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**Review**



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# if

you've been a *Rhodes Journalism Review* reader for a while, you'll be surprised by the smaller magazine you are holding in your hands right now. *RJR* started off life as an A4 but has been big since no 9, December 1994, and the size I inherited when I started as editor in 1997. It's a format I've always loved; it stands (er, stood)



out among the wash of pamphlets at international conferences, it gave designers and photographers a fantastic sweep of canvas, and it was distinctive in the world of magazines, a true original.

But now we're taking a brave step into the digital age because the costs of distribution have become prohibitive. But because

many of our readers have patchy connectivity (if any at all) we're reluctant to abandon print, just yet. So the *RJR* board has made a decision to reduce the size of the publication so that we can still get it into those corners of the continent we want to reach, but to start the migration online. This edition is both a print and online version. But we're not just archiving the print material; if you go to [www.rjr.ru.ac.za](http://www.rjr.ru.ac.za) you'll see the first monthly edition of *RJR Alive* with extra reading material from *RJR 33* and the first digital monthly edition "Viva Radio", a special focus on that most important medium. *RJR Alive* will publish new material on the website every month from February to November. If you'd like to sign up for an email alert then please use this email address to give us your contact details: [rjreditor@ru.ac.za](mailto:rjreditor@ru.ac.za)

## Accountability. The media-people relationship.

Not just the media-our audience relationship, or the media-our readers relationship. For this edition we take our cue again from the Highway Africa conference (theme: "Speaking truth to power") and from the international colloquium organised by Prof Jane Duncan of Rhodes and Dr Julie Reid of Unisa (theme: press accountability and ethics internationally). We started this discussion in the pages of *Review* last year. This conversation is not yet done and it needs to continue until we have a better grip on how the media serves the people and helps gives them access to decision-making power, especially in places where their voices should be better heard.

## Young people, the media and citizenship.

We also take a cue from two recent projects conducted by our school into young South Africans

and their use of the media and whether what they consume helps them speak and act in ways that improve their lives. The SANPAD-funded study surveyed nearly a thousand youngsters across five provinces (with the help of researchers at UCT and UKZN) and looked at 18 months of coverage of young people in the media in South Africa (this part done by Media Tenor) and the Mellon Media and Citizenship project did focus group studies in Johannesburg and in the Eastern Cape. The results are both depressing and heartening. Depressing because young people are being systematically ignored by those in power and abandoned by the media. Heartening because young people have ideas, energy and want to act, and this is a significant force to harness. The cover picture, **Sibulele Mabusela's** portrait of a stranger, was taken in the parking lot at Sandton City of a young man taking a smoke break. If you look into his eyes you will see the familiar defiance and engagement that many youth carry as their defence against the uncertain world. We've peppered this edition with photographs of the youth to keep them in your eye as you're reading and we thank the President's Award, Africa Media Online, Neo Ntsoma, Sydelle Willow Smith and student photographers in Jenny Gordon's third-year photojournalism class for their pictures.

Then we give you "Notes from the Cutting Edge", a heads up from those watching the technological wave and assessing its breaking power. We look at the aftermath of the Marikana massacre and its meanings for us as South Africans and we carry two of **Greg Marinovich's** pictures, one of the few to go behind the lines of policemen and ask questions of how the massacre happened.

## And we're bilingual!

The School of Journalism and Media Studies is involved in an IREX project in Mozambique. The Sol Plaatje Institute is working with several media houses to improve business and journalism practices and the teachers are working with the Escola de Comicação e Artes at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo. Dr Nataniel Ngomane, head of the school, and Vanessa Malila have sourced the stories and **Matthew Kay** supplied the pictures. It's wonderful to be bilingual again and to focus on a country facing a really interesting media future. We are also in discussions with Highway Africa and certain funders about the possibility of carrying regular copy from West Africa in French in this magazine and so we hope to become, over time, a truly trilingual, Africa-wide magazine.

Enjoy the beginning of the new *Review*.

**Anthea Garman, Editor**



# Voice and agency in post-apartheid South African media

What does the rising number of service delivery protests tell us about who gets to speak and who gets to listen in South African politics? Do politicians listen to the youth, especially the vast numbers of the un- and under-employed? What role do the youth play in social cohesion, civic action and the future of our young democracy?

by Herman Wasserman and Anthea Garman

**T**hese are the questions that prompted us to launch a project into media and citizenship in South Africa on a hunch that it would be a fruitful area for analysis. The mainstream media in South Africa, as Steven Friedman (2011) says, does really seem to hold a view based on and speaking for an urban elite. We wanted to question some of the broad claims the media are making in terms of their contribution to democracy, and wanted to find out what role media actually play in people's lives.

As we've proceeded in this project we've narrowed our focus of study to the situation of young people in this country. They seem to us to be the most important demographic to be paying attention to right now. How they form their civic and political identities in this new democracy, how they understand the roles they can play, how they use the media (and the dazzling array of new technologies), how they forge their way into the future.

In the pages that follow in this section on youth, the media and citizenship, Vanessa Malila writes out of our research as a project, Lynette Steenveld talks about the SANPAD-funded survey (with which our Mellon project on media and citizenship has collaborated, See Malila 2013) into South Africa's youth across five provinces and asks questions about the relationship between consuming news media and citizenship, we focus on the situation of children in the media, we look at technologies like Facebook, Jonathan Jansen challenges us with our narrow version of "politics" and we hear from Australia, where James Arvanitakis writes from the University of Western Sydney, the area on the edge of the city where migrants and marginal people live. These articles provide a wide range of different perspectives on our central theme of how the media construct and re-construct citizenship.

Our approach to our study has been influenced by some important

thinkers on citizenship and we have adopted many of these ideas in order to understand the relationship between the media, politics, citizenship and today's citizens.

Sociologist Patrick Heller (2009: 134) characterises South Africa as having a consolidated formal constitutional democracy but with little capacity among its subaltern citizens to shape public policy. Heller says in South Africa, the ANC has turned local government structures into a site for the (often inadequate) delivery of desperately-needed and essential services (shelter, water, electricity, schools, clinics) thereby making South Africa's poorest people into clients dependent on patronage. The result, he says, is a public domain characterised by powerful interests lobbying for access to the government's ear and "inchoate" local protests when service delivery fails (2009: 137). Neither of these two modes of engagement – while they may be successful in getting media attention or the resolution of problems at times – could be considered voice or participation in the full sense that enriched citizenship in a vibrant public sphere is supposed to offer.

The media often claim to facilitate citizens' participation in political processes. But, we ask in this project, to what extent have the South African media succeeded in fashioning new forms of citizenship in the post-apartheid era? And are the media as central as they like to assert in the relationship between ordinary people and those in power?

Toby Miller argues that the last two hundred years of modernity have produced three zones of citizenship (2007: 35):

1. the political (the right to reside and vote)
2. the economic (the right to work and prosper) and
3. the cultural (the right to know and speak)

Miller says people may also express themselves via media and the markets in ways that do not conform to standard ideas of citizenship



Neo Ntsoma

as operating in the realm of the political and economic.

John Hartley believes that people may experience themselves as *both* “citizens and consumers, publics and audiences, workers and traders, all at once” (2010: 238-9). Markers of the membership of these communities and publics may be style and, in the case of subcultures, alternative food, housing and family arrangements or fashion. Especially for those who have traditionally been excluded from civil, social and political rights, “culture” becomes a “battleground where demands for rights and duties are fiercely asserted and denied” (Van Zoonen, 2005: 8). This form of citizenship as consumption, Hartley points out, might be “startling to social theory, but lived by millions” (2010: 238).

Hartley sees a phenomenon emerging which he calls “media citizenship” (2010: 239). This form of citizenship is based on the use of popular media to construct identities, associations and communities. He says the people who are excluded from classic citizenship... are most likely to engage in citizenship of media (2010: 239).

Seen in this way, not only the types of media that facilitate “serious”, rational deliberation can be effective in teaching audiences about civic values and virtues, but also those types of media that are ostensibly focused on leisure and entertainment; soap operas, hip hop music, radio talk shows. These popular media texts should therefore also be taken seriously as part of “media citizenship”.

Then the growth of new media technologies (particularly on cellphone which surprisingly is reaching into the deepest rural areas) have given individuals tools to connect with others that bypass the ordinary media and the public sphere convened by those in power. Hartley refers to this form of citizenship as “DIY citizenship” (2010: 239) because it is dynamic and constructed bottom-up rather than through formal processes.

The consequence of all the processes is that mass media can no longer “speak both to and for the entire

citizenry”, or assume the existence of *the* public. As a result, Hartley says:

... much smaller groups can self-organise and self-represent, and act both culturally and politically, without bearing the weight of ‘standing for’ the whole society. As a result, ‘DIY citizenship’ is arguably becoming more democratic as individual media (content-platforms) become less popular (2010: 240).

All of this tells us that we can make no normative assumptions about the centrality and importance of news media and journalism for democracy. Young people in studies in the developed world (see Irene Costera Meier’s report on her work in the Netherlands, see RJR 30 “The wisdom of the crowds”) and young people here in South Africa tell us that while they value the news as an important cloud of knowing (i.e. just there if you need to refer to it) they find it really hard to imagine how the news, which barely represents them or their interests, is going to play a part in their formulation of identity or decisions about the future.

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Popular media texts should also be taken seriously as part of “media citizenship”.

# young and **MEDIATED**



Each year on the 16th June we celebrate Youth Day and I wonder what the day means to young South Africans. Countries all over the world celebrate Youth Day as a way to highlight the importance of young people in society. In South Africa, it is this and much more. Here this specific day was chosen to commemorate the Soweto Uprising of 1976, when young South Africans rose up against the inequalities, atrocities and injustices of the apartheid government.

# Born Free

## WITHOUT A CAUSE?

By Vanessa Malila

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**T**hese were young people that we now consider the heroic ‘young lions’ – who defended their rights and helped to bring about the end of apartheid (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006). They are seen as the social force behind the political struggle, urging change and having “intensified and led the internal struggle from the early 1970s until victory in the early 1990s, and have, in the person of Steve Biko and hundreds of others, given their lives to the cause” (Abdi, 1999: 157).

But what of the young people of today? They live in a country with a democratic government, albeit one that is still finding its feet. They have access to all the rights that their parents were denied – the right to education, the right to freedom of expression, the right to protest publicly, and the right to vote in multiparty elections. The parents of the Born Frees<sup>1</sup> had a ‘cause’ against which to protest politically and with which to engage at the political level. This new generation, however, is imagined to have been given all the things they need to succeed by the new democratic government – education, employment opportunities, a racially inclusive society, and much more. They should be engaging politically to improve democratic processes rather than to protest against their situations. The term the ‘Born Frees’, itself epitomises the expectations placed on these young people. They are expected to be free of the burdens of the past, to be free of racial, political and economic prejudice and to flourish in a country which offers them so much.

There are no official limits to where they can go, work or live, or on whom they

“It’s all the same, if you vote or not, because nothing improves. Your vote does nothing.”



82%

Likely to vote in the next national elections



78%

Likely to vote in the next municipal elections

**Figure 2: Proportion of respondents surveyed who would vote in forthcoming elections**

may date or marry. They have experienced a series of peaceful democratic elections that increasingly turn on new issues and personalities with diminishing links to the past. They consume news provided by a reformed public broadcaster, and have increasing access to privately owned radio and television broadcast news, as well as to increasing amounts of private and international news on subscription satellite television (Mattes, 2012:5).

Of course, the reality is far different. The inequalities that many of the parents of the Born Frees faced continue to be faced by young South Africans. The question is how are young people engaging with the issues that affect them, and what political activity are they engaging in to change their situation?

Images of Youth Day usually depict young people helping others in their communities, volunteering their time and celebrating the freedoms that previous young generations fought for. The Mellon Media and Citizenship Project<sup>2</sup> has conducted research with young people to find out more about how they think about, feel about and engage in political and civic activity and how this informs their identity as citizens. There are some interesting results which paint a picture of a young person that does help in their community, does volunteer their time, but is also disengaged, distrustful and distanced from political activity and politics. When asked what activity they had participated in over the last 12 months, most young people had ‘helped a neighbour’ (79.1%), been ‘involved in a social group’ (67.4%) or been ‘active in a religious activity’ (64.9%). Here we see a young person who gets involved in civic duty and has an active social life.

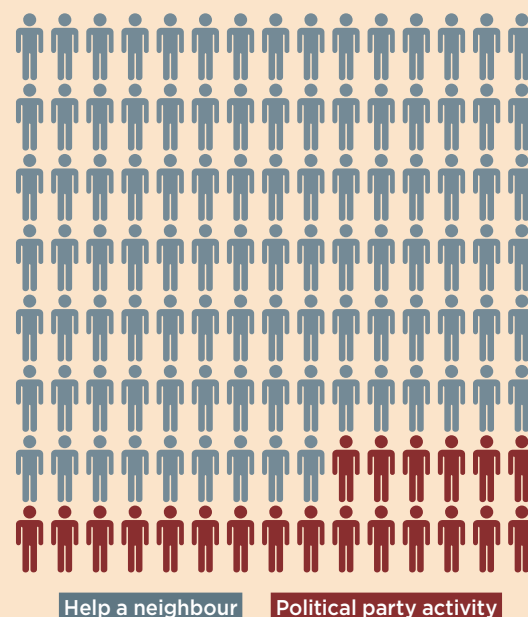
On the other hand, political activity and engagement is significantly lower. Only 16.6% had been active in a political party and only 21.9% had attended a public demonstration in the last 12 months – which is hard to believe if one considers the daily reports of ‘service delivery’ protests which plague the country. (See Figure 1: Activity undertaken by youth surveyed in the last 12 months)

Despite low levels of political engagement, many of the young people we spoke to had voted and would vote again in both municipal and national elections – though to varying degrees. (See Figure 2: Proportion of respondents surveyed who would vote in forthcoming elections)

What is worrying however is that many of the young people that we spoke to directly had very negative perceptions about voting, many echoing the findings by Mattes (2012) that the Born Free generation are “less committed to democracy than their parents and grandparents” (2012: 143). Our focus group discussions with unemployed youth in both urban and rural areas of South Africa revealed that they had a particularly negative attitude towards voting, with many stating that they do not vote as a result of feeling let down by this political activity in the past.

“No it [voting] is useless. I’m not going to vote anytime soon.”

“Ja, I think most people feel that way when it comes to the vote, because some parties make promises, they promise



**Figure 1: Activity undertaken by youth surveyed in the last 12 months**

heaven and earth... And then after the election, they don’t do any of that.”

“It’s all the same, if you vote or not, because nothing improves. Your vote does nothing.”

“It certainly improves the party that is in power or that person who is in power at the time, otherwise not service delivery.”

This picture shows a young South African who is politically disengaged and apathetic towards their ability to do something about the situation they find themselves in. We often complain that young people are disengaged and that they aren’t active citizens – but what does this actually mean and what are we doing to help them become better citizens?

Researchers have long argued that the education system is a key tool for teaching young people to be responsible citizens in a democracy. The education system is key in developing active and responsible citizens (particularly in post-conflict societies) because young people are often regarded as the future of a nation (Giddens, 2000), as not having the baggage that the older generations have, and because they may be more open to new ideas of citizenship (Jansen, 2009; Jarausch & Geyer, 2003). In South Africa, the curriculum is cognisant of the need to provide an enabling environment to build active citizens. However, those who developed the curriculum were also burdened with a legacy where racist nationalism and citizenship were easily interchanged during apartheid, and are fearful of imposing those same kinds of ideals on the future of South Africa. This means that the education system, which should be a key space for developing one’s citizen identity, is falling short in South Africa.

The other key institution where young people should be learning what it means to be an active and responsible citizen, what it means to engage and participate in political activity, is the media. The media has been argued to play a positive role in creating

a link between marginalised citizens, and political discussions and participation (Hartley 1996, Hermes 2006), and in doing so playing a key role in citizenship. The media has for a long time been regarded as central to individuals' construction of citizenship, and it is argued that through consumption of media audiences are influenced in their participation and engagement with democratic processes. Indeed, within a normative framework the very purpose of the media is to provide useful and relevant information for citizens to ensure they are informed about issues within the public sphere which affect them. In a country like South Africa, where the media has made a significant shift in its role in society and has in one way or another been central to the ideology of 'nation building' after the end of apartheid, this need is perhaps even greater.

Despite this, our research shows that the media are failing dismally. (See Figure 3: Media coverage vs youth interest of crime and health)

Despite extremely high levels of trust in the media (79.5% of young people trust SA TV news, and 78.3% trust radio news), young people are not getting information that is relevant to their lives. Not only is the kind of information they are looking for (education, crime and health) not appearing in the media they consume, but they are also not hearing their own voices in the stories they consume. (See Figure 4: Education coverage in South African media)

In research I conducted around education reporting which consisted of a content analysis of 420 articles in three South African newspapers (*The Daily Dispatch*, *The Mail & Guardian*, and *The Grocott's Mail*), I found that most stories were void of the voice of the youth, preferring instead to quote school or university management (23.8%), the public (18.3%) and government officials (19.5%). In addition, research conducted by Media Tenor of 8736 articles across South African media (Malila, 2013: 35) shows that media coverage of youth issues is either largely neutral or negative.

Our focus group discussions confirmed that young people picked up on this negative coverage and were influenced by it.

*"The media only tell us about the problems. That is what makes me apathetic."*

*"It depresses me. I get angry - I get so angry and so sad. I would like to see more positive coverage."*

*"90% of the news is focused on violence."*

*"They must give us something we can learn from and leave us with the strikes. We are not learning anything from the strikes."*

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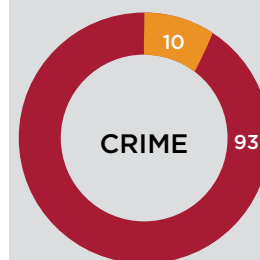
#### Endnotes

1. The Born Frees are those South Africans born after 1994.
2. The Media and Citizenship: Between Marginalisation and Participation project began life in 2011. The project, led by professors Herman Wasserman and Anthea Garman, is based in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, and critically examines the ways in which the South African media realise their potential to contribute to the reconstruction and renegotiation of citizenship.

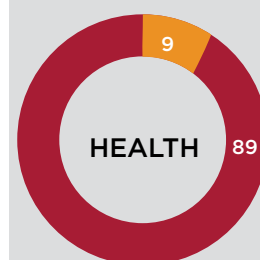
We expect a lot from our young South Africans. But are we giving them the tools they need to fulfil those expectations? Dahlgren (2009) argues that citizenship entails engagement and participation, civic and political identity, and being able to negotiate these concepts in a way that one moves beyond thinking about citizenship to doing citizenship. The articles in this section of *Rhodes Journalism Review* on the Youth, Identity and the Media interrogate many of these concepts, and the institutions that I've discussed above – education, the media, the government – and in doing so give us some insight into the complexities of being a young person, and developing an active and responsible civic and political identity.

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Media coverage  
Youth interest

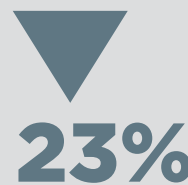


Media coverage  
Youth interest

Figure 3: Media coverage vs youth interest of crime and health



Media coverage is about education



Is reported in a positive way

Figure 4: Education coverage in South African media



Neo Ntsoma

# ‘Our turn to eat’

SOUTH AFRICA’S ACQUISITIVE SOCIETY

There is no other country in the world where the expression “we demand” is more often heard in the public space. We demand apologies; we demand higher wages; we demand resignations. In this demandist culture we act out our demands in the very familiar script of singing, dancing and often gratuitous violence. This South African spectacle exists in place of thought. It is the death knell of deliberative democracy. But most importantly, it is the antithesis of civic duty.

young and  
**MEDIATED**

By Jonathan Jansen

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Nobody could have expected the speed and aggression with which South Africa morphed into an acquisitive society.

**O**f course we know where this demandist culture comes from. Those of us who lived on both sides of apartheid know about protracted struggles marked by demands: demand the end of unjust laws, of racist government, of separate schooling, of forced removals, and scores of bad things we fought against. Then and now, there is nothing wrong with demanding things from government, whether that authority is legitimate or not. But when this demandist culture transfigures our humanity, renders active citizens impotent, negates reflection, and leaves us beholden to the state for good things, then something has gone horribly wrong in the public arena. Singular examples must suffice.

Think for a moment how easy it was to mobilise hundreds of youth and adults into marching against a private art gallery that put on display a painting some people did not like. You did not have to think; all you had to do was follow the official demagogue encouraging you to not buy “offending newspapers” that published the painting and demand that the gallery not only take down the painting, but destroy it. Thinking about artistic freedom and other democratic virtues was beside the point. Demand the painting come down. And if not, we will do it for you – as the two men who destroyed the painting actually did, cheered on by the demanding crowd.

A recent event further alerted me to the dreary state of being amongst our youth. The long row of high school youth visiting the campus had one thing in common: a glum face. One by one they stopped by my table for a sampling of stew and dessert. Each visiting student took the food on offer and walked straight past the servers who greeted them warmly on approach. Not a word from any of the youngsters from more than 20 different schools. This was a little too much and so I called them back: “it would be good if you said ‘thank you.’ The food is free and we did not have to do this. Someone worked very hard to make these meals.” Then, mumbling, some would utter the two words of grace.

When you relinquish thinking and act simply on the basis of your guttural senses, and when you receive human gifts without the capacity to acknowledge kindness, then you lack the constitution through which young (and old) find purpose in civic duty. Civic duty is about giving of your talents and, at a higher level of service, giving of yourself. This higher level of civic duty implies sacrificial service or, in common parlance, putting your body on the line for others. Others come first, something so roundly captured in the phrase ‘public service.’ It is, in its purest form, sacrificial service expecting nothing in return.

The young bald and energetic professor stood out in a room filled with youthful social entrepreneurs. He stands out as the youngest tenured professor at his university who wrote a brilliant new book called *Give and Take: A revolutionary approach to success*. Adam Grant found that people come in two main groups, givers and takers. Takers, from the moment they meet you try to relieve you of your money. They manoeuvre and manipulate for the simple goal of taking what you have for their benefit. Givers, on the other hand, find ways of connecting people with needs to those who can provide for them. But there is a third group, most of us, says Grant, who try to find a balance between giving and taking. They give, but expect reciprocation. There is a transactional quality to their relationships.

Grant’s research found that in certain fields, givers are over-represented at the bottom of the success pyramid; because they give they often end up with less. Yet givers, unexpectedly, are also over-represented at the top, this research shows. That much for the American context.

My sense is that South African society in the post-apartheid period reflects similar trends, with takers heavily represented at the upper ends of an inverted pyramid and givers at the lower, thin end of the apex. Nobody could have expected the speed and aggression with which South Africa morphed into an acquisitive society. “Our turn to eat” is an expression that is heard often on the streets. It is as if we collectively built up this gargantuan appetite during the apartheid years only to be released into the corridors of wealth and power with the sole purpose of filling up.

The group of boys in the township knew I was lost as I tried to find a local school. As I rolled down the passenger side window to ask directions I was intrigued by how their eyes darted back and forth between my face and the backseat, no doubt looking for something to grab. The students, at my first teaching university in South Africa, rushed from the graduation hall like gluttonous beasts, ahead of their parents and grandparents, to finish off the foods we had prepared for their families. When I asked my students on Facebook what they would do if they found that one of the food vendors on campus had forgotten to close his shop, the vast majority replied that they would raid the place. Where does this behaviour stem from?

A number of institutions have to fail at the same time to produce the kinds of incivility witnessed in public life. You have no parents or your parents simply do not care about basic courtesies. Your school life is hard and unforgiving with teachers who themselves could not care less about common decencies such

as saying 'thank you.' In your life choices there are no spiritual sources of instruction and guidance through the challenges of life. Your friends boast about behaviours that offend and communicate a series of messages that make it 'uncool' to express any of these positive habits.

But I think that one of the most troubling institutions that communicate greed and grabbing is our system of government. Through myriad social welfare actions, old and young come to believe that their government owes them something. Government should give liberally and not take away at all. Massive salary hikes out of all proportion to reasonableness are on display everywhere in the strike season and, if government does not respond, places get trashed and reputations get destroyed with impunity. This attitude is the antithesis of a culture of gratitude.

I am brown, I am white, I am pregnant, I am unemployed, I am disabled. Everyone has a story of marginalisation or disadvantage which official resources must redress. Of course I do not have to say thank you for any of this; you owe me.

What I know as a university leader is that there is still a small but powerful class of young people who remain idealistic, optimistic and altruistic even within this overwhelmingly acquisitive society. I know from work in communities how many poor people use what they have to offer free childcare services to working mothers or advice to pregnant teenagers or after-school maths to high school learners. Even as foreign or private funding for nongovernmental organisations dried up in favour of government programmes, many continued to provide selfless services to the poor. But this group of "givers" are dwarfed in numbers by the widespread clamour of both the powerful and ordinary citizens to lay their hands on whatever moves, whether that be government tenders or wealthy friends or private goods.

How do we change this acquisitive culture and develop, especially among youth, a strong sense of civic duty?

First, we need a new and different kind of leadership in government, business, education and the home. Many seriously doubt that the current government has the moral capacity to act as exemplars of a new civic leadership, but let us dream for a moment.

Imagine the President, instead of accepting annual salary increases, gave away – along with his entire cabinet – those salary increases in the form of bursaries for the poorest students in the country to go to university. Symbols matter, for even though that money would hardly begin to make a dent in the student bursary needs of the country, it would send the right message into society that civic duty is about giving, sharing and putting others first.

Imagine, further, that the President establishes a voluntary public service facility, such as the Peace Corps, where instead of the authoritarian streak of some of his ministers to force young people to do an extra year of service attached to their degrees, our political leadership appeals to the civic mindedness of idealistic youth and asks them to join such an army of community volunteers in areas of their degree training.

Finally, we are guilty in the post-1990s of dangerously narrowing down our sense of politics as civic duty to the mean-spirited variety of party political thuggery that dominates media coverage today. Our noisy political youth have come to believe that the only kind of politics worth waging is in the form of party or parliamentary agency with material position as its only end. We need to extend our sense of politics to include the many other ways of challenging and transforming power to include, for example, the environmental, religious, sports and the arts – so that more citizens begin to participate more meaningfully in the deepening of our hard-won democracy.

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# Afrikaner adolescents' identity struggles in post-apartheid South Africa

Eric Miller/Africa Media Online

The question of how Afrikaner young people – the generation born when apartheid was coming to an end early in the 1990s – are coming to grips with themselves and with life in a new society has interested scholars and ordinary South Africans in recent years.

By Charl Alberts

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One could argue that the parents of these Afrikaner adolescents, and the generations before them, can be held responsible for putting in place the notorious system of apartheid, and that Afrikaners over the past decades, generally speaking, have been socialised into the values, discourses and ideology of Afrikaner nationalism, apartheid and racial oppression. These discredited values stand in sharp contrast to what the new democratic society is all about and school-going Afrikaner young people are often rooted in traditional family settings, but they also have to deal with de-segregated contexts such as attending multi-cultural schools.

A recent study (Alberts 2013) investigated how Afrikaner school-going adolescents in rural Eastern Cape contexts were constructing identities of Afrikanerness in conversation with their parents. I conducted family conversations with nine Afrikaner families in the form of focus group discussions, where they were questioned about their identities of being Afrikaans and white in the post-apartheid society.

The research project conceptualised identity formation from a discursive point of view (i.e. identity is produced in and through discourse and in relationship with fellow human beings), and used the theory of a

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It was evident that Afrikaner young people and their parents often colluded and assisted one another in collectively constructing these narratives of settlerhood and threat.

dialogical self, developed by Hubert Hermans (2001) and colleagues, as an explanatory framework. Hermans conceptualises self and identities as multi-voiced and dialogical, and individual selves are embedded in social, cultural and historical contexts.

Analysis of the transcribed texts of the family conversations revealed that identity formation among Afrikaner adolescents was complex and not one-dimensional. Applying the theoretical perspective of a dialogical self enabled an understanding of the complexity and diversity of youthful Afrikaner voices or identities, as well as the contradictions, tensions and conflicts emerging in the dialogue with their parents in a rapidly changing socio-political situation in South Africa. It emerged from the analysis that Afrikaner young people enacted a heterogeneity of identities of Afrikanerness and whiteness in conversation with their parents.

A major finding was that the discourse of the participants on being Afrikaans, for both young and old, was often pervaded by constructions of being threatened. Afrikaner adolescents and their parents often constructed a sense of threat in terms of their identity, language, culture, history, opportunities and future, to mention a few. In the process, a dangerous and uncompromising enemy – the racial ‘other’ – is constructed as one that wants to hurt and harm the interests and well-being of Afrikaners and white people in the new South Africa.

It became clear from the analysis of the data that, in the construction of these threat narratives, discourses (for example, “in the laager” or we should stand together as an ethnic group; the “purity” of the Afrikaans language is threatened) and ideologies (for example, Afrikaner nationalism) of the past were repeated and recited. The discourse of the “swart gevaar” (black danger) was most frequently utilised to construct a sense of threat. In one focus group discussion, Anneke (mother, 51 years old) said of her son’s end-of-matric bursary applications which were turned down: “He was just wiped out. *Then* already they had said ‘you can forget...we are not going to allocate the bursaries to the whites’ and so on.” It seems that Afrikaner adolescents and their parents often remain trapped in the past by repeating ways of talking and sense-making which belong to a bygone era. In the process, they continue to position themselves as settlers and struggle to grow towards making the transition of becoming constructive and participating citizens of the new society.

It was evident that Afrikaner young people and their parents often colluded and assisted one another in collectively constructing these narratives of settlerhood

and threat. In one of the interviews, Johan jr (18 years) said: “The Afrikaners must not stand back for what is right for them. They must *believe* in their language and everything, and they must not hide it away in a wardrobe or somewhere.”

The family conversation also became a social space where, for example, discourses of white domination, racial purity, apartheid, and racism were collectively recited in the negotiation of identities of Afrikanerness between the young people and their parents. Noel (17 years) talked about relating to young girls of colour: “Look, there is a friendship but it remains with friendship. I believe you do not climb over the racial line to tie the knot in a relationship with such a person. I believe strongly that sheep and goats don’t mate.”

From a theoretical point of view of a dialogical self, it can be argued that Afrikaner family settings often become social contexts where discourses of the past are recycled and reproduced, and where rumination and a lack of innovation is taking place (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010). There is a danger that citizens, like Afrikaners in present-day South Africa, continue to talk from conventional identity positions in conversation with one another, making cyclical movements across these positions, and that they might arrive again and again at these same (often destructive) positions, and become absorbed in their negatively coloured memories, cognitions and anticipations. It is evident that rumination, for example between Afrikaner adolescents and their parents, is different from a truly dialogical relationship. This kind of relationship is repetitive in character; there is an absence of innovation during the process of interchange and an inability to move to novel and positive positions. There is a danger of keeping Afrikaners, young and old, trapped in discredited identities of the past, and preventing them from becoming constructive and participating citizens in the post-apartheid society.

The dialogue between Afrikaner young people and their parents during the family conversations was also riven with contradictions and contestations as they often drew on different discursive and ideological resources circulating in the Afrikaans cultural community to contradict one another in terms of identities. Two examples illustrate this point. In the first, Johanna (17 years) outlined – to the surprise of her parents – how she felt about letting go a traditional Afrikaner identity. “Now if I have children one day, I feel I must raise my children in English because I get the feeling our language is going to die out. I will rather change over to English than I would stay Afrikaans.” Johanna is prepared to consider embracing an identity that will give her access to a bigger world.

The discourse of the “swart gevaar” (black danger) was most frequently utilised to construct a sense of threat.



Peter Bendheim/Africa Media Online

In the second example, Anlé expressed her desire to embrace a traditional (romanticised) Afrikaner identity, to the amazement of her progressive-minded father. “I would wish that things must again be as it was in previous years. I am now over the new South Africa. It bothers me so much what is going on now.” In contrast to Johanna, where the struggle and identity contestation revolved around a young Afrikaner’s aspirations to break away from a traditional form of Afrikaansness and embrace a foreign (English) identity, Anlé’s rhetoric about wanting to go back to a nostalgic and romanticised identity of being Afrikaans illustrates that it is not only the older generation of Afrikaners who are romanticising a traditional Afrikaner past.

It is evident from analysing these texts that discursive tensions and contestations of identity between the adolescents and their parents could go in different directions. It wasn’t the case that the parents were necessarily conservative and racist, and the younger generation more liberal. In these family conversations, Afrikaner adolescents would sometimes draw on racist discourses to contradict their parents. It was not only parents who were trapped in ethnic identities of the past.

However, the young people often drew from experience and ways of talking resulting from being embedded in de-segregated settings, mostly at school. They were often able to utilise discourses from these integrated contexts to define themselves and their relations with black and coloured peers. Their parents, on the other hand, usually do not have the same quality of experience (or the same levels of intimacy, openness and intensity), nor the discursive and ideological resources, to deal with themselves and the ‘other’ in the same liberated ways.

In one of the focus group discussions, Carl (18 years) said: “We had a coloured in our class, Myron. We don’t even see him as a coloured any more. He hangs out with us – everything. Unfortunately they have moved to Kareedouw now but there is another one now. We call him the coloured boer.” With these words, Carl constructs the relationship with Myron as normal, embracing him unconditionally as a fellow human being and not on the basis of race, and frames it as a loss when Myron and his family moved away to another town. Furthermore, by adopting the term “coloured boer”, Carl and his friends have befriended the racial ‘other’, and incorporated it into their own group. The invention of the term “coloured boer” can also be seen as a demonstration of the performance of a group ritual, and a way of accomplishing (discursively) group loyalty.

In another family interview, Bernice (17 years) commented on the situation in the classroom at school: “The white group that are there are friends but I am

very good friends with not just coloureds. Many of my good friends are blacks.” In these family conversations, parents seldom described their relationships with black South Africans like this. Both Carl and Bernice have mobilised their experience and discourses from de-segregated social contexts at school in enacting identities of whiteness and Afrikanerness. The voices of these young Afrikaners have transcended identities of whiteness and Afrikanerness cultivated in the apartheid era and are pointing the way towards becoming citizens of the new, democratic society.

From the point of view of the theory of the multi-voiced and dialogical self, Bernice’s discourse in terms of her friendship with the ‘other’ can also be interpreted as the development of a third position (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010). This third position emerges as a reconciliatory position between voices of more conservative parents and traditional collective voices of her Afrikaner culture on the one hand and, on the other, the appeal of fellow black and coloured learners for equal and fair treatment in de-segregated school settings. The emergence of a third position in this example can be interpreted as re-organising the self in a new social, cultural and historical context and will enable Bernice to engage in open and dialogical relationships with fellow South Africans.

In summary, analysis of my research revealed a complex multiplicity of voices of Afrikanerness and whiteness emerging in the dialogue between Afrikaner adolescents and their parents. These identities are often rooted in the discredited apartheid past, but what also emerged were voices of Afrikanerness and whiteness that can be described as subject positions that transcend the ideology of whiteness and embrace solidarity across colour lines. These youthful Afrikaner voices of hybridity and renewal have the potential, if they can be strengthened through a variety of contemporary social forces, to make a contribution towards challenging discredited legacies of the past. They can also give direction in terms of growing constructive, participating and moral citizens in post-apartheid South Africa.

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The voices of the young Afrikaners have transcended identities of whiteness and Afrikanerness cultivated in the apartheid era and are pointing the way towards becoming citizens of the new, democratic society.



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# Young Ozzies in a DIGIWORLD

Standing in front of a lecture room with 400 first-year students, I ask each of them to go to the unit Facebook page and respond to the following status update: 'Globalisation is...'

'You have five minutes', I say, 'and feel free to discuss all this with the people around you.'

By James Arvanitakis

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The response is somewhat overwhelming: in seconds, the chimes that indicate a Facebook 'status update' begin. Within the five-minute deadline, there are over 150 responses. Working with my teaching assistants, I quickly transfer the information into software that produces a 'word-cloud' that presents me the entry point for the lecture to begin interrogating the subject matter.<sup>2</sup> Dominant words include 'connections', 'opportunities' and various forms of media: 'internet', 'Facebook', 'movies' and so on. It is clear from the responses that for this cohort, communications media is synonymous with globalisation.

Other words that surprisingly emerge are 'fear' and 'injustice'. As I ask students to explain why these words were put forward, recent events are raised: from the factory fires in Bangladesh that resulted in the violent deaths of hundreds of people which have been linked with western consumption patterns,<sup>3</sup> to the decline of Australia's manufacturing industry.<sup>4</sup> These events are top of mind, and present intellectual as well as emotional challenges for students. The responses are also accompanied by all sorts of personal 'updates', from commentary on the fortunes of a favoured football team, to opinions about my fashion sense, and requests for top marks.

When discussing the issue of young people, media and identity within the Australian context, this example provides us with some important insights for this paper. It highlights what we already know – that communications and entertainment media is quickly embraced and used by these young people. Yet we have also learnt something of how forms of communication media are seen to be integral to globalisation. Simultaneously, there are concerns being raised about

who exactly holds the opportunities that globalisation offers; what happens to those left behind; what responsibilities do we have; and a quest to understand the risks involved. So while many young people have established a symbiotic relationship with contemporary forms of media in terms of their identity – often accompanied by both confidence and bravado – they simultaneously raise concerns about the associated vulnerabilities.

This paper presents some early results from a broader research project on young people and understanding their changing experiences of citizenship in an increasingly globalised and complex world.<sup>5</sup> The project interrogates whether these experiences promote agency and engagement, and therefore place their citizenship in ‘surplus’, or whether the predominant result is disengagement and disconnection, in which case their citizenship can be considered in ‘deficit’.

As part of this research, media and media interactions are fundamental to understanding the way young people engage with civic processes that can develop or undermine their sense of agency – or both, as circumstances and personalities provide. Furthermore, media interactions are fundamental in youth identity-formation around these essentially *political* processes of civic engagement or disengagement.

Before turning to these issues in greater detail, I would like to briefly present the theoretical framework of the project, which has been discussed in detail elsewhere (see Arvanitakis 2008; Arvanitakis and Hodge 2012).

### Theoretical framework

Citizenship has long been a site of contestation. From below, it offers a range of rights and privileges that have developed over generations, particularly of solidarity actions. From above, citizenship represents a mechanism of control and discipline. As different groups of actors approach citizenship from different perspectives, a fundamental issue that crosses both time and space is the radically different experiences of citizenship that individuals confront.

Citizenship offers a range of rights and privileges; and is encased in a series of obligations (Turner 2009). To enjoy the full potential of social, cultural, political and economic privileges offered, the citizen must negotiate a range of institutions, from the educational to the authoritarian. Here, the ‘active’ citizen is one that experiences both a sense of empowerment and is also engaged. That is to say, those citizens who are active and able to negotiate powerful institutions, experience a sense of *agency* that means they are, as individuals, more likely to enjoy the benefits of citizenship – and appreciate the obligations. Those who are unable to deal with the power and authority of civil society, or grasp potential opportunities, are more likely to withdraw from the *civus*, and remain (or become) disengaged and disempowered.

Elsewhere I have presented this concept as the engaged/empowered typology depicted in Figure 1, (see Arvanitakis 2008). Like all typologies it is limited

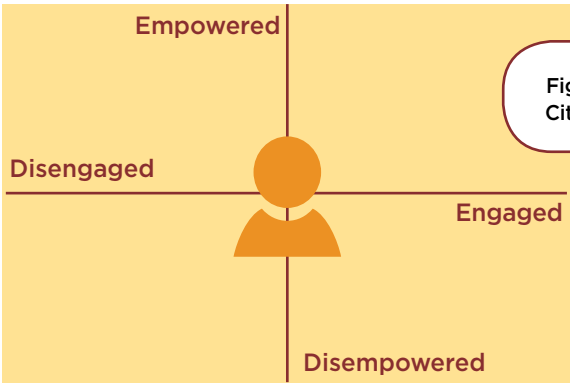


Figure 1:  
Citizenship typology

by design. However, it recognises that individuals experience a sense of citizen surplus or citizen deficit in different settings, and at different times. If experiencing surplus, the citizen has the skills and cultural capital to potentially enjoy the benefits of citizenship, while meeting and appreciating the obligations. For those experiencing a citizenship deficit, these opportunities and skills are less likely to be available, or be pursued.

As mentioned, typologies come with limitations, not least being that it is only ever a static snapshot or point-in-time location of an individual's experience. Rather than only focus on any given point, therefore, the research also seeks to identify triggers that can move individuals from deficit to surplus (and potentially the opposite). Here we are examining the *relational* nature of citizenship. That is to say, citizenship and the associated experiences that locate an individual in one quadrant or another of this typology should not be understood in isolation. Rather, our placement at any one time or place is a function of the experiences of those around us, relationships with the relevant institutions, and interactions with community, including via the media in all its dimensions.

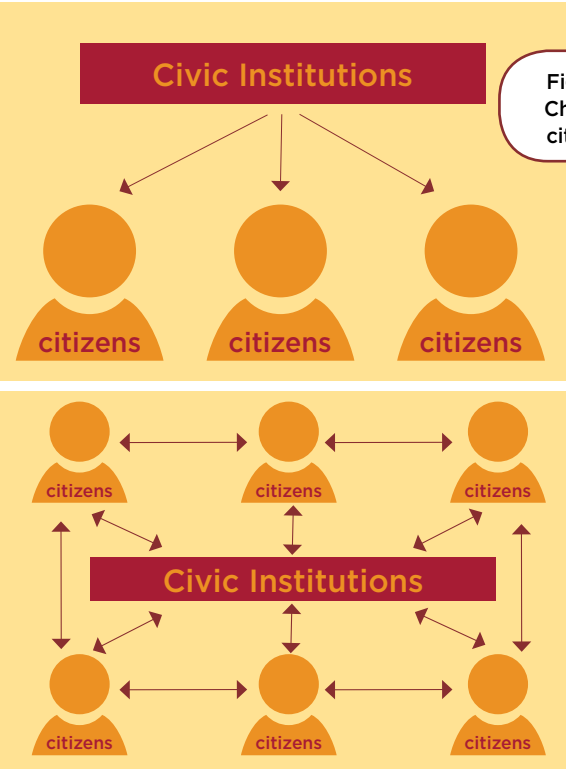


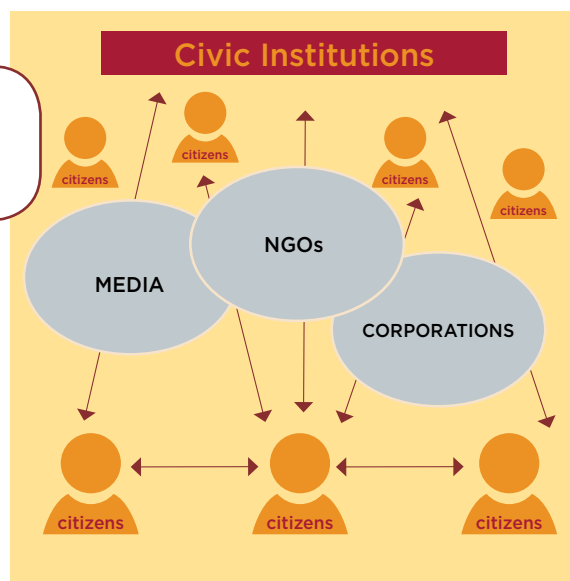
Figure 2:  
Changing nature of citizenship

Access is important, and so is the second issue: internet literacy.

Figure 2 represents the changing nature of citizenship to what I have described as 'relational' from its traditional 'vertical' structure. There are two important insights here: in the contemporary world, the relationship that any individual citizen has with civil society is best understood as a function of the relationships around that person. Someone with strong solidarity networks is likely to be able to draw on them to assist in negotiating the complex processes and opportunities of citizenship. In contrast, those with weak networks are more likely to experience a deficit.

New media – social and presentational – accentuates these experiences. This is highlighted in Figure 3 below, which shows that the relational nature of citizenship is mediated by new governance structures. All contemporary societies are challenged by, and responding to, developments of the digital age, including, but certainly not limited to, governments of all colours and political movements (religious, environmental, Indigenous peoples), media, transnational corporations, non-government organisations, and international institutions (financial, military, health and humanitarian).

Figure 3:  
Mediated nature  
of contemporary  
citizenship



### *Civic identity and media*

Media in its many forms play a number of important roles in civic engagement and identity. I will briefly discuss some of these before moving on to outline preliminary findings of the research project.

The first is accessibility across a variety of platforms. Civic organisations are increasingly coming to rely on a cross-section of media platforms to communicate with the citizenry. This has the potential to empower and to alienate. In Australia, 'Government 2.0' (Gov2.0) works to establish various activities 'including engaging with the public and releasing government data online'. The aim of the Gov2.0 Taskforce is to use technology to realise a 'more open, transparent and consultative form of government'.<sup>6</sup>

Despite being one of the world's most advanced economies, the Australian Bureau of Statistics measured just over 50 percent of young people with regular access to the internet in its most recent census (2011).<sup>7</sup> While

this is relatively high by international standards, it reminds us that almost one in two young Australians do not have internet access, and consequently are more likely to experience a growing sense of deficit.

Access is important, and so is the second issue: internet literacy. Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2012* examined young people's attitudes to the internet and found that it has become their most important source of information. Almost 80 percent of those surveyed listed it as their first preference. Furthermore, 37 percent stated that the web is where they turn for advice. The authors, however, raised concerns about the need to improve internet literacy. Young people need to be "better equipped to not only identify sites with reliable information but evaluate online information" (ibid: 8).

In research with The Whitlam Institute, a public policy think tank based at the University of Western Sydney (see Arvanitakis and Marren 2009), we found what can best be described as a lack of transferability. In a series of focus groups, one young IT entrepreneur emphasised that accessing Facebook does not equate to internet literacy. In his work, he found that internet literacy is "thin" and many young people with whom he was dealing lacked the skills, knowledge and networks to be able to take advantage of projects such as Gov2.0.

A fourth dimension is the fraught relationship that young people have with media – particularly traditional delivery mechanisms. Specifically, I am talking about the way that young people are portrayed in the media. As Alexander (2008) notes, the media can and often does create and promote fears about young people.<sup>8</sup> These range from accusing young people of political apathy, to perpetrating crime, lacking values (such as being labelled the 'me generation') and generally disconnected from their community (Poynting and Morgan 2007). This type of moral hazard is often levelled at young people by the traditional, mainstream media and can aggravate disconnection from civic life. For many young people, it confirms to them that they are not considered part of the civic landscape.

Finally, the media in its many guises can act as a way to promote and encourage an engaged citizenship. There are multiple examples of young people taking advantage of new media to establish themselves as 'active citizens' or 'activists'. They may upload self-made videos to YouTube highlighting Australia's treatment of refugees and Indigenous people,<sup>9</sup> join Facebook campaigns around Fair Trade and myriad other causes and campaigns,<sup>10</sup> or volunteer with online-based active citizenship organisations such as GetUp!<sup>11</sup> Oxfam's International Youth Partnerships program (an organisation that I have intimately been involved with) runs a network of 900 young community leaders across the world, interacts virtually, and is organised and managed by young people.<sup>12</sup>

Despite media interactions playing an important role in young people's civic engagement and identity formation, these activities have been described as "slactivism" in the mainstream media (Christensen 2011).<sup>13</sup> That is, this is a type of political engagement that is envisaged as easy and possibly lazy, and not



Megan Fischer

It became clear here that for many young people who are internet literate, media empowers civic engagement and responsibility.

recognised as a genuine form of political engagement (Greere 2013).<sup>14</sup>

As our research project has identified, the starting point when it comes to young people's civic engagement is one of deficit – treating young people as “citizens-in-waiting” (Collin 2008). The deficit model presumes that young people have nothing to add to civic life until they meet certain markers of adulthood such as employment and property ownership, or financial asset accumulation. While elsewhere I have criticised those organisations that are built exclusively around online engagement (Arvanitakis 2011),<sup>15</sup> there is no reason for youth digital engagement to be simply dismissed.

Here we see a contradictory relationship between various media and young people: on the one hand, there is finding empowerment through engagement; while on the other, experiencing the opposite, in the form of dismissal or negative labelling and stereotyping of the type of engagement in which young people choose to participate. It is such insights that have emerged in this research project, and it is here I turn to next.

### ***‘If we designed parliament today, it would nothing like this’***

Between 2008-09 a Whitlam Institute research project investigated the relationship between young people and democracy, including focus groups. The findings have been released in a series of publications (see Arvanitakis and Marren 2009; Collin 2008; Horsely and Costley 2008).<sup>16</sup>

While the focus of the discussions was much broader than the role of media in civic life and identity, a number of key observations were raised that expanded, confirmed and added to the points outlined above. I will outline three of the most pertinent of these.

The first was that established civic institutions must make greater effort to consult with young people using new media. It became clear from the focus group discussions that much consultation commissioned by civic bodies to seek the views of young people had been negative because they were either consulted very late in the process, such that suggestions could not be implemented, or so early that any input was lost, or seen as unrealistic.

It became clear here that for many young people who are internet literate, media empowers civic engagement and responsibility. The focus group participants were assertive in ways that surprised the research team. Many claimed that it was not only the end product that they should be consulted about, but also the processes of consultation themselves. The internet was clearly identified as ‘their’ domain. For civic institutions to assume that the institutions themselves were best placed to set the terms of engagement, particularly digital and multi-media engagement – without consulting young people on method and form – was a costly, and alienating, mistake.

At the same time, we heard warnings on the old ‘if you build it they will come’ maxim. Just because you ‘build’ something in the virtual world, we were told, does not mean it will be used. Here it was made clear that when civic institutions did enter this arena, there was a need to understand the private/public divide. As with the physical world, the world of new media had clear private spaces that should not be entered. As one participant said: “I do not want my local member [of Parliament] liking me on Facebook.”

The third and final point I want to raise here is that new media was seen as having the potential to create revolutionary structural change that was not generally understood by civic institutions. One highly thoughtful participant observed: “If we designed parliament today, it would be nothing like this.”

As we unpacked this statement, the participant explained that the structure and even layout of contemporary parliamentary processes in Australia were designed at a time when geographical boundaries

and identity were fundamental in representative democracy. Today, however, this had dramatically changed and was now out dated – to the point where our respondent could not even relate to the structures. The majority of time spent at a ‘central’ location such as Parliament House was wasteful; and disconnected parliamentarians from community. Furthermore, traditional party politics created false alliances: today’s technologies should redefine the way parties are formed and allow these relationships to be re-negotiated regularly. For example, is the Australian political divide between representatives of labour (the Australian Labour Party) and business and capital (the Liberal Party) relevant when these issues are no longer how young people identify themselves?

In a recent survey, the Lowy Institute, a public policy think tank, found that the majority of young people did not think that democracy was always the best form of government.<sup>17</sup> Media and political commentators across the spectrum argued that this confirmed young people were either disconnected from political processes, or had become so comfortable in the privileges of democracy<sup>18</sup> that they no longer appreciated them. An alternative way to understand such research was not that young people did not support democracy, but that they felt disheartened by the version of democracy they are witnessing.

## Conclusion

As argued throughout this paper, contemporary media is fundamental to the civic identity formation of young people in a variety of complex ways. The media, in its many forms, empowers and disempowers, engages and disengages, inspires and frustrates young

people. To move beyond the deficit model, media organisations (and those who teach media at different education levels) must promote internet literacy while simultaneously recognising that these young people are active citizens who are engaged in ways that are not often recognised or appreciated. Without a better understanding of these practices, the available energy will not be harnessed and our democracies will suffer for it.

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## Endnotes

1. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ingrid Matthews and her insights in preparing this article. I would also like to thank the Australian Research Council for awarding the funding for the ARC Discovery project DP120104607 discussed in this article.
2. Word clouds are open source software that explicitly disclaim having the text analysis capacity of more complex programs of the CAQDAS (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software) family of software. Word clouds are ‘toys’ (see [www.manyeyes.com.au](http://www.manyeyes.com.au)) and as such are ideal for engaging with first year students. They do however show dominant terms: the more frequently a word appears in the uploaded text, the larger the font in which it is printed in the word cloud. On the usefulness and capacities of both word clouds and text mining software, see Hodge and Matthews (2011).
3. <http://www.actionaid.org/australia/2013/05/bangladesh-factory-collapse-no-accident>
4. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-23/ford-to-close-geelong-and-broad-meadows-plants/4707960>
5. See [http://www.uws.edu.au/ics/research/projects/young\\_peoples\\_citizenship](http://www.uws.edu.au/ics/research/projects/young_peoples_citizenship) for the project background. Furthermore, this project has built on earlier work undertaken with the public policy think tank, the Whitlam Institute looking at young people and democracy: [http://www.whitlam.org/the\\_program/young\\_people\\_imagining\\_a\\_new\\_democracy](http://www.whitlam.org/the_program/young_people_imagining_a_new_democracy)
6. <http://webguide.gov.au/web-2-0/gov-2-0-primer/>
7. <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features50Jun+2011>
8. <http://www.acme-journal.org/vol7/CLA.pdf>
9. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=411ueiat2sY>
10. <https://www.facebook.com/FairTradeNetworkGroupNSW>
11. <http://www.getup.org.au>
12. <http://oiyp.oxfam.org.au>
13. <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3336/2767>
14. <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2013-05/4/unicef-slackivism>
15. <http://newmatilda.com/2011/03/31/getup-and-then-what>
16. [http://www.whitlam.org/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/82972/focus\\_groups\\_report.pdf](http://www.whitlam.org/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/82972/focus_groups_report.pdf)
17. <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/lowy-institute-poll-2012-public-opinion-and-foreign-policy>
18. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/whats-democracy-done-for-me-lately-asks-generation-y/story-fn59niix-1226384017869>

I wrote my first blog in 2005, as part of the BBC's My Africa Project, a blogging project put together for 'Africa 05', a year-long series of events described at that time as "the biggest ever celebration of African culture ever organised in Britain". That year I worked as a pharmacist at a government hospital in Asaba, in Nigeria's oil-rich delta region. At that time Facebook didn't exist in Nigeria.

By Tolu Ogunlesi

# Youth and social media in Nigeria

**T**here was no Twitter, no Instagram. Mass mobile phone usage was only a few years old, and no one I knew regularly accessed the internet on their phone. I certainly didn't – my access was restricted to daily visits to an internet café a taxi ride away. I would take photos with a digital camera, load them onto my laptop, transfer them onto a memory stick, and then head for an internet café where I paid for access by the hour, and browsed surrounded by strangers.

My blog was one of several others by Africans across the continent, sharing details of their daily lives. It was an excellent demonstration of the amazing powers of the internet, allowing sharing and connections across a continent that until recently was defined more by the flow of refugees and weapons than by the flow of information.

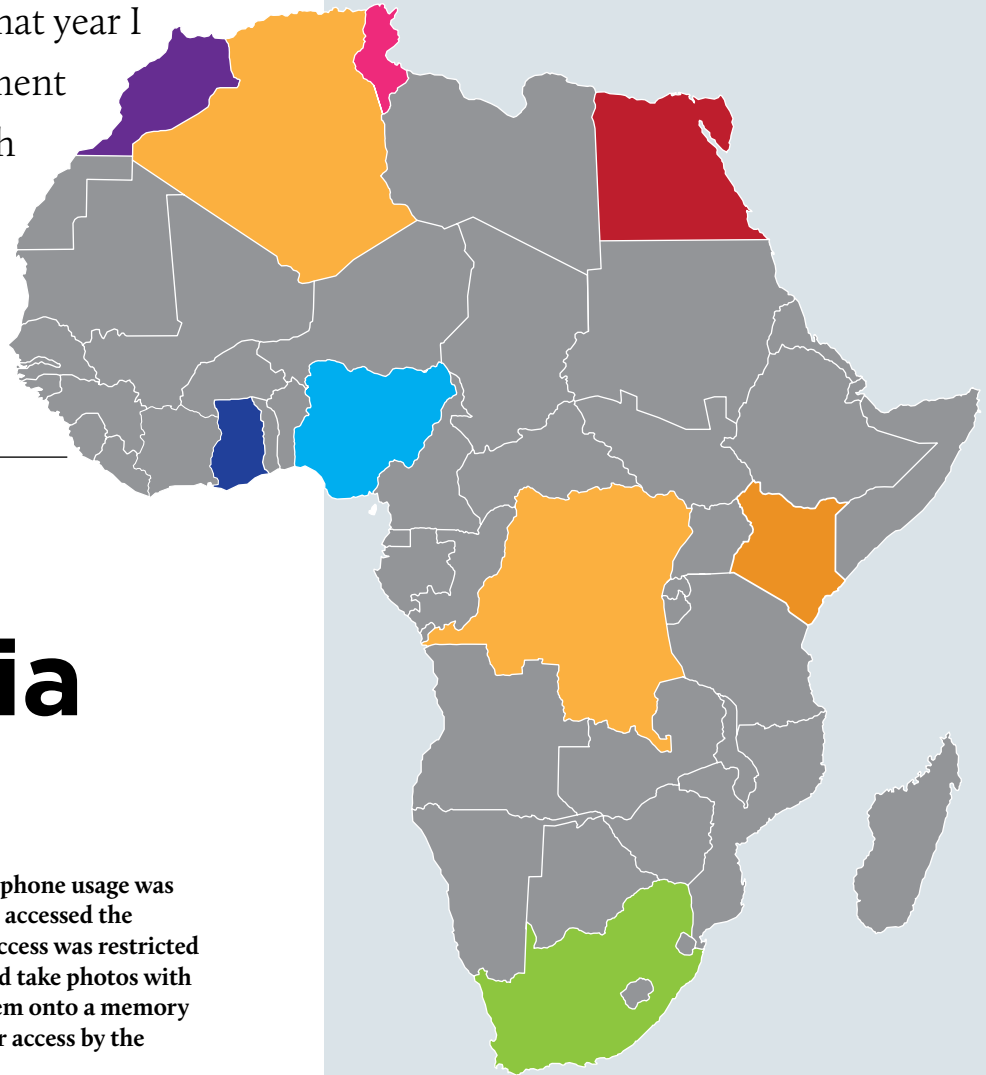
In the time since then I have launched three other blogs (two are now defunct), and joined Hi5 (which no one uses any longer). I am one of more than four million Nigerians who use smartphones (according to statistics from Informa Telecoms), one of six million on Facebook, one of the almost 50 million Nigerian users of the internet.

The turning point for social media as a tool of political engagement in Nigeria was 2010. In May of that year the President joined Facebook. It was the most potent endorsement any social media platform could get, in a country home to more people than any other country on the continent.

Suddenly Facebook became the place to go if you wanted to connect with the President. Posts went up regularly on that page. In a country where Presidents have always been inaccessible, it was a miracle of sorts. By the end of that year the President was the second most popular Head of State

## AFRICAN FACEBOOK USERS IN 2013

(Source: [www.socialbakers.com](http://www.socialbakers.com) Infographic designed by @ivanisawesome, [afrographique.tumblr.com](http://afrographique.tumblr.com))



# 50 386 760

African Facebook users

(Approx. March 2013)

### Similarly sized Facebook markets:

**Mexico** 39 945 620

**Indonesia** 47 165 080

**India** 62 963 440

young and  
**MEDIATED**

An overview of the latest user numbers in the largest Facebook markets across Africa.

Ghana  
**1 465 560**

Morocco  
**5 250 340**

Algeria  
**4 322 820**

Tunisia  
**3 436 720**

Egypt  
**13 010 580**

LARGEST MARKET IN AFRICA  
20<sup>TH</sup> WORLDWIDE

Size similar to Australia, Taiwan,  
Malaysia and Japan

Kenya  
**1 886 560**

DRC  
**891 140**

South Africa  
**5 534 160**

2<sup>ND</sup> LARGEST IN AFRICA  
32<sup>ND</sup> WORLDWIDE

Size similar to Saudi Arabia,  
Romania and Ecuador

Nigeria  
**5 357 500**

3<sup>RD</sup> LARGEST IN AFRICA  
36<sup>TH</sup> WORLDWIDE

Size similar to Ecuador, Morocco  
and Belgium



Felix Masi/Africa Media Online

on Facebook, after Barack Obama (granted he occupied a *distant* second place).

The excitement spilled over into a book, *My Friends and I* published in the President's name – a collection of Facebook conversations between the President and his citizens. Much of it was fawning commentary, expectedly, from a citizenry utterly impressed by the effortless access they had to the most powerful man in the land.

Mr Jonathan's earliest announcement of his desire to run for President appeared on Facebook – again, a first. It was timed to coincide with the widely advertised declaration by another prominent candidate.

All of this was in the lead-up to the Presidential elections in April 2011. As the first general elections since Barack Obama came to office, everyone knew this was going to be different. This was going to be our opportunity to replicate, to the extent to which our circumstances allowed us, the magic of Obama.

And we tried. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many young people voted for the first time in their lives in the 2011 elections. That's in part because social media made it cool. Popular musician Eldee (Lanre Dabiri) was one of the celebrities encouraging newly registered voters (there was a registration process in January 2011, to update the list of voters) to tweet or Facebook their newly-acquired cards. (And on election day it was not unusual to see photos of ink-stained thumbs circulating on social media).

Following the Goodluck Jonathan example, other politicians took to Facebook and Twitter, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, and success.

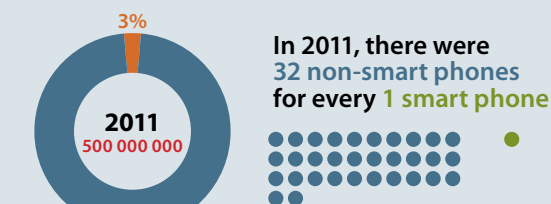
Social media would go on to feature prominently in the elections proper. The

Electoral Commission collaborated with a number of civil society groups to set up a Social Media Tracking Center that monitored online activity relating to the elections – the distribution of voting materials, polling booth incidents, and results (armed with mobile phones, citizens were tweeting and Facebooking results as soon as they were announced at polling booths). Tools like Revoda and ReclaimNaija allowed users to send reports via text message to the Electoral Commission.

Social media usage in Nigeria cannot be understood outside of the mobile phone revolution. At the turn of the century the total number of mobile phone lines in Nigeria was less than 300 000. Today there are 149 million mobile lines, 112 million of which are in use, making Nigeria one of the fastest growing mobile phone markets in the world. Meanwhile landline usage has been dropping steadily; the number of landlines in use today is only a third of what it was in 2009. Increasingly, internet-enabled mobile phones have become cheaper, allowing more people to go online via their mobile phones. In a city like Lagos where commuters spend several hours daily in traffic jams, mobile phones have come in handy to while away the time. According to the mobile social media network Eskimi, mobile internet usage in Nigeria is ten times more than desktop usage.

When Nigeria's President Jonathan says he believes he is "the most criticised President in the whole world", it is in large part due to social media and the way it has allowed frustrated Nigerians to express their opinions without censorship.

On 1 January 2012, news filtered out that

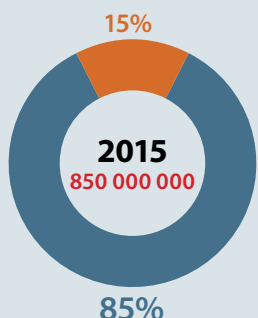


In 2011, there were  
32 non-smart phones  
for every 1 smart phone



## MOBILE PHONES IN AFRICA

(Sources: Informa  
Telecoms and Media.  
Infographic designed  
by @ivanisawesome)



In 2015, we expect  
Africa to have:

**722 500 000**  
non-smart phones

**127 500 000**  
smart phones

In 2015, there will be  
5.6 non-smart phones  
for every 1 smart phone



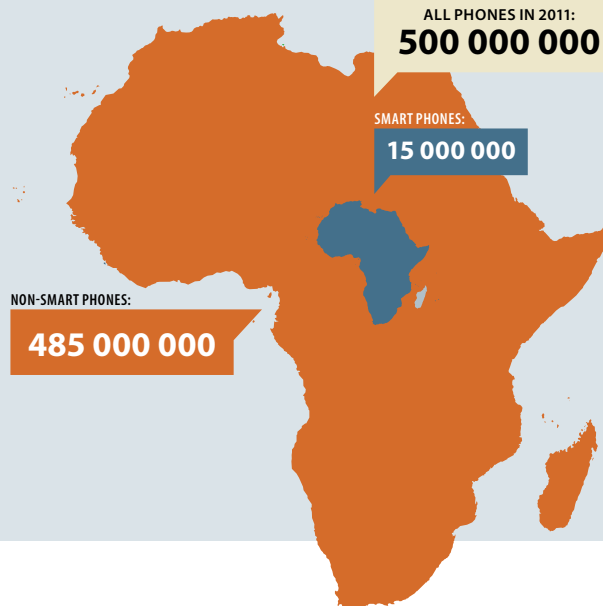
NON-SMART PHONES:

**485 000 000**

ALL PHONES IN 2011:  
**500 000 000**

SMART PHONES:

**15 000 000**



the Federal Government had removed the subsidy on petrol, causing prices to jump from 65 naira to 140 naira. Days later public protests started in parts of the country. Expectedly young people turned to social media. The President's Page, the same one that inspired the *My Friends & I* book, was a prime target. Thousands of angry messages appeared on it, from citizens who now had a chance to communicate their feelings 'directly' to the man in charge. And who had seen how social media had worked in the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Social media allowed many of us to vicariously participate in the Egyptian revolution, so that when the fuel subsidy protests started in Nigeria we had a model to guide us.

Mr Jonathan's complaints can be seen in the same light as the comments by Nigeria's Senate President that "social media has become a threat to the ethics of media practice and good governance because of its accessibility and absolute freedom" (August 2012); and the outburst by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in which he described social media as "the worst menace to society" (June 2013).

Long before them, the former Philippine President Joseph Estrada reportedly blamed "the text-messaging generation" (this was in 2001, the pre-Twitter, pre-Facebook age) for the protests that led to his impeachment.

In the same speech in which he expressed reservations about social media the Nigerian Senate President acknowledged that "the emergence of the social media like Facebook, twitter, BlackBerry Messenger, YouTube etc have changed the face of the media practice by making information sharing easier, faster and quicker."

Like young people across the world, young Nigerians, who form the bulk of social media users – the FactBound survey found that 70 percent of social media users in Nigeria were between 18 and 33 – are fast realising the extent to which social media has altered the dynamics of the world. The extent to which

social media has resulted in the democratisation of access to information, and expression of opinion, and a shift in the balance of power between the leaders and the led.

The 2015 general elections will provide the perfect opportunity for young Nigerians – and an estimated 75 percent of Nigeria's 160 million people are below the age of 35, and about 50 percent below 18 – to put the much-debated power of their numbers to the test, supported by social media.

Until then the Twitter and Facebook debates will continue, on *everything* from the size of the Nigerian President's feeding budget, to Big Brother Africa, and the English Premier League.

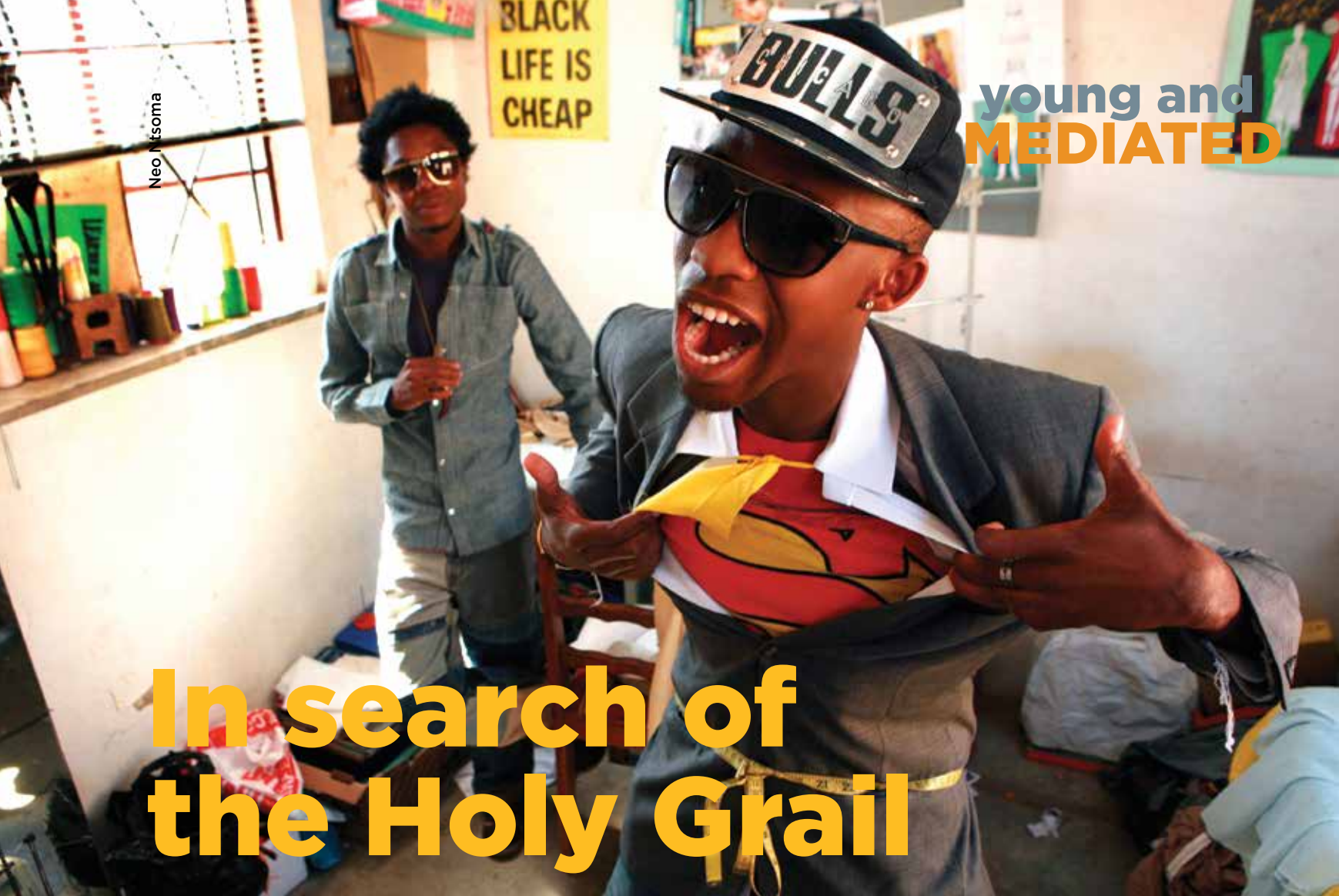
According to a 2011 survey by FactBound, a research consultancy, "networking" and "communication" are the two most popular uses of social media in Nigeria, and Facebook was by far the most popular and widely-used social media platform in the country (45 percent of Facebook users were spending between one and three hours daily on the site; 18 percent spent between five and seven hours daily). Only one in every three respondents claimed social media had influenced their political beliefs, compared to 86 percent who said it had influenced their social lives.

Nigeria's most popular blogger is a young woman called Linda Ikeji, who describes her blog as covering "News, Events, Entertainment, Lifestyle, Fashion, Beauty, Inspiration and yes... Gossip!" Politics shows up only occasionally; and it's certainly not the reason why the blog is the most popular in Nigeria. Linda has got her own BlackBerry App, and hers is the only blog featured on the MTN Mobile Newspaper service, which provides breaking news to subscribers on their phones.

The "social" in social media will continue to define its usage amongst Nigerian youth, and its application as a tool for political engagement will mostly depend on the extent to which it still manages to fulfill its responsibilities as a vehicle for triggering and sustaining human connection.



Tolu Ogunlesi is a journalist, editor and blogger. He was Features Editor and Editorial Board Member at NEXT Newspaper between 2009 and 2011. He has written for the Financial Times, CNN.com, the UK Guardian, Al Jazeera, NEXT, Forbes Africa and several other publications, and was awarded a CNN/Multichoice African Journalism Prize in 2009. He writes a weekly column for Nigerian daily newspaper PUNCH, and tweets actively at @toluogunlesi. He lives in Lagos, Nigeria. [to4ogunlesi@yahoo.com](mailto:to4ogunlesi@yahoo.com)



young and  
**MEDIATED**

# In search of the Holy Grail

## YOUTH MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP

Rather than support the democratic process, as in the ideal scheme of things it should be doing, journalism has become an alienating, cynicism-inducing, narcoticising force in our political culture, turning people off citizenship rather than equipping them to fulfil their democratic potential.

By Lynette Steenveld

This is McNair's (2000: 8) rather harsh view of journalism, but Buckingham (1997) also argues that instead of blaming young people for turning away from the news media, we should rather re-consider the relationship between the news media and young people, in particular, and citizenship in general.

Youth have been constructed and addressed in contradictory ways in the media: as victims of adult society in need of protection; as a 'dangerous' alienated group threatening to adult society; or, mid-way between these two, as 'incomplete' adults/citizens and therefore in need of guidance (Kurth-Schai 1988: 114-115; Finn and Checkoway 1998: 335). As a result, youth are confronted with "confusing and contradictory patterns of protection and pressure, with conflicting perceptions of their abilities and inadequacies, rendering their social presence inconsequential and their social power invisible" (Kurth-Schai 1988: 116).

And yet the media are seen by liberals and radicals alike as an important site for public discussion and dissent, what is often deemed the basis of democratic citizenship (Golding and Murdock 2000; Dahlgren 2000). In particular, the purpose of journalism, write Glasser and Craft, is "to promote and indeed improve, and not merely to report on or complain about, public or civic life" (1998: 2004). Based on Marshall's (1964)

view of citizenship, the rationale is that the media serves citizens by making them aware of their rights so that they can exercise them. The media's role in a democracy is thus to provide citizens with the access to the information and debates they need to make informed political decisions; and to provide the means through which citizens "recognize themselves and their aspirations in the range of representations" (Murdock and Golding 1989: 183), which confirm and construct their personhood, and their identity as citizens (Gitlin 1998: 168; Ronning 1994: 15).

This kind of theorising begs questions about how 'youth' are to be regarded vis-à-vis citizenship and, more particularly, how the media can play this integrative, democratic role vis-à-vis young people. A key question is, therefore: How are we to think about the relationship between youth media consumption and citizenship?

### **Citizenship**

Marshall's hegemonic view of citizenship is that it is the condition of one's membership of a polity. He identifies three main dimensions which constitute citizenship as a particular social identity, with their associated rights and the institutional means for securing them: the political, civil, social and cultural (Murdock and Golding 1989: 181; Dahlgren 2000: 317). In this way, citizenship is a means of establishing equality in a structurally inequalitarian state. The significance of South Africa's 1994 elections is that it enabled all South Africans to be constituted as citizens.

However, a more recent view of citizenship is that it should no longer be seen as a state of being, but one of 'becoming': that one can *learn* to become a citizen (Delanty 2007). There is thus a move away from a state-centred view of citizenship, to a 'people-centred' one (see Hartley 2010: 234). This view shifts the focus from membership of a polity, to "common experiences, cognitive processes, forms of cultural translation and discourses of empowerment" (Delanty

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Citizenship is thus not just about rights and responsibilities, but about capacity for action, the learning about the self, and the relationship of the self to the other.

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2007), which can take place in the informal context of everyday life, and is influenced by the critical and formative events in people's lives. Citizenship is thus not just about rights and responsibilities, but about capacity for action, the learning about the self, and the relationship of the self to the other.

This is perhaps a more useful way of thinking about youth as citizens. Hart, for example, uses the term "cultural citizenship" which foregrounds broader aspects of youth social identities; recognises differences between young people (class, race, cultural backgrounds etc.); and argues that equality of citizenship can only be attained by getting youth views of, and participation in, the polity to be constructed (Hart 2009: 243-245). In other words, youth should not be seen as merely fitting in, or providing a rubber stamp for a normalised state, but rather that their participation should help to constitute the very nature of the state.

Another concept related to citizenship is civic engagement. Many argue that it can be seen as a form of social capital, and thus a critical resource for positive social, emotional, and intellectual development (Winter 2003), and thus a pre-requisite component of democratic practice (Galston 2003; Flanagan and Levine 2010; Zaff, Boyd, Li, Lerner and Lerner 2010).

### **Public sphere: Nexus of media/youth engagement**

The basis of the news/civic engagement/democratic practice argument is the Habermasian argument that the media constitute a public sphere for rational-critical debate through which "strangers" can constitute public opinion and public consensus. But the alternative views of citizenship noted above speak to post-modernist and constructivist critiques that the Habermasian public sphere neglects issues such as gender, class and age (Fraser 1990); sidelines the role of alternative media (see Schudson 1997; Buckingham 1997; Gitlin 1998); ignores the existence of "counter-public spheres" and multiple public spheres (sphericules) (Gitlin 1998); and disregards "dis-sensus" and the agency of audiences. Equally important is the critique of Habermas' assumption that the public sphere fosters rational deliberation, thereby also ignoring Bakhtinian notions of dissimilarity, dialogical engagement, carnival and spectacle (Gardiner 2004: 30).

### **Youth reception of media**

The re-thinking about the kinds of spaces and the modes of deliberation that the media offer, as noted above, provide important perspectives on the youth/media nexus. Youth researchers offer another dimension. They argue that adolescents' views are *mediated* by their relationships with peers and parents, and thus it is not just youth media consumption that is important, but *whether* and *how* they discuss the ideas they get from the media with their peers and family. They argue for the critical importance of "*communication competence*" (Shah, McLeod and Lee 2009; McLeod, Shah, Hess and Lee 2010) "which includes media use (with focus on public

affairs news consumption) and interpersonal communication (discussion of public affairs and politics with others), as underpinning civic competence” (Boyd et al 2011: 1169). These communicative abilities are therefore described by civic scholars as an “important aspect of civic development and critical for effective civic participation” (Boyd et al 2011: 1169).

### **Youth, media and citizenship**

All these ideas arguably give us clues to how the media can help in the constitution of youth citizenship. Modernist approaches to citizenship focus on the structural relationship between citizen and state, suggesting a privileging of information (hard news), and a particular form of critical engagement, namely rational critical debate. Eschewing the hard news/soft news divide enables experimenting with form/content in order to *reach* young people (see Buckingham 1997; Costera Meijer 2006; Baum 2003). However, it does not negate the value of information (Patterson 2000: 4), and is consistent with arguments about convergence culture which points to the complex ways in which content flows between different media and genres in the new media environment, thus offering opportunities for youth consumers to become producers of meaning, with an attendant shift in their identities (Jenkins 2006).

In contrast, post-modern, constructivist approaches focus on citizenship as a complex identity – not the binary citizen-or-consumer (Hartley 2010: 238) which exists in relation to other identities. This view points to the potential importance of *all media* (news and entertainment), in the *constitution* of this identity. Critiques of the Habermasian public sphere also point to the social importance of alternative spheres, alternative media forms, alternative modes of address and ways of communicating with a range of publics, who are often politically and culturally marginalised (Atton 2002: 4; Dockney et al 2010: 77).



Yasser Booley/Africa Media Online

They challenge the privileging of hard news and information, and even the producer-consumer polarity, pointing to the significance of popular cultural forms (rise of social media) and the technologically enabled collapse of the binary producer-consumer into “produsers” (producers + consumers) (Bruns 2007). This approach echoes James C. Scott’s (1990) theorisation of everyday forms of resistance and Gluckman’s (1954) rituals of rebellion, which point to the hidden discourses of youth which potentially go on “offstage”, making them difficult for the power elites to decode. This is a useful way of thinking about youth protest as it departs from the narrow definition of resistance (and related identities) as referring to physical and material protests in the streets, to include sets of practices used by the dominated to challenge those who attempt to dominate them (Willems 2010: 4).

For the connected, new media technologies enable individuals to self-represent, self-organise, and construct for themselves what the associational relations among strangers will be, thereby offering the possibility for re-shaping/re-configuring social relationships, and thus the public sphere (kinds of debates, nature of debates). New media thus offers the possibility for combining the personal/lived with the social/political that some argue the revitalisation of youth engagement in/with politics requires (Hartley 2010: 245; Buckingham 1997). But the digital divide is real for us in the South. From a recent South African baseline survey of youth, media and citizenship (Sanpad 2013), it appears that most youth still favour the legacy media as their main source of news; they also trust these media more as sources of information. But they also think that the media would serve them better by dealing with issues that help them understand their world. This seems to be a fundamental requirement of all media if they wish to fulfil their democratic role of contributing to the constitution of the social identity we call citizenship.

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# Absent voices

## Children in the media

Representing children in the news is one of those areas riddled with contradictions, complex issues and ethical dilemmas so challenging they make rocket scientists' jobs look easy. But why is this? How does our media report on children, what could be done differently, and why should we care? This article offers some answers to these questions.

By William Bird

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**L**et's consider how children are represented. Media Monitoring Africa's most recent research<sup>1</sup> indicates the following. Stories that mention or are about children account for nine percent of all news items. Children currently account for 39% of South Africa's population, and given the additional constitutional protections that they are afforded, it is clear that not only are children under represented, but their issues are further marginalised as a result. If we look at how often we hear the voices of children, their portrayal is marginalised still further. Their voices are heard in five percent of stories. In other words, less than one in ten news stories we see/read will mention or be about children and of those only one in 20 will access the voice of a child. Given these results it is unsurprising that the roles in which children are represented are similarly limited, with the top three roles, Child 27% (where the child is identified only as a "child" in the item) Victims and Learners both at 19%. The top three roles account for 65% of all roles attributed to children, which indicates minimal diversity in representation. The roles are also gendered with girl children more likely to be portrayed as victims than boy children, and boy children more likely to be shown in positive active roles than girls.

Perhaps one of the most positive results of the monitoring indicates that only two percent of stories



Sydelle Willow Smith

young and  
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further violated the rights of the child. Such stories would be instances where a child was identified where he or she should not have been, or where reports were clearly not in the best interest of the child. While this is a significant improvement since 2003 (where 10% of stories violated the rights of the child) it means approximately 155 stories of the sample monitored still violated children's rights.

While dramatic there is little to suggest that these results are unique to South Africa. MMA's research in other parts of our continent indicate similar trends. However, given the high levels of child abuse, where SAPS figures<sup>2</sup> indicate just over 2 children murdered each day and just under 135 children sexually or physically assaulted and abused each day, the media's marginalisation of children and children's issues should be of extreme concern.

One of the fundamental reasons we don't hear as many voices of children as we should is because getting their voices can be hard. It's hard, because unlike adults journalists need to spend time with children to get quality answers, it's hard because they usually also need informed consent. It's hard because journalists need to be especially careful about what questions

We can fix our justice system, we can have better policing, we can pass more matric learners, we can have job subsidies or unemployment grants, all have value, but unless children are a core component, it will be like treating a deadly infection with a plaster.



Sydelle Willow Smith

they ask and how they ask them and ensure they are age appropriate, and it's hard because in addition to all these considerations journalists also need different interview techniques.

It isn't just the interviews but the laws and policies, and until recently the general ethical guidelines, that were difficult to find and adhere to. As an NGO that advocates for increased children's participation in the media, we find both us and the media professionals are forced to deal with some basic contradictions, where we say use more children's voices, but at the same time avoid and do not interview children as it may cause them harm. The contradiction arises precisely because reporting on children requires nuance and certain knowledge sets. For example, it would be very interesting to hear children's views on how best to combat child abuse, but it would be highly harmful to out of the blue ask a child who has been abused to relay her/his experiences of the abuse.

While the laws around children and media are still slightly confusing and located in different places, for example some in The Children's Act, The Criminal Procedures Act, as well as the Child Justice Act, guidelines are now available to help ensure better ethical choices and reporting on children.<sup>3</sup> In addition however the new Press Code adopted by the South African Press Council now has a dedicated section focused on reporting on children.<sup>4</sup> The section emphasises the importance of the Best Interest of the Child principle<sup>5</sup> which is not only a useful element in resolving ethical dilemmas, but the section now provides a solid basis for newsrooms to make better decisions. It also enables audiences to help hold media accountable if they err.

The representation of children raises a more basic question, why should we care, after all aren't children's issues simply another interest group vying for media space among others?

The short answer is no. There are three core reasons why media need to radically shift the manner in which they engage with and report on children. The first is a rights based argument. Like adults children also have the right to freedom of expression, and the rights to receive and impart information. Children also have a right to participate in matters that affect them. The exclusion of children and children's voices is a denial of these fundamental rights. But more critically Section. 28(2) of the South African Constitution goes further than South Africa's international obligations by stating that, "A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child"<sup>6</sup>. Even if we were to consider arguments that mainstream media do not as a general rule target children as audience as some justification, it is difficult to imagine how children's exclusion and marginalisation can be seen to be in their best interests.

The second reason relates to our nations future. Children matter, not just because they have rights and our constitution tells us they do, but because our tomorrow depends on how we treat our children today.

Unless we place children at the centre of addressing our most pressing challenges, any and all of them will be exponentially larger. If we are serious about reducing poverty, unemployment, crime, gender based violence and inequality, children are critical to any long term solution. We can fix our justice system, we can have better policing, we can pass more matric learners, we can have job subsidies or unemployment grants, all have value, but unless children are a core component, it will be like treating a deadly infection with a plaster. Unless we address the challenges in our education system from birth. Unless we stop setting our children up to fail before they enter school, by addressing critical early childhood development needs. Unless we stop exposing our children to violence, and unless we challenge gender and its construction with our children, we will continue to merely treat symptoms and not their causes. Clearly most of our crucial challenges require systemic change, and are the responsibility of the state as well as all citizens, but media have the power to help shift the core issues in our society and how they are perceived. There is as such an overwhelming public interest argument when it comes to reporting on children and children's issues.

Perhaps the most basic reason relates to news media's future. Children that the MMA work with highlight how they don't often read newspapers or watch the news, precisely because they feel excluded, or scared or potential victims, or because they simply don't hear themselves. Given the common representations it is therefore hardly surprising that children don't consume news; but they should. Not just because it will help inform them and help shape their views and debates, but because news media, and print in particular are losing audiences and their financial models have been thrown into disarray. The idea that nearly 40% of the population are excluded simply because they are underage – or not part of the media's "target" defies common logic, and suggests a huge missed opportunity. Anyone with children in the home will attest to the power that children have in determining what gets purchased. Multinationals have not only cottoned on to the power that children have long ago, but also the value of building life long consumers. Social media and access to the internet (despite these still being limited in South Africa) mean that children have a plethora of information sources available to them, which means traditional media will need to work hard to get children's attention. If they don't, the chances of them starting to read when they fit an adult profile are that much smaller, and chances of them going for a particular brand for which they have negative connotations are even smaller.

Media marginalising children and their issues not only denies them their rights, it violates a basic tent of journalism - to act in the public interest. It is also bad for business.

While reporting on children and children's issues is arguably one of the most challenging areas of journalism, sustainable shifts can be made and a few

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Like adults children also have the right to freedom of expression, and the rights to receive and impart information.

Often the best stories, as is clear from investigative journalism, are those where the hard work is done, in researching, checking, thinking and being ethical. The same holds true for reporting on children.

practical steps can have a significant impact. Three of them can be remembered as: Pink elephants, Get down and Take the hard way.

**Pink elephants.** If a person is asked not to think of a pink elephant, the person will think of one none the less. The first recommendation is to make children the pink elephant of each story, or to think of the aspect that people may not think of, or is present but not seen. To ask, for each story, if there is a children's angle or how the story will impact children. We know for example that transport strikes can impact commuters, but how do they affect children? Children we spoke to about this raised issues of vulnerability of having to walk further, longer travel times, or greater cost, which meant deciding in some cases to eat or get transport. What does corruption mean to children and how do they experience it? What does it mean for children to have a public broadcaster in crisis? There are very few issues that don't impact children directly. By thinking of the pink elephant, some of these angles can be explored and offer fresh stories.

**Get down.** Perhaps not straight off dancing but in addition to thinking of children's angles to mainstream news, it is critical to include children's voices where it is in their best interests and where reasonable to do so. The parlous state of our education system has received widespread coverage, but despite children being most effected only a handful of stories seek children's views on the issues. It is not only critical to speak to children but to get down to their level. Approaching children requires different interview techniques it also requires more time and explanation. Children are often very perceptive and need to feel that they are taken seriously. Spending the time and resources will ensure their views are heard, and not just the views they think adults may want to hear.

**The hard way.** Reporting on children is incredibly challenging. There are extreme ethical dilemmas, as well as practical concerns and considerations. The additional protection afforded to children in the constitution means that not only do journalists need to do their job properly, but that the standard has to be higher than it is for any other group of people. The

most recent version of the Press Code is very useful in this regard not only because of the inclusion of the Best Interests of the Child Principle, but because it also includes the ethical principle of minimising harm. This applies in general terms to reporting, but especially so where children are involved. So it may comply with the law to run a story about a child who has been raped and not name or identify the child, but it is a clear violation of the principle of minimising harm to interview the child about her/his experience. The process of telling the story exposes a child a secondary trauma and can deeply undermine the child's well being. Not only do such practices harm the children, the information gleaned is often of little journalistic value beyond potential shock and horror. It is critical that in every instance where children are concerned the child's best interests are paramount. There may be some exceptions to this but they will be exceptional. Often the best stories, as is clear from investigative journalism, are those where the hard work is done, in researching, checking, thinking and being ethical. The same holds true for reporting on children. Reporting well on children is extremely hard, but it is equally rewarding.

While the results continue to highlight the marginalisation of children it is also clear that our media is getting more right more of the time. Given the substantial challenges our media is facing this is a significant achievement. We now have a dedicated children's section in our press code and a growing awareness and respect of children's basic rights to dignity and privacy. Media do sometimes get these things wrong, and when they do they can have devastating impact, but these are increasingly the exceptions. We also have some excellent journalists and media are giving greater coverage to issues of education. Joan van Niekerk, from Child Line said, "children are the future but where is the investment?" She was referring to the state and private sector at the time but it is clear that those media that report well on children and children's issues are not only living up to their audiences rights and needs, but are also investing in their own future.



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#### Endnotes

1. See: [http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/index.php/resources/entry/promoting\\_childrens\\_rights\\_coverage\\_of\\_children\\_in\\_south\\_african\\_and\\_zambia/](http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/index.php/resources/entry/promoting_childrens_rights_coverage_of_children_in_south_african_and_zambia/) accessed 6 June 2013
2. See: [http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2012/downloads/crime\\_statistics\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2012/downloads/crime_statistics_presentation.pdf) accessed 06 June 2013
3. See: [http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/mma\\_editorial\\_guideline.pdf](http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/mma_editorial_guideline.pdf) accessed 6 June 2013
4. See Clause 8 <http://www.presscouncil.org.za/ContentPage?code=PRESSCODE> accessed 6 June 2013.
5. See Section 28(2) Constitution of the Republic of South Africa
6. See: <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/96cons2.htm#7> accessed 06 June 2013

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Giving young people a voice

# Yes. But do they read what we write about their schools?

I write about schools. There are 25 000 of them in South Africa and about 12 million pupils. When I go to these schools I try to imagine what it would be like to learn there, with their filthy toilets, leaking roofs and not nearly enough teachers or textbooks to go around.

By Victoria John

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**W**hen I write about my experience I do it in a way that I hope will make people think: 'This is so bad that I cannot not do anything'. It's the dream of any journalist to invoke a reaction like this – one that sparks people's civic responsibility and actually causes change. Sometimes that dream comes true and you see action being taken by corporations and individuals.

But where are the schoolchildren – the actual subjects whose education I spend my days writing about – in this picture? Are they taking action? Yes, some of them are, with the help of rights organisations. Is it as a direct result of my stories as is the case with many adults? No. Do my stories influence children's civic identities? Not that I can see, or at least not directly. Why? Because many of them are not consuming news in the first place on the digital and print platforms on which I work.

As an education reporter for the *Mail & Guardian* (M&G) newspaper and website I have received numerous heartening emails from the private sector saying something along the lines of: "We're angry about what is going on in those schools you wrote about. We want to do something to help. Tell us how."

I was moved when I got a call a few weeks ago from a young professional who said she and her friends wanted to help the Eastern Cape schools I had recently written about that didn't have school furniture. She emailed me a few weeks later to say she had raised R50 000 and had chosen which school she would be donating it too. I was thrilled when a hygiene company emailed me to ask for the details of the Limpopo schools I had written about that did not have enough toilets, wanting to donate portable toilets and toilet paper to it and provide hygiene education. I am working towards the day when I see government acting on the desperate problems I've reported on. It has not happened yet, from what I've seen, but you could argue that the reporting I do intensifies the public pressure that eventually forces government to act.

Besides that, my stories trigger rage in our readers.

young and  
**MEDIATED**

The media has the power  
to go where organisations  
can't, but even it is not  
reaching children.





Sydelle Willow Smith

On Twitter they lambaste government for forcing 120 pupils to squash into a classroom meant for about 30. On Facebook they tell me to keep up the good work in exposing the infringement of pupils' rights.

These messages are encouraging. The examples of some of the action taken, as described above, is inspiring. It changes lives. A sense of responsibility in the private sector bodes well for the future of education in South Africa.

The media is also crucial in highlighting the work of rights organisations that stoke the fires of civic responsibility in our youth everyday. Much of my reporting includes the perspectives of an organisation called Equal Education which campaigns for quality education in South Africa through analysis and activism. A membership-based organisation like this is useful for a reporter as it is a valuable link with pupils, teachers and experts. The organisers are also the ones doing the tough job of going out onto the streets, speaking to young people, educating them about their rights and encouraging them to join their campaigns for an improved education system. Through marches, sleep-ins, solidarity tours, and social media campaigns Equal Education makes it known very clearly what problems, like poor school infrastructure and non-delivery of textbooks, look like through pupils' eyes. They teach pupils how to organise themselves so decision makers hear them. They open the public's eyes. They raise the government's hackles. They make sure that they will not be ignored.

Sustained media attention helps them do this..

The organisation's spokesperson, Kate Wilkinson, said young people are often not seen as active citizens and are viewed as dependent on their parents.

"Because learners are often treated as 'children' they are unaware that they have power to change the circumstances they live in. Equal Education empowers them by educating them about their rights and the options they have available to them. This allows them to make an informed decision about how to resolve their own problems and who to ask for help."

The organisation uses media coverage in its weekly youth groups as examples of victories and progress. "Often an article will be photocopied and used as primary material in a youth group. It will be the basis of discussions about campaigns and the way forward. Sharing media coverage with learners allows them to grasp the wider implications of their hard work." Equal Education also needs media coverage for the funding that is crucial to keeping its cogs turning. "Often past media coverage is referenced in funding applications as evidence of our work and efficacy. It also encourages private individuals to donate small amounts. It creates context for members of the public and gives us credibility."

But not every South African child has the means to access and participate in the work of organisations like Equal Education.

The media has the power to go where organisations can't, but even it is not reaching children.

I, personally, do not hear from them. These children, who are part of the generation that is almost inextricable from technology, do not phone me. I don't get Facebook messages from them. I rarely get emails from them. But they constitute 39% of our population. So how much more influential would reactions to my stories be if children read the news and were as affected by what they saw as adults were? How much more formidable would Equal Education's campaigns be if more

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## Children read news looking for practical solutions to problems.

children knew about their work?

A lot more.

My guess is that if they did, there might not be pupils sitting under umbrellas in their classrooms while the rain pours through the holes in the roof. But children are not a popular target market for mainstream media. Of the *M&G*'s print readers only 17% are between 15 and 24 years old. Of our Online readers only 0.23% are between 15 and 17 years old and 0.47% are between 18 and 19 years old.

It is no wonder that although I try to speak to schoolchildren and put their comments in my stories, when my stories are published these schoolchildren don't speak back to me.

The civic identities of South African children are treasures that should be nurtured and protected. They should be given the information they need so that they know their rights and know how to fight for them when they are infringed. Later, when they reach voting age, they will need this information to make informed decisions about who governs them and who dictates the conditions they continue to learn in and later work in.

The media plays a vital role in this. It gets all sides to the story, puts the information on the table and says 'now you decide'.

Building the civic identity of youth is arguably a more lasting and sustainable solution to addressing the problems we see in education than donating funds is. We can do this through the media by creating a product that educates children about their rights and what they can do to protect them. But this is not happening because reporting like mine is not written or formatted in a way that speaks to children.

I was surprised when I received an email earlier this year from media watchdog Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) congratulating me and two other journalists at other newspapers for our representation of children in recent articles. The commendation came as a surprise. 'Is it so rare to quote children in articles that a media watchdog feels the need to congratulate reporters when they do?' I thought. Yes it is.

According to a survey done of all news stories in about 18 South African daily and weekly newspapers over three months, only nine percent of stories were about children. Children were actually quoted in even fewer of them. MMA's director, William Bird, said the fact that the *M&G* has a three-person team dedicated to covering education is progressive. "It shows that the *M&G* sees value in education and is saying 'this is a fundamentally important part of our society and we're going to commit a big chunk of our budget to covering it'." Our reporting thus far is read by policy-makers and

decision-makers in the education sector which "has a significant impact on education", Bird says. "As far as the man on the street is concerned, if you can get him to realise the importance of education, then that has a huge impact too."

Again, where are the children's voices in all of this?

"If you include children in your reporting, get them interested in your stories and grow their civic identities then that will have a far greater impact than anything else," he says. "That is not going to happen if the media marginalises children, scares children and ignores children." The media first has to find out how children consume news differently to adults to be able to write in a way that includes them, he explained.

Adults read the news to acquire information so that they feel on top of the latest news story. Children read news looking for practical solutions to problems.

"They will read a story and think 'imagine if that happened to me or my sibling... what can I do to prevent it?'" he says.

But the media is not meeting this need.

The media should also take into consideration children's practical lack of independence, which sets them apart from other readership groups, and how they react to news because of it. "Adults can easily access media that makes them feel happy, or at least positive, but what do children have? Children are dependent on adults, so many decisions about their lives are made by adults, and they don't feel like they can do something about what they read."

The MMA conducted a project earlier this year in which they gave children a selection of positive and negative news stories and told them to put together a newspaper. The children always used a mixture of the stories, Bird says, and weighted stories very differently to how most newspapers do. They applied a six:four ratio of negative stories to positive stories and about the same ratio to stories about adults and stories about children. The ratio for negative to positive stories in actual mainstream news media is more around nine:one. In creating news for children, the media would need to ask itself: "Why would children want to read stories that make them scared and sad and don't show them what to do about it?"

Put simply: Make children know that their voices are heard and give them news that offers practical advice and not just negative stories, but inspiring ones too. With information like this children are more likely to develop valuable civic identities.

And why wouldn't the media want to be part of developing identities that result in the kind of change that holds government to account and revolutionises the socio-economic experiences of millions of people?

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Neo Ntsoma

# Inspiring young people to empower themselves

AN EFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK  
TO DEVELOP CIVIC IDENTITY  
IN SOUTH AFRICA

The development of civic identity among young people in South Africa is an enormously difficult task in a country that remains so polarised culturally, economically and socially, even after 20 years of a new democratic dispensation. Where does one start looking when challenged by these massive mountains that confront a country such as South Africa?

By Martin Scholtz



The President's Award

**H**ow does one begin to engage with these issues when faced with the levels of disparity that exist here? The reality for South Africa is that there are numerous obstacles which stand in the way of securing opportunities to develop civic identity in young people: The number of young people who live in environments – both rural and urban – that are essentially about survival, make it difficult for them to engage in personal self-development routines; a very tenuous education system which battles to support opportunities for civic identity development let alone basic education; party-politicisation of youth development warps the perceptions about the value and purpose of civic education; the lack of sustainable, long-term interventions for youth due to short-term funding for organisations within the youth development field. The vision for young people is just not clear enough.

At the end of the day, I would argue, notwithstanding the obstacles, those of us who are working within the youth empowerment environment in South Africa and who are able to sustain the work that we do, need to *encourage*, we need to *inspire*, and we need to *create opportunities* for young people to exercise their right to developing a civic identity.

What is civic identity for a young person? In broad

terms it means having an identity which resonates with the broader social or political framework. It is an identity where young people feel that what they contribute, what they say, and what they do “counts”. It is a space where young people feel that they are recognised – in the South African and in the global context – as important and contributing members of society. As part of The President’s Award for Youth Empowerment Programme young people take part in a Bronze Level hike. In the most recent one held in the Eastern Cape, 24 young people hiked over two days, walking a total of 24kms. Six of the youngsters were from St Mary’s Day Care Centre, three of them from St Andrew’s College, and 19 of them from the Upstart Community Youth Group. While their social, political and cultural contexts are vastly different, they also have some things in common. They all go to school in Grahamstown. They are all enrolled to do the Bronze Level of the Award Programme. They are all young people between the ages of 14 and 25. And they are all South Africans. In the words of Brett Malila, programme manager for the Award Programme in the Eastern Cape who facilitated the hike: “Hiking itself was but a single component of this journey, as the youngsters assisted with the map reading and – on arrival at the campsite – set up camp and cooked their

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This is what all young South Africans need to explore their own civic identity – an opportunity to be active, to be engaged and to be involved.

own food. For some of them, this was the first time they had put up a tent, cooked two minute noodles and walked with such heavy packs. The evening was spent interacting with each other and apart from dancing and singing around the fire, the group discussed citizenship, and positive leadership, and the history of the area. It was amazing to see how these young people interacted ... finding their rhythm as they danced and sang as one, even though the language used was not always known to some.”

The hike is used as a metaphor for life, to assist young people to internalise the need to look at their own development as a journey. They need to pack their rucksacks well, to pace themselves, to support one another, to take it “one step at a time”, to keep focused, and to have a plan. What is remarkable is to hear the reflections of the young people who took part. One of the St Andrew’s College boys, Stuart Hobson, had this to say: “I live a very sheltered and secluded life from the cultures, languages and ways of life even in my own backyard ... [but the experience of dancing the night away with traditional Xhosa songs] showed me how to really enjoy a night’s fun with only your voice and legs.” Reflected here is a sense that he is part of something bigger that he was not aware of before – a watershed moment for a young South African, perhaps?

“We must interact with others even though they are from different races,” reflected Ncwadi Nqatyiiswa, one of the Upstart members after the hike, who had for the first time in her life, done a joint activity with a young white South African her own age. The hike “gave me some time to think about my future and also South Africa’s future,” said Xabisa Mgudlandlu, also of Upstart. More watershed moments in the lives of young South Africans?

In The President’s Award for Youth Empowerment’s 30-year history in South Africa, there have been many examples of young people who have developed their civic identity through active involvement in the Award Programme. The examples range from a group of inmates in a prison in the Western Cape, who have set up a vegetable garden within the prison walls to supply a crèche in the local community with healthy produce, to a privileged white boy who started up a township cricket team in the Eastern Cape. There is a participant who initiated the Pink Hijab Day to conscientise people in the Muslim community about breast cancer, and another who has formed an NGO which looks at supporting school-going youth in the Eastern Cape. There is a group of Award participants in rural Limpopo who are supporting needy households by assisting with their washing, cooking, and home maintenance. Each of the case studies reflected here talk to active youth engagement. They are young people who are not sitting back, waiting for things to happen, but are determined to engage with their own development and the development of others. Developing civic identity in young people means action on the part of young people. The Award is about *action*. It is about setting goals and setting out, as best as possible, to achieve those goals. So it does not matter whether you are a young person in the remote Waschbank Village in Limpopo,

a young Muslim woman from Azaadville, a boy from Fingo Village, or a boy from an independent school in the Eastern Cape, if you are prepared to take on the challenge that the Award presents to you, you are given the opportunity to explore your civic identity. This is what all young South Africans need to explore their own civic identity – an opportunity to be active, to be engaged and to be involved.

- ***Xolile Madinda***

Xolile, who grew up in Fingo Village in Grahamstown, achieved his Gold Award in 1999. He is a co-founder of Save Our Schools and Community (SOSAC), which operates in Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth. The organisation assists school-going youth with tutoring, homework sessions, and life skills training. Xolile – an avid hip-hop artist – was a founding member of the Makana Arts Council and is an active member of the Khulumani Support Group, which calls for corporates that supported the apartheid regime to pay reparations. Xolile is also actively involved in the Fingo Festival, which has become a voice of expression for township youth. This has included providing a platform for township youth to be part of the National Arts Festival held in Grahamstown annually, but has also got involved in seeking opinion regarding the debate about the city’s name change.

- ***Humairah Jassat***

Humairah received her Gold Award in 2011. While in Grade 11, she became aware of a number of women in her community, Azaadville, south of Johannesburg, who had died of breast cancer. As part of the service component of the Award Programme, she asked her headmaster whether the girls at the school could wear pink hijabs on a specific day. Permission granted, she phoned other Muslim schools around the country to do the same and so Pink Hijab Day began raising money and awareness for The Cancer Association of South Africa. The concept won Humairah the inaugural African Leadership Academy’s Social Innovation Prize, as well as the opportunity to share her project at a dinner of the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award in the UK. Speaking to supporters of the Award, Humairah says she was inspired to take on the issue of breast cancer care when volunteering at a local hospice. “I realised that the subject of breast cancer was still taboo, especially among young women in the Muslim community,” said Humairah.

- ***Ross McCreath***

Ross, aged 14, was enrolled on the Bronze Level in 2008 of the Award Programme. As part of his community service, he set up a cricket club – The Tiger Titans Cricket Club – on a field adjacent to his parent’s farm, which is across the road from Nolutkanyo Township outside Bathurst. Initially a December holiday project with 20 youngsters from the township, the Cricket Club has grown to 100 strong in just five years. The club has several teams at different age groups, with the senior team competing in the 2nd Division Grahamstown Cricket League. In addition, the Tiger Titans boast four

players selected to represent Eastern Province. One of the Tiger Titans, Masixole “Hassan” Mkrakra, was invited to speak at Lord’s Cricket Ground in March 2012, to reflect on the impact of the Award Programme and cricket on his life: “The Award has given me the chance to see that I am able to make a difference to my own life and in my community. I have overcome many fears. I have made new friends. I have learnt new skills. I have found that I can be: a leader, a helper, a teacher, and a positive influence in my community. I am proud of who I have become and am grateful for those who have helped me to make the right choices.”

He received a standing ovation. Tragically, Masixole drowned on the 17 December while trying to save the life of a friend – giving up his own life for another.

#### • Limpopo

There is a group of 93 young people from Waschbank Village in Limpopo on the Award Programme at the Bronze and Silver levels. The village is situated about 45km from Polokwane and has a population of around 1 700 people. Through a partnership with Class Act, an NGO that does focused community development in two sites in the province, these young people are engaging in a very practical way with their own development in the Waschbank Village. As part of their community service for the Award Programme, a team of eight of them formed a support group to assist two disabled brothers in the community. The group focused their efforts on the boys’ home which was infested with rats and was run down, cleaning it up and doing basic maintenance work on it. They continue, on a weekly basis, to cook and clean for the brothers, committing themselves to support people within the Waschbank Village who need it.

#### Conclusion

We have a responsibility in the youth empowerment sector, to create more opportunities for young people to explore their civic identities through this sort of engagement, lest we face our own Arab Spring. Young people need to feel a connectedness with themselves, their communities, and the country at large. They need to experience purpose and tangible results from their own actions and decisions. As an organisation with the support of over 500 adult Award volunteers, a network of corporate companies in South Africa, provincial and national government support, we feel that we have found a framework that challenges young people to be active, to be engaged, and to connect with others. Much like the young people on the most recent hike who connected with each other through song, let us find rhythm, as we find each other.



Fergus Burnett/The President's Award



The President's Award

*Martin Scholtz taught English and Biology at secondary school level in Cape Town, Swaziland and Franschhoek, before joining The President's Award for Youth Empowerment Programme as its chief executive officer in 2003. For the past six years he has represented East and Southern African countries on the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, International Council, the parent body of The President's Award for Youth Empowerment Programme. [ms@presidentsaward.co.za](mailto:ms@presidentsaward.co.za)*



# Do more. Enjoy more freedom.

young and  
**MEDIATED**

Young people in South Africa, like everyone else, have a constitutional right to public participation and to influence decision making. The concept of media diversity in this country makes it possible for media to play a special role in promoting active citizenry.

By Bongzi Bozo & Aniela Batschari



Sydelle Willow Smith

There are about 30 community publications and 20 community radio stations in the Eastern Cape, but few of these consider the youth as part of their target group.

**Community media contributes to media pluralism by presenting the voices of the voiceless, especially those at grassroots level. They give a platform to present the diverse views and opinions of ordinary citizens on political, social and cultural issues.**

Local independent media play a watchdog role, disseminate information, and play an educational and entertaining role. With relevant community media citizens are well informed and able to participate as active citizens in democratic processes of the country. Based on its mandate, community media seem to be the ideal tool to engage with youth in the country. Yet, how does it look on the ground? In what ways are community media contributing to assisting the youth in the country establish their civic identity? There is a gap as young people seem to neither be considered as a relevant target group nor are they adequately represented by community media. Although there are about 30 community publications and 20 community radio stations in the Eastern Cape, few of them consider the youth as part of their target group. Most of the community media available seem to ignore this group although they have a mandate as community based media to present to the entire community they serve.

By working closely with community media in the province, the ECCF<sup>1</sup> has witnessed many concepts being presented to the forum to specifically attract this market. However, only a few manage to stay in the market. The main reason being the lack of entrepreneurial skills and consequently funding constraints. The support of the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) is assisting in that domain and makes it possible for some publications to break into the market. For instance, *Imonti Education Express* is a youth publication launched in the province in 2012. With funding from the MDDA, the newspaper manages to cover its printing costs and various start-up costs. However, the newspaper seems to be irrelevant to the market it aims to target. The amount of free copies sitting at WSU's Department of Media Studies speaks for itself. Why is there limited interest from the youth? A group of journalism students, who were asked by the ECCF to give input on the concept of this publication, responded that the name was not appealing to youth. It was too long and not catchy. The same was raised about the layout which was regarded as not appealing.

A similar response is common among the students when engaging in critiquing sessions of other community media publications. Based on these observations, it can be argued that young people find community media irrelevant. It seems that community media are neglecting the youth by neither making an effort to be more appealing to young people nor presenting their voices.

### **Successful projects**

Research conducted by Media Management students from the Sol Plaatje Institute (SPI) in 2009 provides evidence that the youth are attracted by different things in a publication. The research subject was the *Upstart* Newspaper Project, a project founded in 2008, written

for the youth by the youth. The research revealed that young people want a different use of language and not the technical language that journalists normally use in their writing. They also want more colour. Most of the young people who participated in the focus group interview were more attracted to *Upstart* because they could contribute to the content, and they knew someone their age was producing the content. *Upstart* is a successful newspaper that seems to provide a voice for the voiceless youth by giving them a platform to express their views in the form of letters or poetry, an unusual style compared to traditional journalism.

A similar initiative was *Indaba Ziyafika* ("News is coming"), a project implemented by the Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) and Radio Grahamstown. The project involved learners from 16 schools around Grahamstown. As part of the project, *Y4Y* was a youth radio show produced by the youth for the youth to discuss socio-economic issues. The topics of discussions were usually drawn from national news. The learners would then engage with the topic and share their views and opinions as citizens on the subject. The social network Mxit was used to engage with listeners at home to enable them to contribute to the discussion in studio.

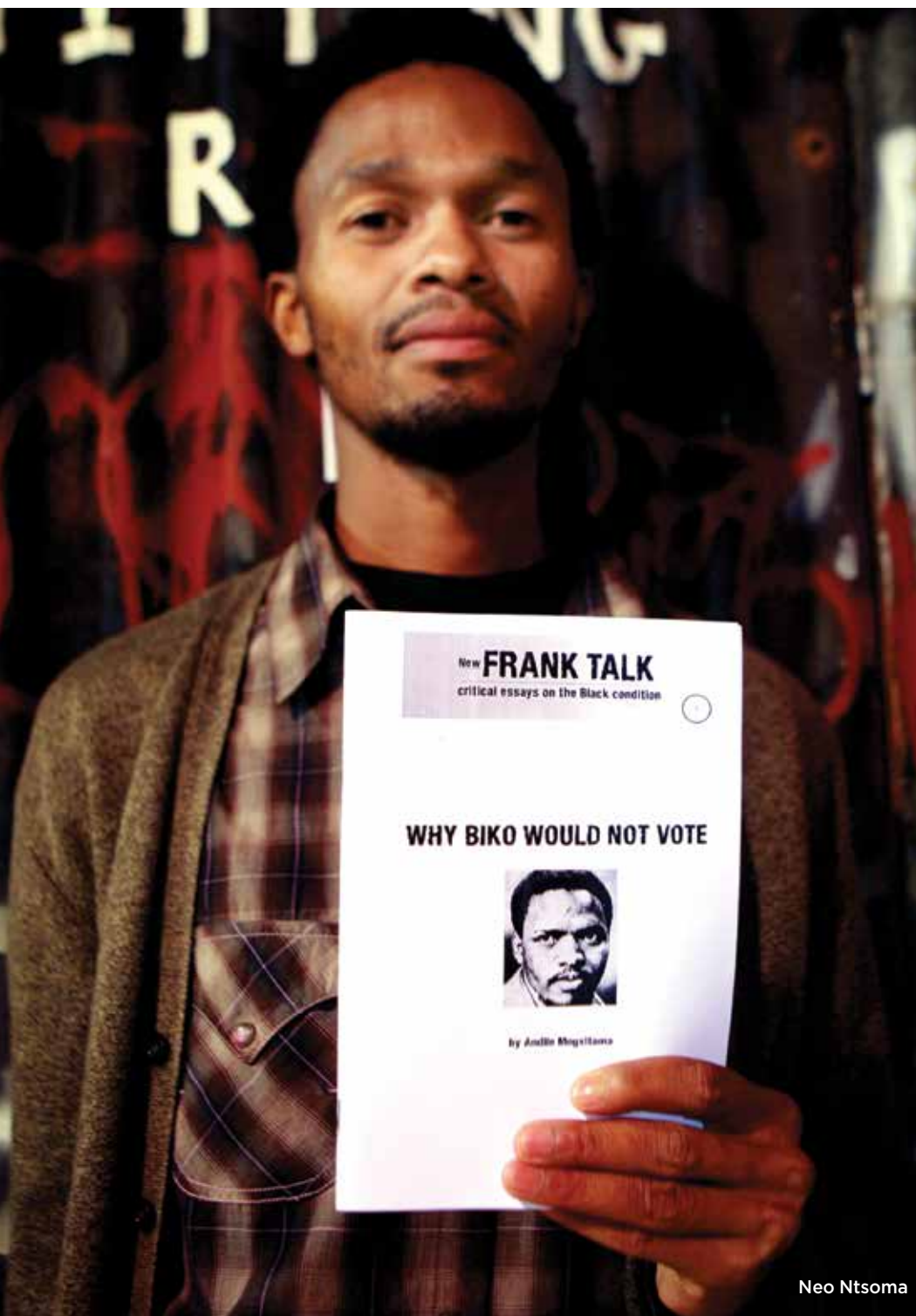
However, it should be noted that the success of both projects relied on adequate funding available, and a support system provided by Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies (JMS). This ranged from provision of office space, journalism student and support staff volunteers, and supervision by lecturers.

### **Municipal Matters**

The ECCF had similar experiences and learnt similar lessons during the implementation of the Municipal Matters project in 2012 and 2013. Municipal Matters is a training and campaigning initiative for small, local, independent media in the Eastern Cape. It aims to improve reporting skills on municipal issues and to challenge local media organisations to move beyond just reporting, but to consider innovative initiatives that engage the community on issues that are relevant to them. The project is all about local media empowering community members to practice their democratic rights. It therefore has the potential to help people establish their civic identity and to become active engaged citizens.

Three small, local newspapers initiated dialogues in their communities – *Skawara News* in Cofimvaba hosted dialogues on xenophobia and littering in the community. *Zithethele*, based in Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality, hosted a dialogue on sanitation in KwaZakhele and on xenophobia in Uitenhage. *Eastern Cape Today*, based in East London, hosted a dialogue on access to public health services in Mdantsane. All dialogues were a success as they brought a new communication platform to communities which had never experienced this kind of exchange before.

In organising the dialogues the ECCF, together with the media organisations, carefully considered who best to invite as panellists to share experiences, provide information and answer questions on a specific topic.



Neo Ntsoma

Panellists were briefed to keep the dialogue interactive and were cautioned not to veer into a monologue. The topics chosen for the dialogues were in response to what the newspapers picked up as relevant issues through their readers.

*Ikamva laseGcuwa* introduced a page dedicated to municipal matters in their monthly 16-page newspaper. The page is set up as a series to profile the 31 wards of Mnquma local municipality with three wards per edition. The ward profile includes general information (villages, schools, education level and number of residents), snippets of the reviewed Integrated

Development Plan (IDP) budget 2010/2011, as well as a response from the ward councillor, and comments from the community.

Another initiative is a weekly one-hour long programme on municipal matters broadcast on Wild Coast FM, a community radio station in Sunrise-on-Sea, outside of East London. The show consists of pre-recorded interviews, voxpops and information on municipal issues such as audit reports, the IDP, council meetings and ward committees.

Community media – small, local, independent newspapers and community radio stations – are predominantly run by young people. While the management sometimes falls outside the category that defines youth in South Africa, the age group 14 to 35, those involved in developing, producing and presenting programmes almost without exception all belong to youth. Therefore community media is ideally positioned to play a role in making young people more aware of who they are as a young person, and where they fit in society.

All reporters who participated in and benefited from the Municipal Matters project fall in the category of youth. How relevant then are the initiatives that emerged out of the Municipal Matters project to the youth? Interestingly, young people were largely absent from the dialogues. The few that were present all represented organised youth structures. Participants who actively engaged at the community dialogues were mostly older people. Unfortunately, no reliable figures are available in terms of the age groups of the readership of the newspapers or the listenership of Wild Coast FM. According to observations, it can be estimated that the majority of readers and listeners fall into the age group above 30. It seems that the youthfulness of reporters does not necessarily contribute to making community media more relevant to younger people.

The ECCF starts phase two of Municipal Matters in July. The community dialogues hosted by newspapers, the municipal matters page of *Ikamva laseGcuwa* and the community radio show on Wild Coast FM will continue. All these initiatives are powerful tools to potentially reach out to a younger audience and create more awareness around municipal issues. Student reporters will continue to play an integral part of the project. Their ideas and input need to feature more prominently to ensure the project also reaches younger people. A stronger emphasis needs to be put on the relevance of topics to young people and also on marketing these initiatives in a way that young people will pay attention and become interested.

### **Community radio stations**

How do community radio stations in the Eastern Cape generally connect with the youth? Three WSU journalism students who were placed at community radio stations for their internship from July 2012 until February 2013 shared their observations. Khanya FM, Vukani Community Radio (VCR) and Unitra Community Radio (UCR) all offer programmes that either aim at or involve the youth.

Vukani CR, situated in Cala, runs the *Drive Time*

*Show*, daily from Monday to Friday from 3-6pm. A DJ presenter discusses youth issues and shares information, especially on young achievers ranging from artists to successful bursary applicants. Youth who have achieved something in the Chris Hani district municipality are invited to the show. The show gives young people who are trying to make a difference and to develop their community a chance to share their stories. It also offers slots for organisations such as loveLife to give inspiration.

Khanya FM, based in Butterworth, presents the *Youth Movement* on Saturdays from 6-9pm. A DJ presenter incorporates entertainment with issues that relate to youth such as HIV/Aids, teenage pregnancy and drugs. Previously youth participated in the show to share poems, but due to the late broadcast time there were too many safety concerns and it is no longer taking place in that format. More recently, the show *Ulutsha lwemvaba Ngemvaba* is airing on Tuesdays from 9-12am. It targets the out-of-school youth and follows a Christian format. It motivates young people and encourages them to do things for themselves, such as starting projects to earn their own income and to not only rely on government. Judging from the number of call-ins, the audience has responded very positively to this show.

UCR, based in Mthatha, presents a 30-minute slot on Thursdays during their weekly *Afternoon Drive Show* from Monday to Friday. School-going youth come into the studio and discuss different topics on-air. This kind of format seems to be giving them a better understanding of their surroundings, which makes it easier for them to see where they can fit into their community, and what role they can play in society.

The student reporters, who are still active in the broadcasting sector, all believe more can be done by community radio stations to be more relevant for young people to establish their civic identities and become active and engaged citizens.

One student suggested that there should be more shows/programmes that are made for youth. This should not only feature achievers and go-getters, but also provide advice on how to get a bursary, avoid peer pressure and being around people who take you down.

Another student said it is important for community radio to go out to the community, instead of mainly focusing on producing and broadcasting programmes from the studio.

Furthermore, they should also host dialogues to try to tackle the issues faced by young people. Another student suggested that there should be more programmes that let the youth participate in the programmes to create a platform for themselves.

### **Snap survey**

These recommendations are mirrored by other young people. A snap survey among 26 2nd year journalism students at the Department of Media Studies at WSU revealed that the majority of the students believe that media can do more than it currently does in helping young people establish their civic identity, and become actively engaged citizens. Most of them suggested that media content can become more appealing to youth by producing content that youth can relate to and that directly affects them. Two said that media should engage with the youth and have discussions about the issues that youth face. Other suggestions included that local independent media need to go to the young people and ask them what they want in order to give them what they want; there should be more magazines, more youth shows and even a newspaper for the youth that deals with youth problems; and media should encourage young people to spearhead media itself.

### **Conclusion**

Young people who are part of community media should be given a stronger voice in shaping the content for newspapers and radio programmes. They should enjoy more freedom to share innovative ideas as to what can be done to make the media more attractive to young people. They should be encouraged to think out of the box. They should be allowed to go out onto the streets and conduct surveys to explore what young people would like to hear and read about. The youth themselves are the best advisers as to what kind of format and content would be appealing to them.

One effective way for community media to engage with and be more relevant to the youth is by working closely with schools, youth clubs, civil society groups and non-governmental organisation that represent the youth. This can be easily done by forming linkages between these organisation to ensure they find young voices. One can get learners writing articles or have youth involved in civic organisations producing articles on the challenges they are facing. Similarly, community radio stations can arrange interviews with these young people or even create a regular slot that forms part of their programming. Community media is supposed to be participatory media, therefore communities should be involved in order to provide better and more meaningful media services to those they serves.

South Africa's population is largely – more than 50 million – made up of young people. Of these, 18.5 percent are between the ages of 10-19; and 24 percent are aged 15-24. With 77.6 percent of the total population being below the age of 35 years there should be no excuse to not feature content that is relevant to the youth.



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### **Endnotes**

1. The Eastern Cape Communication Forum (ECCF) is a non-profit organisation based at the Department of Media Studies at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). Its main objective is to strengthen and professionalise the local independent media sector in the province and to assist in building local independent media that is inspiring and creates active citizenship.



Charles Heiman/Africa Media Online

# THE TRITENESS OF **KNOWING**

The de-commodification of English news and the online enclavism of opinion-making among South Africa's young educated elite

By Nomalanga Mkhize

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young and  
**MEDIATED**

**Why are South African major mainstream newspaper circulation figures in persistent decline?’ The question was posed to me via email this week when I was sent the figures as published on the media industry blog *Marklives.com*. Between 2012 and 2013 dailies dropped from 1.67 million to 1.54 million; weeklies from 697 000 to 630 000, and weekenders from 2.44 million to 2.29 million. ‘Could it be that the readers were disengaging because they are drained by the constant negativity in newspapers?’; read the query.**

In the context of the exchange, the underlying subtext was that perhaps South Africa’s media is, to its own detriment, producing content that spreads a malaise and alienates the reading public. But blaming the drop on a fatigue with the commercial media’s traditional “bad news model” seemed way off, especially if one considers the creative vacuum caused by the dismal failure of the public broadcaster to use its considerable infrastructure to enable channels of vibrant civic engagement.

Ironically, part of the answer to the question was actually hidden in plain sight – the person querying had sent me an email with a blog link freely availing valuable information for which no doubt a range of institutions have paid to gather and produce. Notwithstanding the irony of the sender’s actions, I felt that laying blame at the door of “the free internet” was also far too simplistic.

In the circulation statistics, I was particularly puzzled by the *City Press*’ shocking performance. In a single year it slid from 163 000 to 118 000. This was strange given the high public profile of its editor Ferial Haffajee, who currently has 57 599 Twitter followers (the *Mail&Guardian*’s Nic Dawes stood at 29 424) as well as the kind of social media hype and publicity generated by the newspaper’s “sold out” moments such as the “Buy City Press” anti-boycott during “The Spear” debate.

Yet the hard sales figures demonstrate disjuncture between the *City Press*’ public and online image as a news leader versus what the newspaper buying public actually believes its news to be worth in print.

Not being privy to industry information, I cannot judge Haffajee’s editorial and strategic management abilities. However, newspapers do share the same broader context and economy of knowledge production and dissemination as the academic sphere in which I exist as a history lecturer and education reform activist.

There appears to be cultural shift occurring in the very nature of our relationship with information that is prompted by the internet, and in South Africa, this particularly affects information and news produced in English as the language of global exchange.

The tendency of the internet as a medium is to abolish information hierarchies and democratise the process of production, dissemination and consumption. Online readers of mainstream English language media in South Africa see themselves not just as consumers of information, but also as potential co-producers of content. This is particularly the case with ‘younger’ readers, many of whom have spent a substantial portion of their lives using the internet and digital services

as primary means of information acquisition and communication. The popularity of news and opinion-sharing via tweeting, blogging and Facebooking is clear evidence of this.

However, what is more interesting is that South African English language newspapers appear to be encouraging these alternative content platforms outside of their hard printed pages not only by interacting with their readers online, but also by reporting on what is discussed on social media and re-blogging content. It appears that the rationale for this is to progressively herd the online traffic towards the newspapers’ own websites, presumably to attract advertisers.

A common strategy seems to be the provision of reader opinion blogs. The *Mail and Guardian* recruits young opinionistas to contribute to its *Thought Leader* blogs, *News24* allows the reader to register and upload their own written or visual media content, while the *City Press* invites opinionated Twitter users to contribute opinion columns which appear both digitally and in print.

I am not so much concerned with judging whether this democratisation is a negative or positive development; I am only interested in what these shifts in the way newspapers operate (perhaps prompted by their declining circulation figures) tell us about emerging information-driven civic cultures. It appears to me that this democratisation shapes two cultural shifts in information consumption:

1. It is generally recognised that the opening of the blogosphere has expanded opinion space that newspapers were traditionally parsimonious with. However, the information glut as a whole on the internet has devalued both news and analysis such that they no longer carry distinctive value as information – knowing has thus become trite. Although more voices are heard, it is no longer so easy to commodify them and convert them into revenue.
2. The decline of the dominant print publications in South Africa leads to the shrinking of ‘common reading publics’. By ‘common publics’, I mean those spaces of overlapping social interest where the English language papers could cater for a cross-section of the population even if its main audience was of a particular demographic. This is not yet feasible with online media. The unevenness of digital technology penetration in South Africa means that, for now, certain social media platforms are elite techno-ghettos where there is little crossover into everyday social spheres that physical print media (and broadcast) can penetrate. The effect is that although digital opinion-making has widened, opinionistas address less diverse audiences.

### ***The message of the internet: The ‘triteness of knowing’***

The democracy of the blogosphere has no doubt led to the toppling of the traditional conception of the “expert” and all the associated cultural baggage of what sort of person can be viewed as being authoritative.

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The unevenness of digital technology penetration in South Africa means that for now, certain social media platforms are elite techno-ghettos where there is little crossover into everyday social spheres that physical print media (and broadcast) can penetrate.



But this should really be understood as a normalisation of public political culture. From the point of view of those commonly excluded from editorial pages, the recognition of diverse voices can hardly be considered a remarkable advance in human culture.

The critical challenge of the internet is the sheer volume of information made available and the dearth of mechanisms to sort, review and verify it. The result is that information becomes commonplace and is viewed as self-validating by its mere existence and accessibility. If the McLuhanist message of television is to turn information into entertainment; then the message of the internet is that all information is equally valid.

I note that my undergraduate students, most of whom were born in the digital age and highly dependent on Google, have to not only be trained on how to discern the validity of internet sources, but have to also be persuaded that information on popular internet sites is not necessarily equal to that found in scholarly texts. I have to convince them that although some Wikipedia entries cite scholarly works this does not make the repository credible. Does this differ from

a historian taking an archival collection at face value? In the sense of having to validate content, it is not necessarily different, but that is not the essential point.

Of significance is the way the internet makes the acquisition of knowledge a superficial and trite occurrence. At the click of a button one can find out about almost anything. Attempting to sell information in print, particularly news which has a short shelf-life, becomes like trying to commodify soil or air – something that is everywhere in some form or another. Why then buy a newspaper? Put more specifically, why bother to buy a newspaper to read news and analysis when you consume so much information for free online? This returns me to the strange case of the *City Press* and the failure of its online brand dominance to attract and retain readers in print.

One can get *City Press* commentary by simply subscribing to the editor's tweets – why distinguish between what she puts in her editorial page and her microblogging – even if she has put the disclaimer “Tweets in personal capacity” on her Twitter bio? Why would Haffajee have us believe her opinions in tweets

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The creation of personal brand is of course not entirely a narcissistic impulse, but also a perfectly rational self-marketing strategy in a world where “good education” on its own is no longer provides the guarantee of a good job.

are any different from her opinions in print? In any case, even if she did not make herself available online, there are many online commentators whose analysis on whatever is being reported in the news cycle can be accessed. It is even tougher for newspapers when broadcast media break news on the internet and steal the attention of the online audience.

Is it any wonder that newspapers sometimes break news online purely for the brand credit and not for the sales?

The lesson of the *City Press* is that growing the online profile does not create value in print. Unfortunately, there is something inevitable about all this. It is difficult to foresee a future in which South Africa's mainstream print media can claim back the space lost to the vast sea of information that is the internet. But it gets worse.

#### **Gizmos and Apps: The ‘young’ online opinion enclaves**

The pursuit of internet audiences by mainstream press often results in online opinionistas, many of them young, being accorded a news profile disproportionate to their offline social reach.<sup>1</sup> Recently, political commentator Professor Steven Friedman (*Business Day Live*, 29 May 2013) criticised the tendency for online-interactive reporters to treat social media opinion as a representative sample of South African broader public sentiment arguing that

*“When some people decide that their world is the world, reality is sure to suffer. Which is why claims that social media are the pulse of the nation should make us wary... social media here do not include most people in the debate — they connect the connected, the top one-fifth or less who are already part of the conversation. And so they do not tell us what South Africans think — they tell us the thoughts of a small section of the population who would have other ways to make themselves heard if new media were never invented... social media may reach many more people and so may no longer be the preserve of the few. But the day will never come when new media can substitute for the task of achieving and building democracy.”*

Friedman's cautioning is important; in an unequal society, knowledge producers and disseminators must come to grips with the creative power of cultural imagination where what is produced and consumed

as media becomes enmeshed with what we experience as reality. That is, the conflation of the real and the mediated in the Baudriallardian sense of *hyperreality*.

One example is the way in which raising one's online profile has become a favoured strategy among educated elites in order to gain the kind of media exposure that creates a personal brand. One of the most coveted forms of recognition is to gain a spot on the *Mail and Guardian's* List of Top 200 Young South Africans. Apart from being able to manufacture the kind of public online persona that can edge you closer to a spot on the list, one is also able to validate one's “credentials” by existing in networks of educated elites who can nominate you for the list.

I am stunned annually by how many top young people I see on the list from my alma mater Rhodes University and similar institutions but very few from historically black universities. It cannot simply be that the formerly white institutions have more than their fair share of bright young things, but that the overlap of networks, particularly through social media and print media, favour them for media profiling.

The creation of personal brand is of course not entirely a narcissistic impulse, but also a perfectly rational self-marketing strategy in a world where “good education” on its own is no longer provides the guarantee of a good job.

What we see then is the segmentation of online audiences such that more distinct marketable niches develop and editors, I would argue, pursue the niches of the affluent in an attempt to increase revenues.

All the while, mainstream print media decline, eroding the traditions where they were recognised as speaking to common reading public – whatever the audience they sold to their advertisers. Increasingly then, there are accusations from politicians (and people such as myself) that the mainstream English press does not represent a political worldview that grapples with the social imagination of the black majority.

This piece is not meant to be definitive; my main goal was to understand the complicated effect of the internet and try to relate this to the unevenness and inequality of South Africa's public sphere. There is great potential for African language and non-suburban English reading audiences online but that will have to await more column space.



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#### **Endnotes**

1. Although circulation figures are down, readership figures are reported as stable (Moodie 2013). In her analysis of ABC and AMPS figures, Moodie tries to make sense of this disjuncture. The trends remain complex – Gill Moodie, ‘Analysis of 2012 Amps readership figures: what lurks beneath for SA newspapers?’, *Marklives.com*, 23 April 2013, retrieved online at <http://www.marklives.com/wordpress/2013/04/analysis-of-2012-amps-readership-figures-what-lurks-beneath-for-sa-newspapers/>
2. Youth in South Africa generally refers to the category of people between the ages of 15 to 35.



## *Static: Race and Representation in Post-apartheid Music, Media and Film*

ADAM HAUPT  
HSRC Press 2012

Reviewed by Annetjie van Wynegaard

## BOOK REVIEW

# Gone for a badass song

**Professor Adam Haupt leaves no strings un-plucked in his new book, *Static: Race and Representation in Post-apartheid Music, Media and Film* (HSRC Press 2012).**

*Static* opens with haunting lyrics from “hawks” by colony. The image of “hawks coming down on small fry rodents from a dizzy height” sets the tone of the book as Haupt explores music, film, social media, corporations and copyright laws in South Africa and the global north.

Haupt defines static as unmoving or unchanging, a static society, and static as noise. He then poses two questions. Is South Africa undergoing change after apartheid, or are we static? Can we hear each other through all the noise?

*Static* cuts across genres, such as hip hop, gangster rap, Afrikaans folk music, and Afrikaans punk, in its discussion of race and representation in post-apartheid media. Haupt uses theories by Frantz Fanon and Louis Althusser to show how race and representation in South Africa go beyond skin colour. It’s a subtle, systematic ideology under the control of those with all the power, without the physical burden of colonising. Read: Empire.

This issue of power, its ownership and meaning for “small fry rodents”, is explored at great length in *Static*. Who controls the music? Who controls the production and reception of the message?

In the first chapter Haupt takes on big music production companies and their copyright laws, as well as post-apartheid government’s adoption of neo-liberal macroeconomics, to show how, despite our best efforts, resources and power still lie in the hands of the elite minority. He explores social media as an alternative distribution channel to mainstream media, but finds that South African artists like Prophets of da City, EJ von Lyric, Tumi and the Volume, and many more are to a large extent left behind by the digital divide.

Haupt then looks to Die Antwoord in chapter

three for their successful employment of social media, but finds other factors that catapulted them onto the world stage. Die Antwoord portrays a “white trash”, “zef-side” identity and representation of a marginal white and coloured working class. However, Haupt goes beneath the surface of carefully crafted gangster tattoos and appropriated dialect to their Mitchell’s Plein braai on *Top Billing* to ask the question, “Are Die Antwoord blackface?”

In chapter two Haupt explores the popularity of folklorist Bok van Blerk’s songs, “De la Rey” and “Tyd om te trek” (Time to move). In contrast to this he analyses Afrikaans punk rockers Fokofpolisiekar’s music, but finds them lacking as a viable political alternative to the nostalgic hankerings of Van Blerk.

He also highlights the positive way in which the now infamous Reitz video was first received, and modifies Jonathan Jansen’s question from his inaugural address: “What can we learn from a community’s popular culture to explain why such an atrocity would find an approving audience?”

In chapter four Haupt studies gangster currency and the construction of black masculinity in films, through Gavin Hood’s *Tsotsi*, Ralph Ziman’s *Jerusalema*, and Oliver Schmitz’s *Hijack Stories*. Popular kwaito star, Zola, and SABC 1 programme *Yizo Yizo* also form part of the discussion.

Finally the Soccer World Cup, K’naan and Shakira’s compromises, as well as Fifa’s control and copyright of all things soccer, lead Haupt to conclude that this one was not for Africa.

*Static* is well written with clear arguments, crisp language, and badass song lyrics peppered throughout. It ends with more words from colony: “...now our freedom’s gone for a song.”

*Static*, as well as Haupt’s first book, *Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, 2008), are available under open content licences at <http://www.hsrcpress.co.za/>.

*Static* is well written with clear arguments, crisp language, and badass song lyrics peppered throughout.



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# Regulation **Ethics** Accountability

Neo Ntsoma



# Journalism in the global agenda

Journalists need to take seriously that the UN creates a big-picture intellectual climate for their work

by Guy Berger

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**H**ere's one thing I've observed: journalists like talking to each other. By contrast, it's rather rare for them, as a collective, to engage with other groups.

That's too bad because they miss out on chances to find common ground with other communities, like geeks, librarians, parliamentarians, educationalists and the like. But at least one forum in February 2013 did succeed in bringing a range of constituencies together exactly for this purpose.

The occasion was a conference in February at Unesco headquarters in Paris, where I nowadays work. Jargon alert: the gathering was called "Towards knowledge societies for peace and sustainable development – First WSIS+10 Review Event". Here are the definitions to decode this:

WSIS+10 – an acronym for the World Summit on the Information Society, which was a UN-convened global event in two phases, held in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005. So WSIS+10 Review Event means an assessment of the impact of these summits the past 10 years.

Information society – describes a society that increasingly relies on information flows, thanks in particular to the spread of mobile phones and internet access (summed up as Information and Communication Technologies, or simply ICTs).

Knowledge societies – this is when information is converted to know-how in social life, and so it's a higher stage than information societies. For this to

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If the world wants further progress towards knowledge societies, then freedom of expression in all its dimensions has to be respected

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Stephanie Papini

happen, ICTs should be ubiquitous, and in a context of human rights, education, cultural diversity, multi-lingualism, universal access to information and more.

In a nutshell then, the Unesco WSIS+10 conference in February joined up diverse groups – including media people – to take stock of the underlying trends taking place in communications.

The discussion also analysed what this means for the final review of the implementation of WSIS decisions, which will be done by the UN General Assembly in 2015. That milestone should ring a bell, because it is also the deadline for the conclusion of an even bigger UN initiative, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Both WSIS and the MDGs have strongly influenced state policies on telecommunications, broadcasting, education, gender and health. The big question now is how the UN system will shape the sequel.

The journalists who came from the world over to February's WSIS discussions in Paris were naturally pleased to be visiting what's called the "City of Light". (Et pourquoi pas – and why not?) Yet they also saw the professional value of inserting media voices into the debates about ICTs and development... for good reasons:

Like all journalists, they're convinced of their importance as key agents for spreading information (and, hopefully, knowledge), and they exploit ICT to better their journalism.

They also know that journalism impacts on development, influencing the extent to which it is respectful of rights and is corruption-free, not to mention equitable, environmentally-sustainable, rural- and gender-sensitive, etc.

The problem is that while most journalists see all this, most other social actors don't, no matter that it seems so obviously self-evident.

In fact, back at the original 2003 WSIS discussions, media had to push its way onto the agenda. Community radio activists like Tracey Naughton lobbied at the time with the argument that without media, WSIS would be akin to holding a world summit on agriculture without the farmers being there.

Eventually, media's potential was inserted into the WSIS conclusions, alongside the recognised roles of governments, tech

companies, civil society groups, and others. But journalism has been less successful in getting itself taken seriously by the development community.

One result is that, as anyone who has ever tried fundraising for journalism projects knows, most development donors are still far from seeing the importance of supporting journalism. The irony, as Eric Newton of the Knight Foundation has proposed, is that: "Media development aid creates the independent journalism that tells you whether all the other aid is being stolen. Just as freedom of expression supports all other freedom, media aid supports all other aid."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the importance of media has not been top of mind in policies about the information society and the MDGs. In short, unless media people are proactively part of the agenda of global initiatives for the post-2015 period, journalism is likely to be underestimated.

The good news is that journalists in Paris for the WSIS+10 conference didn't spend all their time sipping noisettes<sup>2</sup> at pavement cafes or visiting the Louvre.

Instead, they ensured that media-centric discussions were prominent parts of the agenda, including who controls the internet. The debate also covered items like how to entrench a free press in the Arab Spring countries if democratic gains are to be secured.

There were also analyses of Africa's media industries and convergence, and assessment of the significance of citizen journalism.<sup>3</sup> Tech trends like the growing "shuttle-screen situation"<sup>4</sup> were interrogated.

The result was a Final Statement<sup>5</sup> that highlights a very fundamental interest for journalists: namely, if the world wants further progress towards knowledge societies, then freedom of expression in all its dimensions has to be respected. One point especially singled out was the need for safety for online journalists, bloggers and human rights activists.

Indeed, journalists in the digital era need many voices in support of this cause. It is about their ability to work, in the digital age, without fear that they or their sources may be harmed as a result of underhand electronic

surveillance of their communications or illicit tracking of their geo-location.

The WSIS+10 Final Statement also stresses something else strongly in journalists' interests: the "multi-stakeholder processes" which have grown out of the WSIS initiatives. In context, the phrase means that measures to restrict the internet should be subject to widespread public debate among interest groups, and not be the preserve of a single constituency (be this governmental, intergovernmental, or corporate).

The Final Statement of WSIS+10 was supported by the diverse participants, which included representatives of many governments. This level of agreement differed from an earlier division in the international community in December 2012, when about one third of the world's governments declined to back a draft treaty at the International Telecommunications Union.

The dissenters saw the wording of the treaty as the product of an overly government-centric process and as giving a green light to illegitimate controls over the internet at state level. In contrast, with the WSIS+10 event, the pendulum swung back to emphasising consensus seeking over shared international norms for the internet.

Journalists have a direct interest in global consensus about this multi-stakeholder principle, because it opens doors to them to have their concerns represented in a range of fora. For them, a unilateral concentration of power over the internet could end up being detrimental to independent media whether online, print or broadcast.

These Unesco WSIS+10 Final Statement will now feed into further WSIS review processes, which will culminate in a position being adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

However, the WSIS+10 statement also goes beyond WSIS to also call for the lessons learnt to date to inform the formulation of global development goals after 2015.

As it happens, the two WSIS+10 themes of freedom of expression and multi-stakeholder processes are also mirrored in a report released in June for the UN Secretary General. Dealing with the post-2015 UN development agenda, the document was compiled by world

leaders who included the Indonesian, UK and Liberian presidents.<sup>6</sup>

The original Millennium Development Goals declaration put much less emphasis on these two issues. It could be that this new document, combined with the WSIS+10 Final Statement, will ensure these concerns are reflected in how the UN frames the sustainable development agenda after 2015.

Some journalists will think that this is all such big-picture stuff, that it has no connection to the day-to-day grind of the newsroom or citizen-generated sms's published in the media. Others may also question the gap between fine words at the UN, and actual actions in countries.

At the same time, no journalist should underestimate the impact of a UN-influenced intellectual climate which defines what is significant and legitimate, and conversely which stigmatises actions outside the consensus. The UN agenda also has also enormous material impact on how governments and donors decide to spend money.

Journalists can do a lot more to keep their concerns aloft in other quarters, and particularly at the level of the UN system. There are opportunities to capitalise on the current points of traction.

To take advantage, however, journalists need to get organised, penetrate the jargon, and recognise that the high stakes will have an impact on the profession. Some journalists might even get to visit Paris as part of the process.



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## Endnotes

1. <http://www.knightfoundation.org/press-room/speech/eric-newton-world-press-freedom-day-2011/>
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3. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/unesco-and-wsis/wsis-10-review-meeting/>
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6. A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development. The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda



Tiffany Majero

## THE AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER

# Not just another media index

By Mareike le Pelley

**T**he African Media Barometer (AMB) is a tool to self-assess the respect for freedom of expression and information and the state of the media in a specific country. In recognition of the crucial role of freedom of expression and media freedom in good governance and democratisation processes and while noting that the African Peer Review Mechanism had left out the media sector, the AMB was conceived by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the media project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (now fesmedia Africa) in 2004 and 2005.

The AMB formulates 39 indicators, sorted into four sectors, which are based on African declarations, charters and protocols. The four sectors address: 1. the regulatory framework for freedom of expression and whether it is effectively implemented, 2. the diversity and accessibility of the media, 3. broadcasting regulation and the state broadcaster and 4. the professional performance of and the working conditions within the media sector.

Panellists from their respective countries, half of them representing the media sector and half of them representing other parts of civil society, spend one and a half

Depending on whether a country is just emerging from many years of autocracy or civil strife, or whether it has enjoyed peace and the respect of basic human rights for a number of years, citizens will value and assess freedoms and media performance quite differently.

days discussing the indicators and giving a score of one to five for each, with one being the lowest possible score and five the highest.

Their discussions are moderated by a trained facilitator who ensures that a range of issues are thoroughly covered. After the event a rapporteur puts together a comprehensive report of the deliberations.

Between 2005 and the end of 2012 AMB panel discussions were held in 29 African countries and a total of 80 AMB reports were produced<sup>1</sup>. Some countries have so far hosted only one AMB panel discussion, such as Ethiopia, Guinea-Conakry or the DRC, while others, such as Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, or Zimbabwe, have been covered by four reports already. In 2009 the barometer was adapted and introduced to Asia and the first barometer panel discussion in Eastern Europe took place in 2011<sup>2</sup>.

#### ***Yet another media index?***

The AMB is different in several important ways from other media assessment tools. First, and foremost, the indicators are based on African documents, making the AMB a home-grown instrument. Secondly, the indicators are only given scores by the expert panellists in a country and it is these scores that all averages are calculated from. No external scoring or evaluation by outside experts is added, making sure that the resulting report is fully owned by the members of the panel.

Thirdly, the panellists are carefully selected based on certain criteria which are to ensure that they not only bring to the discussion considerable expertise but also represent as much as possible the various voices of a specific country. For example the media sector is to be represented by urban and rural media, by print and broadcast media, by private and state media houses, by men and women, by journalists as well as editors and owners.

The entire selection of experts is to take into account different interests, regions, and religions. Putting together a panel, which answers to all set criteria, is highly ambitious but serious efforts are undertaken each time to come as close as possible to the ideal.

#### ***A qualitative tool with detail and depth***

One reason the AMB may be less known than some other media assessment tools is related to one of the above mentioned strengths. Since all scores are exclusively given by the AMB panellists, the results are mainly qualitative in nature. While some indicators are mostly to be scored on the basis of certain facts (for example on the existence or non-existence of a

certain piece of legislation), the majority (also) require a subjective assessment of the situation: is the law being implemented, and if so, to what degree? Are media applying their codes of ethics and reporting professionally? Are people afraid to speak their minds? Do the media reflect all voices in society? How easy is it to obtain publicly held information?

AMB panel discussions are held among knowledgeable experts, including at least one person with legal expertise. They are given the necessary documents to base their discussions on and have the chance to exchange facts and opinions between each other with the moderator pointing out the various aspects and sub-issues of each indicator.

However, at the end of the day, the report will still be on the one hand a compilation of individual perspectives and on the other hand a reflection of the political culture and history of the country.

Depending on whether a country is just emerging from many years of autocracy or civil strife, or whether it has enjoyed peace and the respect of basic human rights for a number of years, citizens will value and assess freedoms and media performance quite differently. Where people have been free to express themselves for a while, they may award high scores. However, they may also have acquired a more critical mindset and might be more likely to come down hard on any still existing shortcomings by scoring very low on certain indicators.

These considerations make a comparison of average scores across countries and thus any sort of country ranking impossible. Even comparisons within a country over time have to be done carefully as the composition of the panel may change from one AMB to the next.

#### ***Why is scoring done at all?***

The AMB scores are useful for at least three reasons:

Firstly, low indicator averages are likely to point to the most critical areas, which require advocacy work by civil society and/or the attention of a country's policy and law makers.

Secondly, indicators, where individual scores differ greatly, for example with part of the panel scoring one or two, while the rest is scoring four or five, point to a substantial polarisation of the panellists, which may also reflect divisions in society on a larger scale. Any advocacy work in these areas would have to take this into account.

Thirdly, at the end of each AMB panel discussion, the indicator averages of the previous years' discussions are put next to the current ones. While the average scores of some indicators will have moved very little,

In most countries the working conditions of journalists are precarious, with low salaries, many without fixed contracts and poor benefits.

others will see large up or downward movements. The issues covered by those indicators require more in-depth analysis in order to assess whether the situation has really deteriorated or improved that much, or whether the drastic change in the average score for that particular indicator compared to the previous score is the result of different views of a different panel.

#### **What do the AMB reports tell us?**

Besides the information the scores convey, the main benefit of the AMB is the thorough discussion and analysis, which are captured in the AMB report. The analysis provides substance to the information given by the scores and supplies a multitude of additional details, facts and information about the panellists' views and their assessments of the country's media and the state of freedom of expression.

Notwithstanding all the differences that exist between individual countries, a careful reading of AMB-reports over the years reveal that certain issues feature in the majority of countries assessed. Here are some of them:

- While freedom of expression is usually well protected in the constitution and sometimes additional media legislation, other legal provisions and the political reality on the ground often restrict the full enjoyment of that right. Good legislation is hardly ever effectively implemented.
- State broadcasters are still under the control of the government of the day. Neither their editorial nor financial independence is secured.
- Self censorship and corruption in the media (brown envelope journalism) are wide spread. Many governments use the placement of government advertisements to influence editorial content. In some countries ownership of media by politicians or political parties or those close to them has negative impacts on media diversity and media ethics.
- New media usually do not suffer from interference from government. However, a few countries experience the shut-down or disruption of text messaging services and the filtering and blocking of websites.
- In most countries the working conditions of journalists are precarious, with low salaries, many without fixed contracts and poor benefits.

- Frequently, there is low compliance with professional codes of conduct.
- The distribution of print media in rural areas and the full coverage of remote areas by broadcasting services is still a challenge.

In conclusion, AMB reports offer several benefits:

- They provide a great source of information and detail, and an in-depth analysis of the media sector and the state of freedom of expression and information in a particular country.
- They capture the perspectives and experiences of a wide range of experts from the country and thereby also allow insights into the historical and political context, in which freedom of expression has to be placed.
- They enable the reader to discover broader trends, developments and shortcomings in the media field and with regard to freedom of expression across countries in Africa.
- They can be used for advocacy campaigns for political reform. The reports' major strengths for advocacy work derive from being owned by the panellists and being the result of a home-grown tool based on African documents.

On the fesmedia Africa website<sup>3</sup> you find regularly updated posts and articles on media development on the continent. They are sorted into different categories ranging from factual items to opinion pieces, short news to longer analyses. Many items are collected from other websites and reposted but the site also features the various publications of *fesmedia Africa*, the media project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Sub-Sahara Africa.

The calendar and archive links facilitate the search for older posts by topic, year and country while the library gives access to a collection of more in-depth papers on media development, which can also be searched by topic. The website is a work in progress. Besides being regularly updated, the search function is currently being improved by assigning more key words and giving easier access to archived material.

The website targets media and civil society activists, policy makers and the academic sector. It also features a call for papers<sup>4</sup>, which offers graduate students the chance to be published online (and perhaps in paper) under the expert guidance of a senior journalist.



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#### **Endnotes**

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# Media faces **ACCOUNTABILITY SURGERY** in BRICS countries

The past few years have been dramatic for the media in BRICS countries. This explosive growth brings up thorny questions of media freedom, accountability, and independence.

By Shakuntala Rao

**W**estern countries seem to have finally realised that places like India, South Africa, Brazil, and China are just not exotic locations to spend one's holiday; they are promising investment destinations and growing economies with the potential of becoming the engines of world growth in years to come.

The inspiration of the word Brics, coined by Goldman Sachs in 2003, came from the realisation that five countries in the world, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, are poised to be the top world economies by 2050. This is not to say that it is easy to provide a sound-bite definition of five large countries and their economics and try to lump them together under one workable definition. Rather than giving up on trying to find linkages and settling for definitions for what they are not (ie the advanced economics of US, Western Europe and Japan), a more useful approach would be to identify some of the benchmarks that makes Brics an economic and geopolitical cluster.

Very little research in journalism has focused on Brics or its implications in a new global media order or that the "road to BRICS-dom" is not without challenges.

## ***Phenomenal growth of media industries***

These countries, individually and collectively, have seen some of the highest growth rates in their media

industries. For instance, since the early 1990s, Indian television has grown exponentially with more than 800 channels, out of which roughly 300 are round-the-clock all-news channels available in multiple languages. There are 330 million newspapers sold daily in the country. Second only to China, a staggering 900 000 million, about 75% of the population, have access to mobile phones. In China, with the weakening of old ideological shackles, there are 2 200 newspapers catering to 500 million people and a television industry which, although highly controlled, reaches approximately 700 million people daily. Brazil and South Africa have emerged as the biggest media centres in their continents. Russian government claims a 24% growth in media economy in the last decade, the fastest growth of any media market in the world.

Such explosive media growth also brings up thorny questions of media freedom, accountability, and independence.

## ***More media, more accountability***

The concept of accountability, in modern democracies, is linked to the possession of power. Those who wield power are expected to answer for how they use it. Journalists are often seen as those who wield power of information dissemination.

The past few years have

been dramatic for the media in Brics countries. With the proliferation of internet, iPhones, and other hand-held mobile devices, the possibility of user empowerment has dramatically increased. A new relationship between society and the media has evolved. The possibilities of public participation in debates about the quality of media content and governance have increased, be it on the level of actor transparency or on the level of post-production correction.

This is especially true in the democracies of India, South Africa, and Brazil but also true in a non-democracy like China and an illiberal democracy like Russia.

China hosts some 300 million microblog accounts, and officials say that domestic social media put out more than 200 million posts every day. These microblogs have become the main source of media and political accountability.

The high-speed rail collision in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, in July 2011 was the turning point. The government took a beating by public opinion over the crash, in large part because social media harnessed anger over the bungled rescue effort, the safety of the high-speed rail network and corruption in the Railways Ministry. And in summer 2011, two other embarrassing public opinion defeats for China's leadership originally took off on the internet: the Guo Meimei affair,



Kendal Quicke



Sibulele Mabusela

which exposed irregularities at the government-run Red Cross Society of China, and the massive and well-organised public demonstrations against a chemical project in Dalian.

In India, we have seen large street protests against corruption and sexual violence. Dubbed the “India Spring”, these protests have been brought about by wall-to-wall television media coverage of political and police corruption, an increasing gender gap, and daily violence against women. The 240-million strong urban middle class, the primary consumers of the new media, is seeking more political and media accountability.

In Brazil, resistance to the tearing down of favelas or slums in Rio de Janeiro to gear up for the 2016 Olympics has resulted in young Brazilians posting videos on websites and on Twitter. Such social-media activism has forced the otherwise pro-Olympics mainstream media to write and cover news stories of illegal bulldozing of properties.

And in Russia, the high-profile killings of two prominent anti-Kremlin journalists, Anna Politkovskaya and Alexander Litvinenko, in 2006 and 2007 respectively, has resulted in an increased awareness among the Russian public about how important freedom of press and media accountability are.

***Changes in media practices:  
for the better and worse?***

As the media economies expand in the Brics countries, do journalism practices improve, thus making media more accountable? The answer is both yes and no and depend on the country in question.

In India, we have seen the strengthening of media institutions and increased media accountability with more open and public discussions of media ethics

and appointments of ombuds by major newspapers. An independent agency called the News Broadcasters Association has been established which has developed the first ethics codes and guidelines for practices for television journalists. Journalism ethics is now being taught as part of the curriculum in every major university.

Yet, ethical lapses in journalistic practices are on the rise. The case of the Delhi teenager Aarushi Talwar's murder in 2008 which was sensationalised by the round-the-clock television news cycle is a prime example, among many, where news media was found to have fabricated images and broadcast gossip as facts. The justices of the supreme court of India, in a rare gesture, issued a statement about media coverage of the Talwar case as “lacking in sensitivity, taste, and decorum”. One well-known journalist labeled this coverage a “media scrum” where the practice of breaking news had become the excuse for broadcasting a massive amount of inaccurate information. And with no clear system of accountability and no repercussions on the media companies, retractions were few.

In China, the government is being held accountable by underground bloggers and social media activists but the national media remains firmly in the hand of the state. In hopes of getting a handle on the potentially threatening surge of information from the internet, the government has started a campaign that aims to quash what it calls internet “rumours”, ie, statements that it says threaten the public order but that it has no way of defining what is and is not rumour. The communist party has been pressuring social media providers to weed out allegations it finds threatening, and state media has tried to whip up fear over their malignant cultural effects. Since December 2012, the government has been blocking

online searches of politically sensitive terms, smothering what it deems embarrassing news events for the party, blocking online messages from dissidents, and deleting microblog posts that it dislikes.

In Russia, President Vladimir Putin, an ex-KGB agent and second-time president, has not been an advocate of a free, accountable, and independent media. Russian media's spectacular economic growth and expansion has not been matched by a growth in freedom of expression. Becker calls Russian media a "neo-authoritarian media regime" where "formal democratic institutions may appear to exist but they are rotten at their core". Arrests of journalists are common and a few government-friendly oligarchs control most of the private media. And private media owners, like Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky, who have not openly supported Putin have been jailed, exiled, and harassed on fake tax evasion and fraud charges.

Scholars argue that Russian media today, under Putin, is far less free than during the post-totalitarian days of the early 1990s.

South Africa, one of the most diverse democracies in the world, has witnessed both a consolidation and a weakening of a democratic press. Within a few years, South African media had to move from an isolationist siege economy to an economy that had to compete in the global marketplace.

After a smooth start in the early post-apartheid period, South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress, was increasingly afflicted by contradictions between its idealistic principles and the conduct of many of its leaders. These behaviours currently include threats to institute tighter controls over the judiciary, the ANC's critics and the media.

The 2012 Ibrahim Index of African Governance shows that although South Africa ranks fifth overall among African governments, its scores

have consistently declined over the past five years, with a significant reduction in scores for rule of law, accountability, and public participation. Freedom House's *Freedom of the Press* report downgraded South Africa from free to partly free status in 2011. With the recent passage in the National Assembly of a bill titled "The Protection of State of Information Act", aimed at prohibiting public access to information about many decisions and acts of government officials, the downward trajectory appears set to continue.

Of the Brics countries, Brazil has had, historically, a relatively free press. Journalists have been able to report freely during elections and there has been a wide spectrum of political voices available in the media. But the neoliberal economic model of media has touched media practices in Brazil, as it has touched the other Brics countries, with increased emphasis on entertainment rather than hard news and consolidation of media in the urban centres of Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and Brasilia. Brazilian media owners also exert enormous political power which has led to an environment of corruption, undue pressure on individual journalists, and court-ordered censorship.

#### ***Future of media accountability in Brics***

Much has to change in each of these countries before media can be considered free, accountable, and independent. And the journalists in each country face unique challenges.

In India, Brazil and South Africa, as democratic institutions such as the judiciary and electorate politics consolidate the press is likely to remain free. While in South Africa we have witnessed efforts by the government to curtail freedom of the press, in India we have seen a commercially-driven press abuse its freedom and act unethically. A truly accountable and free press in a democratic society is not only assured in the written law, but must hold itself accountable for unethical lapses and must create an environment where journalists can work without fear for their safety or of legal repercussions. In China and Russia existing political systems do not provide any guarantee for media freedom and accountability.

The latest Brics heads of state meeting, held in Durban, South Africa, in March 2013, had many issues on the agenda such as unemployment, establishing of a development-oriented bank, and environmental concerns. There was no discussion about freedom of the press or media accountability.

While the road to increased media accountability remains fraught with danger, there is also hope. Social media and mobile technology are weakening state control and information dissemination may not be as centralised in the future as it has been in the past. If so, journalists and media owners must use new media to seize opportunities to reach their publics quickly, directly, and with minimal state intervention.

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Neo Ntsoma

# Media ownership and **TRANSPARENCY**

By Reg Rumney

It is hard to understand why such an intemperate war of words flared up over the change in ownership of one of South Africa's oldest and influential newspaper groups. Yet inquiries about the identity of the new owners of Independent News and Media South Africa (INMSA) generated a surprising ferocity from a surprising range of sources.

Regulation  
**Ethics**  
Accountability

In money terms, this is not a huge deal. The local newspaper group was sold to a domestic consortium headed by black empowerment figure Iqbal Survé, for R2-billion, by its Irish owners. But South Africa's Independent group owns daily newspapers in every major urban area, as well as weekend newspapers, magazines and community newspapers. In particular, as the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) noted in a letter, later withdrawn, to the Competition Commission, the Independent group "has a monopoly in the English-language newspaper markets of Cape Town and Durban, as well as arguably Pretoria and Kimberley".

In that letter Sanef, on behalf of journalists, expressed concern about "the lack of information about the people who are members of the consortium", and asked for the following information:

1. in addition to the consortium members a list of the shareholders and their respective shareholding;
2. confirmation that these shares are held beneficially and not as nominees;
3. the shareholders' agreement;
4. confirmation that no political party has the right to appoint the chairperson or CEO; and
5. details about how INMSA is to be funded going forward.

Interpreting this as racially-based hostility, sparked perhaps by remarks about anti-competitive forces by Survé himself, commentators launched attacks on the Times Media Group, Sanef, the "liberal" press, and Wits University journalism professor Anton Harber.

Especially relevant is that SA Communist Party general-secretary Blade Nzimande used the opportunity to label

Sanef and "the likes of Anton Harber" as hypocritical in not questioning the "greediness of their owners at Media 24 and Caxton".

To understand why journalists and some members of the public may be suspicious, we have to look to historical memory. The apartheid government tried to buy control of the English-language press to silence its reports on the horrible reality that the sanctifying language of "separate development" sought to hide. One of the most sinister historical moments of the apartheid era was the launch of the government-funded *Citizen* newspaper after attempts to buy control of the English-language press failed. The government used nationalist supporter and businessperson Louis Luyt as a front to finance the *Citizen*, both to sabotage the liberal *Rand Daily Mail* and to propagandise for apartheid.

The apartheid government and the democratically-elected government cannot be equated, and perhaps this explains some of the ferocity of those questioning the questioners, and the emotive language of a particular brand of political rhetoric being directed at Sanef and Harber.

Yet in the democratic era, there is also abiding hostility to the print media by the ANC, which began when Nelson Mandela, still in office, expressed the view that the media had set itself up in opposition to the ANC government. Given the ruling party's reluctance to relinquish dominance of free-to-air television broadcasting, and persistent reports of attempts to control or influence the state broadcaster, the print media may be forgiven for being fearful.

We have to filter out the noise around this recent transaction to see that it

highlights the urgent need to devise means of shining a light on media ownership. This noise should not be allowed to distract from the need for greater scrutiny and transparency of ownership in the news media.

Fiona Harrison of the Madrid-based Access Info Europe, in presenting the findings of a project to look into transparency of media ownership in Europe, wrote recently: "The availability of accurate and up-to-date data on media ownership is an essential component of a democratic media system. It is impossible to take steps to address excessive media concentrations without the tools to identify the owners; public knowledge of owners' identities helps to ensure that abuses of media power can be assessed, publicised, openly debated and – even – prevented. Both media regulators and the general public must have access to information about who owns – and influences – media outlets."

In many countries, while people often have some idea of who formally owns the media, and even of who are the real powers behind media companies, this information is frequently based on hearsay rather than access to official ownership data. The complex chains of formal owners and the real ultimate or beneficial owners tend to be even more obscure, thus preventing members of the public from knowing the influences to which media outlets are subject and which may affect their editorial line.

In South Africa, given the legacy of the concentration of market power that sanctions and disinvestment led to, and racial imbalances, the attention on changes in ownership should not be surprising. Ownership is one of the important elements to judge transformation, as expressed by the Codes of Good Practice, which are the regulations that give effect to the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act.

Since 1994, specific ownership of the news media has not attracted much controversy – even in the lack of direct black ownership. Surprisingly, two of the major print media companies have managed to resist pressure for direct black ownership entirely. The Independent group has been entirely foreign owned and the Moolman-Coburn partnership, according to Who Owns Whom, controls Caxton and CTP Publishers and Printers Ltd, owner of the *Citizen* and many community newspapers.

All the print media companies except the Independent are listed on the JSE, making it easier to assess ownership, since the stock exchange listing opens up companies to intense scrutiny on funding as well as ownership. Yet it is still necessary to do some sleuthing, since the ultimate owners can be hidden by proxy companies.

In the US, the trend towards private-equity ownership, which usually means delisting, has been seen as an unwelcome shift towards opacity. It is quite simply harder to obtain information about unlisted companies, as financial journalists will attest. Yet private ownership makes it possible for companies to resist pressures for short-term returns that may imperil future sustainability. Private equity ownership allows

companies to move out of the limelight and fix their problems without the glare of publicity.

The International Centre for Media and the Public Agenda at the University of Maryland suggests that openness about ownership and conflicts of interest is one of five ways of measuring transparency. The others are openness to reader comments and criticism, openness to discussions with readers, willingness to explain editorial decisions, including the values and ethics behind them, and willingness to openly correct mistakes.

On openness about ownership and conflicts of interest, the centre asks: "Is it clear to the customers who owns the news organisation and what business or other dealings might put the news organization in a position where its collective judgment could be clouded?"

In a liberal, democratic society there will always be vested interests, of powerful corporations, civil society groupings, trade unions, and government and quasi-government organisations. It is utopian to believe that journalism will represent the interests of every sector of society. But journalists in the service of a larger public interest must try as far as possible to resist capture by vested interests. To the extent that they fail, transparency helps the audience to hold journalists to account.

This is not simply a matter of ensuring that government does not censor the private sector, but that the private sector does not censor itself, or at least that the public may be aware when this happens. Moreover, no society should wake up to find itself with a concentration of media power.

The question, then, is how to ensure media transparency when a public listing is not a requirement, and when attempts by journalists to pierce the corporate veil of media companies are resisted as unwarranted intrusions by competitors?

The Access-Info report found that while pressure for transparency in media ownership is increasing, finding out who owns and controls the media in Europe was generally difficult. It therefore recommended a legal reporting requirement, and this should give food for thought in South Africa.

Broadcast, print and online media should be required to submit to an independent national media authority sufficient ownership information to allow identification of the beneficial and ultimate owners of the media outlet. This should be a one-way reporting requirement which in no way implies a requirement to register the media outlet or obtain permission to operate (with the exception of the pre-existing legal framework for audio-visual media).

In the light of this, are the questions asked by Sanef unreasonable? The SACP expressed outrage that other media firms were not subject to the same interrogation. The point of media transparency is that they should be. The main concern of the Competition Commission, which has to ratify the Independent acquisition, is competition, not diversity of media. Media transparency legislation would decrease the heat in debates about media ownership by providing light.



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# The journalism of SELF PRESERVATION

Keeping jobs and making money

If you ask any practising journalist what role journalists play in society, the most probable answer will be to promote public interest by reliably and accurately informing citizens about the most crucial issues that directly affect their lives.

But I am not sure if the answer would be in the affirmative if you asked the same journalist if that is actually what he or she does because the reality may be quite different from such text book definitions of the role of journalists in society.

By Jacinta Maweu

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Regulation  
**Ethics**  
Accountability

**W**ith journalists and the media increasingly focusing on the bottom line (and profits), and less on public interest, one is left to wonder if there is any room for journalism ethics in the new media model any more.

It is evident that the ways in which traditional media and journalism work have changed with the new business model, but the ethical imperatives of good journalism have remained unchanged. The benchmarks of professional journalism, truth, accuracy, reliability, impartiality, respect for humanity and the promotion of public interest, still remain cardinal principles that make media content credible and useful to the wider audience.

But who adheres to these cardinal principles anymore? When people talk about journalism ethics, what comes to mind are invasions of privacy, corruption, sex in the media and sensationalism in reporting that is likely to cause chaos through public incitement.

That explains why the phone hacking scandal in the UK caused so much public uproar, because it was regarded as a blatant violation of journalism ethics.

But there is an even deeper crisis in journalism ethics that has nothing to do with the hacking scandal, ethnic hate speech, sex in the media or even corruption among journalists. The crisis is a commercial threat on journalism ethics.

My interviews with journalists working for commercial media in Kenya revealed that most of the time, individual journalists experience ethical dilemmas emanating from the desire to fulfill their ideal professional role as journalists, which according to them is the promotion and protection of public interest, and the need to preserve themselves against internal and external commercial threats as they adjust to the realities of the corporate newsroom.

The journalists observed that corporate pressure



Joshua Oates

Any honest journalist working for private commercial media in a democratic society will tell you that there is much more self censorship in the media houses today to protect commercial interests than there was during the authoritarian control of the media by the government, mainly because of pressure from owners through the managers and senior editors.

Professionalism in the media today therefore is a matter of balance, a give and take, because journalists have the dual role of promoting the shareholders' interests and the public interest but, more often than not, shareholders' interests reign supreme.

from media owners, advertisers and shareholders force them to practise what they called "the journalism of self preservation", because they want to keep their jobs and the owners want to make money.

Most of the journalists I talked to cited the ethical principles of accuracy, fairness, truth, objectivity and public interest as the principles that guide them every day in their work. But most of them also observed that sometimes, it is more practical to violate these principles in order to survive.

It was near unanimous that most of the journalists try to be ethical and professional in their work by observing both the code of conduct and the editorial policy guidelines. But they also observed that there are real challenges and threats that compromise their capacity to fulfill their ideal role as journalists. They lamented that though they are technically free to fulfill their roles as journalists, ownership does influence their freedom because their freedom is limited by commercial interests.

Any honest journalist working for private commercial media in a democratic society will tell you that there is much more self censorship in the media houses today to protect commercial interests than there was during the authoritarian control of the media by the government, mainly because of pressure from owners through the managers and senior editors.

Professionalism in the media today therefore is a matter of balance, a give and take, because journalists have the dual role of promoting the shareholders'

There is no doubt that journalism ethics are on trial in most democratic societies both in the developed and developing world due to the increased bottom-line mentality of senior management and media owners.

interests and the public interest but, more often than not, shareholders' interests reign supreme.

Media professionals who are brave enough to own up to their deep-seated fears of the economic threats to their very survival will tell you that they are more afraid of commercial threats from the market because, unlike the government, markets subtly vote with their pockets and hence are worse media regulators.

As some of the journalists told me, the media is first and foremost a business and someone owns that business. At the end of the day, the owner wants profit and this has profound implications on how journalists go about their professional roles.

Indeed, the media is a business and decent profits can and should be made from it. But ethical problems arise when owners regard the media as akin to any other industry. The moment media executives and journalists begin talking about their work as if it were just another branch of the business industry among others, branches that only require profitability so that they can maintain their own and their employees' positions, society is in deep trouble.

Listening to media executives, one can tell that profitability has become both the sole means and goal of the media business.

This is a sorry state because the moment journalists and the media in general fail to report on a matter of public interest because it is not in the interests of their industry, a betrayal of the sanctity of journalism occurs.

Such behaviour undermines the media's capacity to authoritatively question the disreputable, self-serving behaviour which they routinely accuse other sectors of indulging in. The interests of the news media as businesses are contrary to the press' traditional role in serving the public. The primary obligation of journalism is truth and its first loyalty should be to the public, not profits.

Good journalism practice must be grounded in journalism ethics to encourage the responsible use of the freedom to publish. Journalism ethics encourage a more professional media that is aware of its social role and its capacity to make or break the society. Journalists have to know to what extent market forces can have their way in the media without compromising public

interest, which is the essence of journalism.

The success of any democracy depends upon the combined efforts of professional journalists, concerned citizens, and responsible media institutions that can balance between public and commercial interest. And without such, citizens only fool themselves when they claim they are informed and self-governing.

So are journalism ethics on trial and is there any chance for survival?

There is no doubt that journalism ethics are on trial in most democratic societies both in the developed and developing world due to the increased bottom-line mentality of senior management and media owners.

But all hope is not lost. With the professional integrity of journalists and the deliberate effort by the media fraternity to practise responsible journalism, journalism ethics can still survive these commercially-turbulent times.

Journalists and the media in general must understand that, if they are to retain their credibility and honour their constitutional protection of free speech, they must operate by some minimum ethical standards. If the media is to hold politicians, public officials and the private sector to a certain standard, the media will have to live by those same standards.

Journalists set the agenda for what readers will be thinking about and discussing with colleagues. Despite these economic threats, journalists should know how to balance the owner's desire for profits without compromising their professional integrity. As some of the journalists I talked to observed, the first obligation of the journalist should be to get their facts right, then wave the code of conduct and the editorial policy guidelines to defend themselves once their seniors and the management come after them.

When the editor or the owner tries to limit a thorough investigation because it is against industry interest, the journalist should know when it is ethical to negotiate to protect public interest. Ethical journalism may be a delicate balancing act amid all these commercial pressures, but as some of them told me, it can be done. The challenge lies in how to fund such journalism in the new commercial media environment.



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That a palpable sense of mounting ethnic tensions was beginning to take root in the few months leading up to the 4 March general elections in Kenya, was not in doubt but not entirely unprecedented. Sporadic inter-communal skirmishes did not augur well for an exercise that would see the country elect its fourth president since independence. The worst tribal violence seven months before the elections was witnessed in the Tana River Delta, between the Pokomo and Orma tribes, the one a farming community and the other a pastoralist one. A 2 000-strong paramilitary force was later deployed in the region to prevent further conflict, which could easily spread to the rest of the country. Even so, an escalation of violence left scores of people dead, livestock stolen and property razed to the ground. A total of 115 villagers lost their lives in the clashes. This led to suspicion that a political hand was behind the incident, beyond the dispute for water and pasture, which was the reason offered as the main cause for the conflict. One member of parliament was arrested and accused of incitement. All in all, apart from the violence in the Delta, elections went on peacefully, bar one or two isolated incidents. However, the calm that prevailed was an uneasy one. The manner in which the tallying and announcement of elections results was being conducted not only left a lot to be desired, but was the cause of much apprehension. In many people's eyes this calm was necessary to avert inflaming ethnic tensions that would see the country slide down the slippery road of the 2007/2008 post-poll chaos. Up to 1 300 people lost their lives in the violence that ensued. And to keep this calm, the Kenyan media had to be responsible in its reporting.

# A crisis of CREDIBILITY

By Geoffrey Kamadi



Geoffrey Kamadi

Regulation  
**Ethics**  
Accountability

Media owners and managers therefore promised responsible journalism by appending their signatures to a code of conduct that would discourage the type of reporting deemed to incite the public to violence.

All of a sudden the media found itself on unfamiliar ground, with the spotlight falling squarely upon it.

The manner and extent to which it was going to objectively cover an electoral process, which, from a neutral point of view was flawed in many respects, became a matter of public interest.

The true test came when the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission (IEBC), an electoral management body, prepared to announce the results. The public waited to see what would happen, given that the much-praised biometric voter registration system turned out to be a massive flop. The technology, which was meant to prevent vote rigging and electoral fraud all of a sudden shut down.

The commission therefore resorted to manual tallying of the votes. This did not sit well with a section of the public, especially when the results were coming in painfully slowly from the polling stations and took days rather than hours to compile.

Consequently, and rather uncharacteristically, the Kenyan media practically became silent. No hard-hitting questions were coming through from a media that is known not to pull any punches.

This was particularly evident when Issack Hassan, the IEBC chairman, admitted rather candidly that a computer glitch had exaggerated rejected votes by a factor of eight. No one from the Kenyan media followed up on the issue, even after a Reuters journalist brought it up.

That the reputation of the Kenyan media was on the line was clearly demonstrated by journalists taking to social media to express their views and vent their frustrations.

"I work for the media but once again I ask what law bars the media from announcing results as announced in the polling stations, why wait for IEBC to give Kenyans results that are different from what was announced in the polling stations, yet not raise a question? As the media, we failed Kenya in 2007 and 2013. We owe Kenyans more than just an apology," cried a frustrated voice on Facebook, posted by a journalist working for one of the leading newspapers in the country.

Journalists were growing tired of the self-censorship imposed by media house managers, which as far as they were concerned had gone too far.

The freedom of speech and expression the country has enjoyed over the years was under threat and all in the name of keeping the peace.

The stance taken by the media ultimately begged the question: in light of its perceived

collective silence in the wake of the elections result announcement, is the Kenyan media still credible?

Michela Wrong, a London-based freelance journalist, who had covered three previous elections in Kenya, thinks not.

“As a reader and viewer of Kenyan news, I am now far more sceptical than I used to be, and no doubt many Kenyans are too. I just don’t trust the key outlets anymore,” she says, adding that the self-inflicted damage by the media will take years to repair.

Wrong, who has written a book on corruption in Kenya, had spent more than a month writing a blog on the elections for the *New York Times*. She was previously based in Nairobi as a *Financial Times* correspondent.

Her views are shared by Anthony Wafula, a journalism consultant and observer in the country. Whereas he agrees that the media’s credibility has taken a battering, he is quick to add that the public dissatisfaction might not be all that uniform as perception might suggest.

“I am not sure if people trust the media that much again. We need to watch how people consume the media to help gauge the levels of dissatisfaction,” he advises.

However, Wafula adds: “This dissatisfaction might be region specific, so whereas one part of the country might be dissatisfied there is a possibility that another part might be very satisfied.”

Other journalists saw things differently. They defended the manner in which the media acquitted itself in the period leading up to, during and after the elections. After all, the media could not do anything more than it had already done.

Macharia Gaitho, a senior journalist and a respected columnist with the *Daily Nation*, the country’s leading newspaper, is one such journalist.

“The media questioned the IEBC over the process of acquiring the biometric voter registration kits. When the systems failed during the election, the media reported it. Even when the petition [challenging the result] was taken to court, the media was still reporting until the Chief Justice warned against subverting the process,” Gaitho, who is also the chairman of the Kenya Editors Guild, is reported to have said.

As far as he is concerned, the Kenyan media conducted itself professionally and did everything it could to inform the public.

He attributed their professional conduct to their extensive training on election and conflict reporting in the period leading up to the elections.

“We had so much training way before the elections so that we didn’t repeat the mistakes

of the last elections. We had to [inform] radio presenters what is fair and safe to air live,” he is reported to have said.

The over-cautious approach by the Kenyan media in reporting the elections was, at another level, understandable.

Indeed, following the elections chaos five years ago, Joshua Arap Sang, a little-known radio presenter with the nondescript Kass FM radio station, now finds himself as one of the suspects being investigated by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague for crimes against humanity.

The radio station is one among hundreds of vernacular stations which are said to have been at the centre of inciting their listeners. Kass FM broadcasts in Kalenjin, which is the fourth-largest ethnic group in Kenya.

Other suspects facing charges of crimes against humanity by the ICC happen to include the newly-elected president, Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy, William Ruto.

Some will argue that the code of conduct signed by media owners effectively muzzled the ability of journalists to report freely and objectively. This was not only ill-advised but to do it with the excuse of keeping peace was not warranted, according to Wrong.

“Media executives allowed the much-vaunted ‘peace narrative’ to dominate their agendas. They endorsed a distorted retelling of the 2007/8 post-election violence, whereby the media bore much of the responsibility for the killings, rapes and looting of those days,” she says.

Citing the Waki report, Wrong explains that the media’s role in fuelling violence at the time paled in comparison to the violence instigated by armed gangs paid by political figures in addition to the security forces’ fire-at-will approach.

The Waki report was a culmination of the 2008 Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence detailing events that led to the violence. The commission was led by Philip Waki, a Kenyan judge.

There is no doubt that the performance of the Kenyan media in its reporting on the elections did not exactly receive resounding approval from the court of public opinion.

What then for the Kenyan media? Dr. Levi Obonyo, a journalism lecturer at Daystar University offers: “The media should be more aggressive in their reporting, and I think some of that is already starting to happen.”

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‘Media executives allowed the much-vaunted peace narrative to dominate their agendas. They endorsed a distorted retelling of the 2007/8 post-election violence, whereby the media bore much of the responsibility for the killings, rapes and looting of those days.’



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# NEW BUT NARROW

## free expression in South Sudan

By Tom Rhodes

**S**ince Africa's newest country gained independence in 2011 the space for free expression has remained narrow and appears, with 2015 elections creeping closer, to be diminishing further. The former rebels, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) fought a 22-year civil war for greater autonomy and civil rights culminating in South Sudan's independence but a war mentality appears to prevail. "We are still recovering from a war culture," Oliver Modi, chairman of the Union of Journalists of South Sudan<sup>1</sup>, told me. "There is just too much ignorance towards the press. We are not used to systems, structures, even the media."

Accustomed to blanket support by fellow South Sudanese during the war, replete with a highly-supportive, fledgling South Sudanese press; the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) simply is not accustomed to public disapproval. Many in the new government expect the media to simply support their efforts. "Some in the [Sudan People's Liberation Movement] want the press to become part of the government," said journalist Alfred Taban, who started an English daily, *Khartoum Monitor*<sup>2</sup>, in North Sudan's capital in 2000 and now runs *Juba Monitor* in Juba.

"The [South Sudanese] press is partly to blame. During the war, the southern press acted almost entirely as an opposing voice to the Khartoum government." The government-controlled press of northern Sudan always portrayed South Sudan in a negative light during the civil war, while in turn; the fledgling southern press defended the southern rebel movement. The result of this war of words has led to a southern press unfamiliar with critical reporting and a highly defensive new government intolerant of any disapproval.

Politically-sensitive issues such as corruption, inter-ethnic and inter-clan rivalries, along with security issues linked to their northern neighbours in Sudan, have become "no-go" areas for the press, according to local journalists. Security agents arbitrarily detained and questioned Citizen TV station manager Cosmas Mundu over articles published in the station's sister paper, chief editor Nhial Bol said. He believes this is linked to an incident a week earlier where a security officer threatened Mundu at gunpoint, ordering him not to publish anything related to the vice president, Riek Machar. Local journalists covering the growing rivalry between President Salva Kiir and his deputy Riek Machar ahead of the 2015 elections, both representing the largest and second largest tribes in the country, respectively, is the latest issue security services have forcefully censored.

Past topics have proved even more deadly. In

December, unknown gunmen shot<sup>3</sup> online commentator Isaiah Diing Abraham dead outside his home in the capital Juba. A former veteran and outspoken critic of the government, relatives and colleagues fear he was targeted for his critical columns. Diing was threatened several times prior to his killing through emails and anonymous phone calls warning him to stop writing, local journalists said. His last article,<sup>4</sup> published on 27 November 2012 in the *Sudan Tribune*,<sup>5</sup> urged authorities to foster a better relationship with Sudan and refrain from supporting Sudanese rebel groups. Despite claims in May by government spokesman Barnaba Marial that suspects had been arrested, nothing more is known about who the suspects are.

When two other critical columnists, Zechariah Manyang and John Penn, questioned the incident and criticised the lack of transparent investigation, both writers felt compelled to flee the country a month later. "The idea was for security to kill one of us, and if we got afraid, they would stop," Manyang said. "But I continued writing after the assassination and then I was on top of their list." The Committee to Protect Journalists<sup>6</sup> has monitored 14 cases of attacks against the press since December 2012, averaging two a month, and all but two of these cases involved harassment and illegal detentions by security personnel. The organisation wrote a public letter<sup>7</sup> to the president urging him to ensure security personnel are held accountable for unwarranted threats and detentions of the press.

Some journalists are hoping that three media bills, set up to launch a media ombudsman, a public broadcaster and access to information, will improve press conditions. But the original drafts were designed in 2007 and although tabled in parliament, none are yet passed into law. Amendments to the original drafts are also of concern. Under the current draft the media regulator's board would be appointed and supervised by the information minister, for instance, derailing its original intentions for an independent ombudsman.

As the ruling party's control and support of the public wanes ahead of 2015 elections with corruption<sup>8</sup> cases and economic insecurity fostered by seemingly endless oil production disputes with Sudan over oil production, local journalists fear reporting freely will diminish further. "The authorities are getting increasingly nervous amid growing public unpopularity," *Juba Monitor* Managing Editor Michael Koma said. "We have not resorted to grave self-censorship yet, but it is likely."

### Endnotes

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David Iohr Bueso

# Reporting RELIGION

Religion is frequently linked to headlines that scream of shame. But often enough we also don't see contextual or accurate reporting on religion. More likely, one finds journalists whose writing relies on stereotypes and bigotry.

By Yazeed Kamaldien

**I**t was while I was reporting on the Arab Spring in Yemen that an online workshop on religion reporting connected me with journalists of different nationalities with a common cause.

It was early 2011, and we were engaged in discussions on how to articulate better the stories about faiths. We knew that writing about religion was not always easy. And we agreed that we could all do a much better job of it.

One of the workshop facilitators, David Briggs, who is an experienced religion reporter, guided us through the dynamics of writing about the beliefs that so many worldwide hold close to their hearts and defend passionately.

That workshop, offered online by the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) based in Washington DC, was the foundation for the launch of the International Association for Religion Journalists (IARJ) in Italy in March 2012.

The IARJ was the brainchild of Briggs who, by the time of the IARJ launch, had already talked with journalists worldwide. He said he had worked "with some 200 journalists from 90 nations in a series of six-week ICFJ dialogues, to listen to their needs and to learn their ideas about how to best serve global reporters and editors covering religion.

"What emerged from those conversations was an overwhelming consensus for the need for an international association sharing global resources for religion coverage, including the indispensable insights each of us can offer from our professional experience in our own countries," said Briggs.

By the time I'd left Yemen, we had laid the foundation of a common understanding that we needed

to work towards for improving religion reporting.

We had elected a diverse group of men and women to our board of directors from Africa, Asia, Australia, North America, South America and Europe. And among us lived various beliefs, including atheism.

Our work had begun and we needed to now let our colleagues know about our insights. This already includes offering a small fund to journalists who want to work on joint reporting projects. A conference in Latin America is in the making.

And the IARJ envisions hosting workshops, conferences and contests for journalists to improve reporting on religion. It has already run some online workshops since the launch in Italy.

We are engaging funding partners with the intention of launching reporting projects that would enable our members to build networks and spend time to focus on creating examples of best practice.

We have partnered with the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA), which offers our members access to the best international research on religion.

One of the first conferences that I was sent to on behalf of the IARJ was the Highway Africa gathering in Grahamstown in 2012.

It was a challenge explaining particularly to European media professionals that one actually does not have to follow any religion to be an excellent religion reporter.

African journalists were interestingly but not surprisingly more receptive to the idea of the IARJ and cited religion as an integral part of their societies.

My mantra throughout the conference was that the only objective one should have when joining the IARJ, irrespective of your religious affiliation or belief in God, is to report accurately and fairly on religious affairs.

It is known that religion is a topic that easily falls prey to sensationalism and scandal. Religion is frequently linked to headlines that scream of shame. But often enough we also don't see contextual or accurate reporting on religion. More likely, one finds journalists whose writing relies on stereotypes and bigotry.

But we are making strides in showcasing examples of better reporting on religion. The ICFJ recently held a joint reporting contest and a number of IARJ members entered this competition.

An IARJ colleague and I worked on a feature about Islamophobia in Europe. I'd spent a month in Paris and my colleague focused on her Italian surrounds.

While this contest was not for religion reporting, we won the top prize, showing that religion reporting is part of everyday journalism, just like sports, education, health or crime reporting.

The IARJ realises though that not enough newsrooms or journalists focus on honing the religion reporting beat, alongside their sports or crime reporter counterparts. There are hardly any journalists in newsrooms that focus on monitoring and reporting on religious communities and their affairs.

But we hope that with more workshops, awareness and contests that the religion reporting beat would be considered more seriously in newsrooms.



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Danumurthi Mahendra



Steve Evans

The IARJ's membership has grown in just over a year. At last count, we had 400 members from 90 countries signed up. Our website attracts more journalists each month, seeking resources to improve their reporting.

We remind them that the "ultimate goal of the IARJ is not to promote religions, but to foster better journalism about religion worldwide".



# Freedom for some?

It all started with one question: is freedom of religion actual freedom or is it only on the books?

By Yazeed Kamaldien and Elisa di Benedetto

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Belluno, Italy. When Sharif Eissa opened his kebab shop in this small town in north-eastern Italy, he didn't expect it would close after five years. He left Egypt about 12 years ago to follow the woman he fell in love with. What he could not foresee was a growing prejudice against immigrants and Muslims that made it impossible for him to keep open a business.

**“I couldn't stand the continual rounds and fines by the police, keeping my shop under control,” Eissa says. “They used to come every week, no matter the time and whether or not there were people inside. They even asked the customers for their documents.” Add to that the prejudices fueled by groups such as the Northern League political party, and, basically, Eissa says, “I had to give up my shop because of my religion.”**

On the books, there are constitutional protections for freedom of religion throughout Western Europe. But laws throughout the region on everything from limits on Islamic dress to prohibitions on the building of mosques reflect what many regard as persistent persecution directed at Muslims.

Marwan Muhammad, volunteer spokesperson for the Collective Against Islamophobia in Paris, believes Islamophobia in France is “anti-black and anti-Arab discrimination recomposed in a religion context”. “There are right-wing oriented ideologies that say Muslims don't belong here and that Islam is against a European identity. They believe that Europe is for whites only. There is a denial of Muslims in France even though we make up 10% of the population.”

Just how pervasive the contradictions in the notions of religious freedom in theory and practice are, was revealed in a 2010 University of Munster study of more than 1 000 respondents from five Western European nations. More than four in five respondents from all countries expressed respect for freedom of belief, and at

least three quarters from each country agreed with the statement: “We must respect all religions.”

Yet consider also these findings: more than half of the respondents from the former East Germany and France said practising the Islamic faith must be severely restricted. So did more than a third of the respondents from Denmark, the Netherlands and the former West Germany.

Less than half of the respondents from Germany, Denmark and France approve of the construction of minarets. Only in Denmark and the Netherlands did a slim majority believe girls should be allowed to wear a head scarf to school if it is part of their religious tradition. In France, where the practice is prohibited, fewer than 10% supported the right of students to wear head scarves.

The idea that Muslims “must adapt to our culture” was backed by majorities from 73% of respondents in Portugal to 90% of respondents in the Netherlands.

### ***Persistent prejudice***

The hopes of Muslims in France were raised following presidential elections last year when Francois Hollande ousted Nicholas Sarkozy, who stirred tensions with anti-Islam and anti-immigrant rhetoric. But Muslims still report a long road ahead to acceptance. Muhammad says in 2011 his organisation investigated 300 cases of Islamophobia, of which 84% were against women.

Discrimination against Muslims in France has focused heavily on the hijab, or headscarf, that Muslim women wear. “The most visible symbol of Islam is the wearing of the hijab. Most racists perceive the hijab as a visual sign of hostility toward them,” he said.

Chamous Larisse, a nurse who works in Paris while completing her master's degree in social science studies, turned to the collective for advice when the manager at the hospital where she works asked her to take off the scarf that covered her hair.

“I was the only Muslim nurse and I was wearing the hijab,” she says. “Since then I tried to mobilise to struggle against this discrimination.”

It is an important issue, “because I am Muslim and I try to practise Islam as far as possible. God prescribed the hijab in the Qur'an.” Larisse views anti-Muslim prejudice in a broader context, as part of a post-colonial crisis in which Muslims who are also French are seen as threatening the nation's identity.

Muhammad agrees. “Some people don't want Muslims here. Or they want them to assimilate. They want Muslims to fit in because their religion and colour is not in line with what Europe is meant to be,” he says. “I reject that framework. I don't have to define myself according to those criteria. I belong here. I am French and Muslim.”

“Media have a crucial role in shaping people’s perceptions, especially in building prejudices and stereotypes toward Islam and Muslims. Both for ignorance and good faith, religion is often considered as the cause of crimes or related to events that have nothing to do with it, thus feeding tensions and discrimination.”

### ***Restrictions on worship***

The right of women to wear a veil is but one of many issues facing Muslims in Italy. Other areas of concern include the right of Muslim students to have halal food at school, harassment of businesses run by immigrants and laws regulating and even in some cases prohibiting Islamic butcheries or kebab shops. A special concern relates to the fundamental freedom of having an own place of worship.

“At the moment, only two of the five mosques in Italy – the ones in Rome and in Segrate, not far away from Milan – can be defined as mosques by Islamic architectural canons, while there are over 1 000 Islamic centres where Muslims gather for praying and reading the Quran. Here children can learn Arabic and women can meet,” says Husain Morelli, spokesperson for the Imam Mahdi Islamic Culture Centre in Rome.

“Most centres are not appropriate places for worshipping Allah. They are mainly garages or old warehouses and the rent is paid by the Muslim community, despite that places of worship should be guaranteed by the constitution.”

What makes it especially difficult for Muslims in Italy is that prejudice can be pervasive throughout the culture, fed by institutions from political parties to the media.

“Islamophobia in Italy expresses at different levels,” says Morelli. “Media have a crucial role in shaping people’s perceptions, especially in building prejudices and stereotypes toward Islam and Muslims. Both for ignorance and good faith, religion is often considered as the cause of crimes or related to events that have nothing to do with it, thus feeding tensions and discrimination.”

And those pressures take their toll on the Muslim community. “Some of the believers who used to come to the mosque are not coming here anymore, because they fear controls by the police,” Morelli says. “Some of them have been asked for support in collecting information about other Muslims. Moreover, going to the mosque can create difficulties or delays in getting Italian citizenship.”

Zahra, who spoke on condition of anonymity, converted to Islam in 2006, and is faithful in her worship. But she doesn’t wear the hijab at university or at work and only the people she trusts know about her conversion. “Living in a country where Muslims are a minority doesn’t help. People are not used to diversity and this affects everyday life,” Zahra says.

Eissa, the former kebab shop owner, worries about

how his children struggle with being both Italian and Muslim. “How would you feel if one of your neighbours didn’t want his son to play with yours just because of your culture and religion?” he asks. “I feel my son and my daughter are growing up in a big confusion between their Islamic culture and Italian lifestyle. They are very young but they already feel ashamed when mentioning their own religion, while they should live it with serenity and be proud of that, as well as of being Italians.”

### ***Promoting dialogue***

Many Western European Muslims hope that increased dialogue with and interaction among people of different faiths will lead to greater understanding. Morelli encourages Italian Muslims to actively participate in the community to build a positive vision of Islam. “Sometimes prejudices could be avoided by making Muslim people explain what Islam is instead of people who don’t know this religion,” he says.

Research supports the idea that getting to know your neighbour can go a long way to limiting prejudice. The University of Munster study indicated that having personal contact with Muslims was strongly related to favorable attitudes toward Islam in every country. For example, in the former West Germany, 38% of respondents who reported a lot of contact with Muslims reported very positive attitudes; only one percent of respondents who had no contact held very positive attitudes toward Muslims.

But there is a long way to go. In the European study, less than 10% of the respondents said they had a lot of contact with Muslims. As a seeming consequence, the study showed what comes to many of their minds when they think of Islam are discrimination against women, fanaticism and, somewhat ironically, narrow-mindedness. They don’t have notions of Muslims as peaceful and tolerant.

In France, Larisse is determined to push forward for equal rights for Islam. “I hope for the normalisation of the presence of Islam and Muslims. Islam and Muslims are here. I can’t understand why this tension exists,” she says. “I hope in future the presence of Muslim women, the mosque and Islamic practice will appear as normal in France.”

*This article won first prize in the Washington-based International Centre for Journalists annual Joint Reporting Awards competition in April 2013.*



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# NEEDED

## a broader view of accountability

By Steven Friedman

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Political journalists and judges might be offended by claims that they have much in common. But the commonality exists nonetheless. Both media and courts insist that their independence is crucial to a democratic society. Both see themselves as a vital check on the power of government. And both therefore resist calls that they should be accountable to society. Criticism of judges and political journalists, even when accompanied by no demands that they be forced to do anything differently, are often rejected as an assault on the independence of both.

Even purists who protect the media and courts from most attempts to hold them to account, would acknowledge that neither can simply do as they please. Judicial independence zealots would surely agree that we are entitled to know whether judges are freelancing on the side just as their equivalents in the media agree that we need to know if anyone accepts money to write a favourable report. But accountability is viewed narrowly. The public, in this view, is entitled to know if judges or journalists are taking bribes or arriving at work drunk, but is expected to stay out of judging whether they are adequately serving society.

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In reality, recognising journalists' role in underpinning democracy would require a major shift in how many see themselves and their craft, their chief professional relationship would be not with their employers or colleagues, but their public.

Accountability is meant to be the business of the profession, not the public. Judges can be held to account by other judges and lawyers, journalists by each other. The public is meant to stay out of the discussion: if they enter it, independence is at risk.

This is a popular view among influential sections of South African society. It is also deeply undemocratic. A core democratic principle is that holders of power ought to account to those over whom they wield it. And both courts and the media exercise power.

In both cases, independence is important. Judges will not dispense justice fairly if they are told by power holders how they should find. Media cannot inform people accurately if they are ordered what to say. But both fulfill a crucial social function and both therefore wield power.

So purist demands for media freedom or judicial independence are not likely to protect democracy. On the contrary, they undermine it by placing important social functions beyond debate. Democracies and democrats do not close down debate. Purism also threatens democracy by endangering the freedom it claims to promote. If the media or courts insist that what they do is none of society's business, it is likely



Neo Ntsoma

that, sooner or later, powerful interests in society will make it their business. Why should anyone support the independence of an institution which refuses to show that it is of use to them?

If media are to serve democracy, we need a much broader view of accountability than one which restricts it to not breaking the law. Before we discuss that, a brief comment is needed on why it makes sense to talk of media and the courts in the same way.

### ***Another form of power***

Independent courts and media are both key to a democratic society. The core democratic principle is that everyone is entitled to an equal share in the decisions which affect them. This requires that everyone's rights be respected; only the courts can ensure this. It also cannot happen unless we have enough information to decide and the media can help ensure that.

There are obvious differences. The courts are part of the state, independent media are not. And so we have one court system, but many media outlets. Non-state media are not funded by taxes and those who control them are not appointed by government. Why then insist that they be held to account? Why is this not simply an infringement of the right of private citizens to exercise their freedom?

Those who own and work in the media believe they are playing a vital public role. Constant references to their "watchdog" role confirm this, as do references to the "fourth estate", which implies that, like the estates of 18th century France, media play a key role in the social and political order.

They are right. Media coverage of politics and society plays a key role in shaping what we are or are not told and therefore in deciding whether we have the information we need to exercise our rights. This means that private media are power holders, despite the fact that they are not part of the state.

An obvious objection is that media, unlike courts, compete. If you don't think one is informing you, you can switch to another. But often the choice is mythical: powerful media companies muscle smaller voices to the margins. Italy, where Silvio Berlusconi used control of media to entrench himself politically as well as commercially, may be an extreme case, but it illustrates the point: even in a competitive market concentration of ownership is likely and this will ensure that the "free market of ideas" is not nearly as free as its admirers claim. The sovereign in a democratic society is the citizen, and most citizens cannot assert their right to information simply by switching from one media organisation to another.

Like the courts, therefore, the media are essential to democracy. Both wield power and both offer most citizens few options if they don't like the way the institution is conducting itself. And so both are required to account if democracy is to be served – not only for whether they obey the law but for the degree to which they wield their power in the interests of citizens and the extent to which they strengthen democracy. What does that mean for the media?

### ***A wider ethic***

Journalists who cover politics and social issues need to see their independence as a means to an end, ensuring that citizens are able to take informed decisions.

Many journalists who cover politics and society would respond that they do this, it is common to claim that media freedom is demanded not for its own sake but in the interests of a broader public. But in reality, recognising journalists' role in underpinning democracy would require a major shift in how many see themselves and their craft, their chief professional relationship would be not with their employers or colleagues, but their public.

This would be a significant shift for some. Reporting on society is often incestuous and self-absorbed, at least since someone in America coined the term "pack journalism", it has been understood that reporters and commentators often talk to each other and a fairly small group of sources but no one else. Reality then becomes a product of what a small group of people tell each other and the information which reaches citizens is distorted. An appreciation that journalists are meant to engage with the society, not simply with a closed group, would alter the way in which many operate.

But more is needed. "Society" and "the public" are vague terms; professional relationships are built with people, not concepts. One block to accountability is that journalists claim a relationship with an abstract "public" which exists purely as a slogan: anything can be justified by insisting that it serves the "public" because a vague and abstract concept cannot answer back, and anyone who does answer back can be stigmatised as a non-member of the "public" (by, for example, labeling anyone who criticises your work as a lackey of government).

The way out is offered by sociologist Michael Burawoy, who suggests that people who deal in information and ideas engage with specific "publics" rather than a vague and general public. The journalist who writes about politics and society is in a professional relationship with specific groups of people, politicians, political commentators, politically-aware citizens. These "publics" comprise real people and organisations that are indeed capable of answering back.

So far, this is an expression of reality, not an ethical point. Whether or not they wish it, journalists have to take seriously the responses of politicians, business people, trade unions and those citizens who have the power to convey their sense of whether they are being accurately portrayed.

The ethical challenge is to move beyond these obvious "publics", who call or write to complain (or simply yell the next time they encounter a journalist), to broader "publics". And that requires journalists to extend their horizons.

Ideally, this would mean a willingness to envisage who the journalist is talking to and what they want to know: journalists should have a very clear sense of their audience and should bother to find out what it needs to know. But, if this sounds too difficult, a simple willingness to acknowledge that public information is an important resource in a democracy and that the

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journalist has a crucial responsibility as a guardian of that resource, could make a huge difference for many practices we see today.

#### ***From theory to practice***

To illustrate, consider the standard approach to covering politics and society right now.

Information comes from speeches, media releases and confidential sources. There is no attempt to test the information beyond the standard call to “analysts” (such as this one) invariably chosen on criteria other than a sense that they have expertise which would make the report accurate. Particularly desirable are the confidential sources, one recently-promoted political journalist confided recently a fear of taking over the post because “I don’t have the sources my predecessor had”. This way of operating appears to win enthusiastic approval from employers and peers. It is a betrayal of the journalistic mission: it ensures that the information which reaches citizens is shaped by what the politicians or other authority figures want them to hear, not what is accurate.

Usually absent from this approach is the obvious assumption that public figures tell journalists what they want people to know and that what they say is invariably self-serving. So operating in this way ensures that journalists obstruct rather than advance democracy by telling citizens only what the connected want us to know. Journalists who don’t have the sources their predecessors had are better able to inform people because they are able to look beyond that which the inner circle wants them to know.

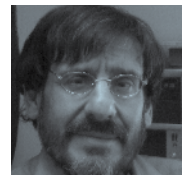
How do journalists break this pattern? Fortunately there are basic remedies which enable reporting to fulfill its democratic function. No one has to become a crusader or an egghead or spend their days outside the office talking to people in townships (although it would be nice if they did). All they need do is apply the common sense tools of the craft.

This means: checking leaked claims with other sources so that spin is not passed off as news; eliciting comment on speeches from people with opposing interests or opinions so that both sides are conveyed; and, where claims are made about policy documents, taking the trouble to read them. This includes finding out what an organisation’s constitution says before you allow its spokesperson to claim it says something else. (If all this sounds basic, examine the media and see how much of it actually happens).

Ideally, it would be useful if journalists went the extra mile and bothered to give those to whom they talk some context. This would mean reading some history to get a sense of why people are doing what they do or checking on recent policy moves so that what is old is not presented as new. And for some it might even mean keeping in touch with researchers who may have information citizens might find useful.

But isn’t this a call for competence rather than accountability? Yes and no. All these basic suggestions are designed simply to ensure that reporting is accurate. But it is a question of accountability too: anyone in the media who accepts that they are meant to be informing citizens so that they can make the choices which democracy allows them is acknowledging a responsibility. Accepting that responsibility will ensure that what they transmit to the citizenry is as accurate as they can possibly make it.

If journalists want to show they are indispensable to democracy, and so persuade others to defend their independence, they need only do their jobs. It is a symptom of the state of our media that this would require almost a revolution in the way our society is covered.



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# THE BRITISH TABLOID PRESS, **Lord Justice Leveson,** **and lessons for elsewhere**

By John Mair

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Niamh Walsh-Vorster

To say Lord Justice Leveson has and will have a seismic effect on the practice of British journalism is an understatement. The Press Barons (American, Australians, Russians, Channel Island tax exiles and a very few Brits) are resisting reform like mad, but soon there will be a royal charter enshrining the Leveson recommendations after his 16-month inquiry into the “culture, ethics and practices of the British press” following the Millie Dowler affair and the closure of the *News of the World* by Rupert Murdoch in July 2011. He brought the great and the good, from Rupert Murdoch to Piers Morgan to David Cameron, to his witness box and took over three million words of evidence.

In brief Lord Leveson concluded in his nearly 2000 word report published in November 2012: elements of the British Press had acted badly for too long. They wreaked havoc through phone hacking, blagging, monsterring and more, and were out of control.

Self-regulation of the press through the Press Complaints Commission, in Brian Leveson’s memorable phrase, “marking their own homework”, had failed dismally to protect the innocent and generate trust by readers. It was dead in the water.

#### **Leveson proposed:**

A much firmer self-regulation body with outsiders on it and the powers to investigate and to fine heavily, underpinned by a tiny dab of statute/law to ensure the press did not roll back on its commitments.

And British journalists could be going to jail for breaking the law. Parallel to Lord Leveson’s Judicial Inquiry there have been four big police investigations in England and Scotland. Arrests occur almost daily, so keeping score is not easy.

In June, Rebekah Brooks, the former CEO of Rupert Murdoch’s British newspaper empire News International, appeared in a London court with eight others for, among other charges, “conspiracy to pervert the course of justice”. Her trial is expected in September.

Brooks and Prime Minister David Cameron’s former press chief, Andy Coulson are not alone. Dawn raids have seen many journalistic collars felt in the last two years. The roll call is not impressive.

Thirty six have been arrested including 27 journalists for hacking into or illegally tapping other people’s mobile phones. Sixteen people have so far been charged.

Sixty two including 29 journalists have been arrested for allegedly bribing public officials to get information. The arrestees include 13 police officers. Six people have so far been convicted.

One major paper, Britain’s most popular *The Sun*, currently has had nearly a half of its news desk journalists arrested.

Eighteen people, including seven journalists, have been arrested in relation to computer hacking.

Three journalists or former journalists have been charged in Scotland with perverting the course of justice, allegedly perjuring themselves in a perjury trial. They include two former senior editors of the Scottish edition of the *News of the World* and Andy Coulson, former Director of Communications for Prime Minister David Cameron from 2007-2011.

#### **How Scotland Yard finally opened the bin bags and turned over the stones**

Initially the police were reluctant to investigate. The then assistant metropolitan commissioner John Yates ignored nine bin bags of evidence in 2009 and decided there was no need to look any further. He was wrong. It was only the 2011 furore over hacking that forced the police to investigate, nudged by public pressure and their political masters.

There are now at least three on-going police investigations by Scotland Yard.

Operation Weeting investigates phone hacking at the *News of the World* and elsewhere and has made 36 arrests so far. Those include 21 former *News of the World* journalists and much of the editorial high command of the paper for the last decade. Arrestees also include *The Sun* journalists and four former *Daily Mirror* (the major tabloid competitor to *The Sun*) senior executives.

Operation Elveden investigates corrupt payments by journalists to public officials, including police and prison officers, in return for information. Sums of up to £80 000 were mentioned by a very senior policewoman in her evidence to Lord Leveson.

Much of the information for these arrests was supplied by News International through a trawl of three hundred million staff emails. There have been 52 arrests to date, including 22 *Sun* journalists in total and the deputy editor.

Operation Tuleta has made 18 arrests so far in its investigation of the misuse of computers and computer hacking.

British popular journalism and British journalism is in a bad place. This autumn, the Old Bailey dock could be full of journalists on trial. Some, including very significant names, could go down. How did it get to this dire position?

### ***The tabloid, the News of the World, dies.***

In the beginning and at the end there was the *News of the World*, closed down by Rupert Murdoch after 168 years in July 2011. They were guilty of the gross offence of offending public taste. They had hacked the phone of a missing girl Millie Dowler who was later found murdered. The advertisers simply deserted the paper. Murdoch took the commercial decision to close it.

Millie was not alone. *News of the World* engaged in an orgy of phone hacking, usually at one remove, over at least a decade. Up to 4 000 plus names appeared on private investigator Glenn Mulcaire's (who did the dirty work) list.

Scotland Yard say there could be up to 820 victims, but 500 more have been found in the last few months.

### ***Wild West: the good, the bad and the ugly of British tabloids***

First the good, they know and serve their market. The tabloids or "red tops" as they are called in Britain are still popular. *The Sun*, *Mirror*, *Daily Star* and their Sunday equivalents sell close to five million copies daily. They are the papers of choice of "white van men" (tradesmen) and the great British working class. The red tops are irreverent and they do hold power to account, whether politicians, celebrities or otherwise, usually in 300 words or less. This week pop star Tulisa Contostavlos was caught allegedly dealing cocaine in an elaborate *Sun on Sunday* sting.

They can be funny too, a former UK culture minister was caught in a sexual liaison, and went

from "Toe Job to No Job", according to *The Sun*, and comedian Freddie Starr ate somebody's hamster, but they can also be cruel. You live or you die by the tabloids and their world view. Look at Katie Price (Jordan), the super-boob model and her career, largely tabloid generated with ups and downs, or Premiership footballers like John Terry who has gone from hero to zero and back again several times.

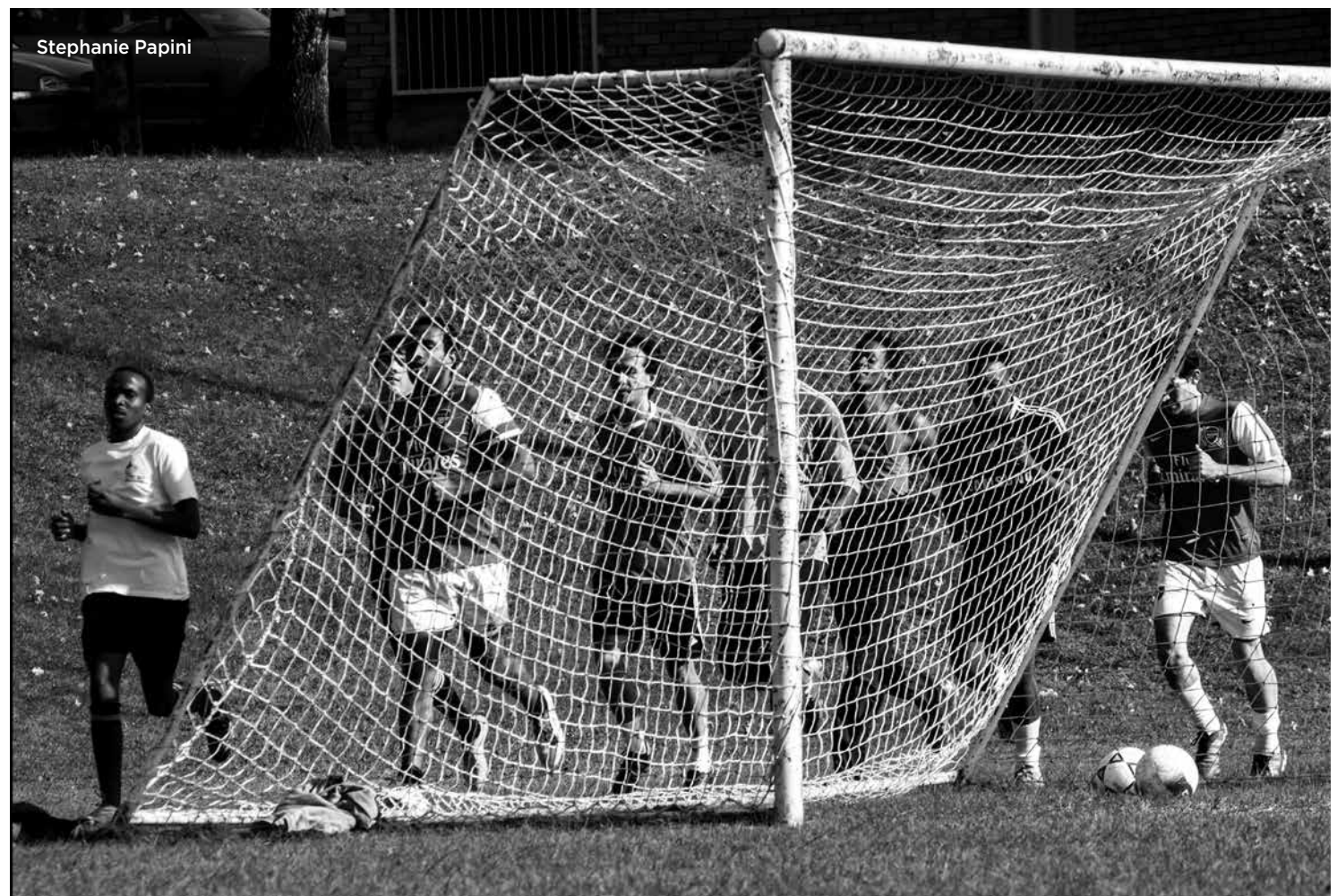
The super red tops, posh-end tabloids like the *Daily Mail*, which informs and entertains the prejudices of suburban Britain, can also be principled and campaigning. The *Daily Mail* got the killers of Stephen Lawrence charged and convicted, after the legal system had failed, once Lawrence's father had decorated the home of editor in chief Paul Dacre and bent his ear.

They can also behave quite badly. Madeleine McCann disappeared in Portugal six years ago. Her parents, Gerry and Kate, have run a media campaign to try to find her. It has been pure tabloid fodder with speculation replacing fact and a "truth" going round the world and ending up on the front page of the *Daily Express* in minutes. They ran dozens of front pages about the Maddy story, mostly untrue. The McCanns were forced to sue for libel and settle for £500 000 plus in damages. The *Express* were unlucky, many others did the same but got away with it.

Then there's Christopher Jeffries, the innocent landlord of Joanna Yeates, who was murdered at his Bristol flat in December 2010. Jeffries was vilified and convicted by the tabloids, because he had long grey hair, it had been blue when he was a teacher and he looked

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For much of this century some or all of the tabloids have indulged in an orgy of phone hacking and tapping on an industrial scale. It is kids stuff with mobiles. Why practice normal journalism when you can get the info through one illegal phone tap?

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“weird”, and therefore guilty. No other evidence. Even the police joined in and arrested him. Jeffries was innocent and he too took the tabloids to court and the cleaners.

Tabloids call it “monsterring”. It happens to fallen celebrities. The other side of irreverence is raw prejudice – against Muslims (especially post the Woolwich murder), against gypsies, against scroungers, against immigrants. You name it and the minorities are in the cross hairs.

Ethics sadly is “a county north of London” to many tabloid journalists, in the memorable phrase of the best-known ever British tabloid editor Kelvin Mackenzie who steered the *Sun* for 13 years.

*The Sun* is the leader of the ugly pack. They got it wrong on the Hillsborough disaster in which 96 Liverpool football fans were crushed to death at a cup match 25 years ago, when they and the police said the fans were drunk. Only last year did an official inquiry disprove their claim. The *Sun* apologised, as did the then editor Mackenzie. Sales in Liverpool have never recovered.

#### ***Phone hacking: how to get a story easily and other Fleet Street dark arts***

For much of this century some or all of the tabloids have indulged in an orgy of phone hacking and tapping on an industrial scale. It is kids’ stuff with mobiles. Why practise normal journalism when you can get the info through one illegal phone tap? The victims varied from celebrities like Angelina Jolie and Hugh Grant, politicians like former home secretaries David Blunkett and Charles Clarke, to footballers like Rio Ferdinand and Ashley Cole.

Glenn “Trigger” Mulcaire, ironically a former professional footballer, was the master of this art. He made £115 000 in one year alone in fees from the *News of the World*. He was convicted and jailed in 2007 with the “one rogue reporter”, Clive Goodman, for intercepting the phones of Prince William and others.

That “one rogue reporter” has since become two or three or four rogue newsrooms, the *Sun*, *Mirror*, and maybe the *Star* added in. Phone hacking was the journalism tool of choice in tabloid newsrooms.

So was “blagging”, or using journalists or even better private investigators to impersonate and blag private information such as bank records, medical records and more. Britain’s Information Commissioner no less found thousands of cases of blagging, commissioned from one private detective by 305 national newspaper reporters back in 2003.

Those plus monsterring, deciding on a target and then picking them apart like the legs from a fly, are just some of the dark arts of the new Fleet Street.

#### ***Crossing that ethical rubicon***

The British tabloids are raw and raucous and used to “shit-kicking”. Now the boot is on the other foot. People will go to jail in the next two years for breaking the law to get a story. They could include some very serious names in British journalism like Coulson, a former *News of the World* editor, and Rebekah Brooks, a former *Sun* and *News of the World* editor.

Will all of this change the amoral, unethical character of the British tabloids? Will the red tops discover morality and power with responsibility post Leveson? I think not, they were breaking rules long before hacking came along.

#### ***Lessons for the rest of the world***

The British press was a pioneer for a century for much of the world, especially the old empire. For the last decade it has led the way in bad behaviour. In life and in journalism, ethical behaviour is everything. Teach that to young journalists, reinforce it regularly, and refresh it as they get older.

Set out clear codes of conduct. In Britain the broadcasters, especially the BBC, all have codes of conduct as part of employee contracts and are subject to external statutory regulation by Ofcom, the office for communication. It has not neutered their journalism or bravery in any way.

If you have a regulating body, make sure it is a watchdog and not a dachshund. We need proper rules of investigation, proper and fair hearings, proper and proportionate sanctions. The British PCC, the Press Complaints Commission, self-regulated by slaps of wrists, which were infrequent, and the carefully hidden corrections, did nothing to enhance British journalism’s reputation.

Remember the public are your customers but they are also your judges. They know right from wrong. They judge you day in and day out. You have to maintain that trust not just for sales but for credibility too. Look how trusted brands operate, like the BBC, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times*.

Journalism to an unbelieving or even hostile audience is not far from fiction. If you break the law as journalists, expect to get caught eventually. The British jails and their stylish prison newspapers over the next few years should be testimony to that.



*John Mair is the editor of After Leveson? The Future of British Journalism (Abramis 2013) and The Phone Hacking Scandal Journalism on Trial (Abramis 2012), with Professor Richard Keeble. He has now edited 10 “hackademic” volumes on contemporary issues in journalism. He is the Chair of the Institute for Communication Ethics and teaches journalism. johnmair100@hotmail.com*

# This could be **COMMUNITY MEDIA'S MOMENT**

By Jane Duncan

At the beginning of this year, the South African Competition Commission announced an inquiry into whether the “big four” press groups – Caxton, Media 24, Times Media Group (formerly Avusa) and Independent Newspapers – were using anti-competitive practices against sections of the independent community press.

Regulation  
**Ethics**  
Accountability



**T**his inquiry is considering whether the corporate press allocated the national market for the publication and printing of their community and paid-for newspapers among themselves<sup>1</sup>, in contravention of the Competition Act. In simple terms, this means that they are accused of having arrived at a gentleman's agreement to allocate market share among themselves, to lock other press competitors out. The act forbids restrictive horizontal practices, including dividing markets by allocating customers, suppliers, territories, or specific types of goods or services.

The timing of this inquiry was suspicious. Coinciding as it did with the Print and Digital Media South Africa's (PDMSA) own enquiry into transformation in the press, the timing seemed designed to collapse this process. This was because the Print and Digital Media Transformation Task Team (PMDTT), which was established to undertake this inquiry, would to an extent have run on the same ground as the commission.<sup>2</sup>

Potentially, the press groups could have compromised themselves by giving information to the PMDTT that could then be used against them in the commission's inquiry. As a result, Caxton and Times Media Group pulled out of the PDMSA process, which has undoubtedly weakened it.<sup>3</sup>

There are other Competition Commission inquiries into the press groups: four in total, according to the Commission.<sup>4</sup> A case against Media 24 has already been referred to the Competition Tribunal. The company stands accused of anti-competitive practices by a newspaper that has since closed down, *Goldnet News*. The paper found itself in competition with a Media 24 title, *Vista*, which it claimed dropped advertising rates below cost, to the point where it could not compete and was driven out of business.<sup>5</sup>

The relentless pressure from the competition authorities could be politically motivated, as part of a broader attempt to reign in a press that has become a thorn in the side of the political elite. The fact that the ruling African National Congress (ANC) had called for a Competition Commission investigation into whether anti-competitive practices exist in the newspaper industry, at the same time that it was pursuing the anti-press freedom Media Appeals Tribunals (MAT), certainly raised suspicions that this was the case. The ANC has also criticised the patchy performance of the press on transformation, which has led to a series of parliamentary enquiries into the matter, and which triggered the PMDTT's own process. So it is hardly surprising that the press is feeling picked on.

But the fact that transformation and competitive environments have even become issues at all, is because these are areas of vulnerability for the press groups, and they have only themselves to blame for these. Interviews I conducted with



Antony Kaminju/Africa Media Online

members of the Association for Independent Publishers (AIP) in 2011 revealed a deep sense of grievance in the community press about the conduct of the “big four”, especially Caxton and Media 24, as they were the most active at local level. Whether their competitive practices were merely dubious, or spilled over into outright unlawfulness, remains to be seen, and it would be improper to prejudge the competition authorities’ processes.

Undeniably, the corporate media groups enjoy competitive advantages by virtue of their size and scale, and are highly effective in dominating the national advertising market. However the one competitive advantage the community press enjoy is their content; many of these papers cover stories and address audiences that are simply not on the corporate community press’ radar; as such they are invaluable sources of local information and debate. Many have developed solid reputations with local advertisers and a strong readership base, which remains loyal to the papers through thick and thin.

In fact, a recent study into the community press found that 57% of AIP papers in three provinces (Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Limpopo) contained investigative or potentially investigative stories, although the number of investigative articles relative to other content was relatively low.<sup>6</sup> These figures show that the community press has huge potential, much of

Corporate freesheets are locked into addressing historically-advantaged, mainly white, areas, they are unable or even unwilling to address the enormity of information needs in small towns and rural areas, which has left a gap that the community press are well placed to fill.

which remains untapped.

In contrast, and by virtue of the fact that many (but not all) corporate freesheets are locked into addressing historically-advantaged, mainly white, areas, they are unable or even unwilling to address the enormity of information needs in small towns and rural areas, which has left a gap that the community press are well placed to fill. And the growth of indigenous language media, against the odds, is particularly encouraging. The fact that a number of these papers are black-owned, while

Caxton is completely white-owned, puts the latter on the back foot in an industry that is becoming increasingly sensitive to transformation questions.

However, a dark cloud hangs over the community press. The corporate press has enlarged its footprint and eliminated competition through creeping acquisitions. These acquisitions were often too small to qualify as notifiable acquisitions in terms of the Competition Act; as a result, this slow but sure process of consolidation has fallen under the regulatory radar, and has gradually made

the competitive environment more difficult for the community press. The community papers claim that when they refuse to be bought out, then the corporate press engage in practices like poaching their staff, making access to publishing facilities difficult and undercutting their advertising rates.

Clearly, the appetite for media production at local level, especially at grassroots level, is great, but conditions in the media system are not conducive to satisfying this appetite. Reforms are certainly possible. Regional and national organisations are needed to strengthen the chances of independent newspapers surviving. The establishment of Limpopo Independent Newspapers is an important step and could be used as a model for other provinces. However, its more established members must not be allowed to do to the grassroots press what the corporate media groups have done to them, namely to skew the competitive environment in their favour.

Procurement of national advertising remains a challenge, and clearly a robust organisation that undertakes advocacy on behalf of its members is needed. Government advertising is key to the survival of the community press. However, access to such advertising is erratic, which strongly suggests that a quota must be applied to government advertising for this tier of media. The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) also needs to pursue proposals for printing and distribution hubs, rather than relying on grants only to support these media.

While being necessary, these reforms are survivalist measures; they will do little to build the non-profit, non-commercial aspects of the community media sector. This project will require the kind of structural change to the media system that the ANC has largely shied away from, but the experiences of the community press attest to the fact that such change is necessary to ensure their long-term survival.

Government policy on the community newspaper sector has been described by Sarah Chiumbu as ambiguous.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the community radio sector, which received attention in policy and legislative processes, the community press remains in the shadows. In fact, the government has adopted a largely hands-off approach towards the sector, promoting a policy environment that focuses on subsidy as the main method

of achieving diversity while leaving the basic market structure intact. At no stage during the transition to democracy or beyond, were anti-trust measures to de-concentrate the newspaper industry entertained as a serious possibility, which would have limited the dominance of the corporate press groups and created structural conditions for plurality.

The reasons for the government's accommodation of a market-driven approach, with a public service top-up in the form of MDDA subsidies, are not difficult to understand. South Africa's transition to democracy took place when prospects for revolutionary change had waned; as a result, the country has not experienced, in its true sense, a social revolution. While the formal trappings of apartheid have been dismantled, the social relations forged under apartheid remain largely intact. The nature of the transition has placed significant constraints on transformation in all levels of the social formation, including the media.

In this regard, the community press' experiences strongly suggest that what Robert Horwitz has referred to as the "post-social democratic vision for media reform"<sup>8</sup> – where the state and the market are held in balance – has failed to deliver a substantively democratic media system. This is especially so with regards to the aspect of this vision that attempted to, in Horwitz's words, "harness the power of the newly-democratised state to shape the communication sector so as to build into its overall structure media that are non-state and non-commodified".<sup>9</sup> The community press' experiences suggest that these very features of the media system have proved to be the most fragile and susceptible to marginalisation.

In fact, with the non-commercial aspects of the community media sector under constant threat and the lack of public funding of the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and the inadequate funding and limited mandate of the MDDA, it seems fair to say that, 19 years into South Africa's democracy, non-state, non-commodified aspects of the media system barely exist. If ordinary South Africans are to claim spaces in the media system that they attempted to claim during the transition, then policy on media diversity clearly needs to be re-imagined afresh.

The transformation pressures on the corporate press do provide the community press with opportunities that did not exist previously. Suddenly, everyone wants a chunk of the sector to prove their transformation credentials. But offers of support are likely to disappear as quickly as they emerged once the political heat is off, which means that the sector must not lower its demands for long-term structural change.

While they would be reluctant to admit it, the corporate press have enjoyed the lion's share of opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet in spite of this, their circulation is, with, notable exceptions, in long-term decline. Yet the community press could buck this trend precisely because it has the potential to tap into hitherto neglected audiences. If the environment created opportunities that the sector really needs and deserves, then it could have a very bright future indeed.

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# Regulating social media

## REGULATING LIFE (AND LIVES)

A report on the workshop “Social Media, Regulation and Freedom of Expression” in May at Hong Kong Baptist University

By Yik Chan Chin

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**S**ocial media is characterised by convergence, participation, openness and the transcendence of national borders. Its growth poses challenges to traditional media policy and regulation making, which are based on the type of medium and on national borders, and also triggers new legal issues of both a criminal and civil nature around the world.

The workshop addressed the implications of social media for media policy and regulation, particularly with regard to freedom of expression, access and service provision, content, data protection and regulatory mechanisms. Leading legal, regulatory, and media experts, plus journalists from different jurisdictions, including mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the US, Britain, Malaysia and Brazil, presented their research at the workshop.

Topics heading the workshop's agenda? The global legal framework of social media, internet censorship, and how people use social media in innovative ways.

### ***Regulating social media, regulating lives?***

Concerns about social media – such as privacy, data protection, hate speech, incitement, bullying, and copyright issues – are driving regulation. However, is self-regulation or regulation of social media ever feasible?

Speakers at the workshop's plenary section, "Self-regulation in the Age of Convergence", agreed that self-regulation is not sufficient and that additional regulatory tools such as public supervision, legislations or even administrative measures are required in the digital and convergent online platform.

However, some of the speakers also expressed concerns regarding government's intervention of free speech. A constitutional approach such as the Royal Charter in the UK is preferred to legislation by the government. Professor Chen Changfeng, from the Tsinghua University in China, provided a case study of the internet self-regulation agency, the Beijing Internet Association.

The self-regulation mechanism consists of an online supervising volunteer, an internet self-regulation commissioner and a mother jury. Chen pointed out that questions of who are the players, what are the purposes of regulation, who regulation will benefit, and what are the ethical principles of regulation, are keys to self-regulation of social media. However, she said that they lack universal concerns and principles.

Gao Shangang, Secretary of Secretariat of All-China Journalists Association (ACJA) in mainland China, stressed that both self-regulation by the ACJA and regulation by third party and government are needed to curb fake news spread on China's social networking sites.

According to him, media that publish unverified information released by blogs or internet forums have contributed to the "biggest and most common" problem of online fake news, featured by its "high covertness and deceptiveness".

"Because of the incomprehensive accountability system, light punishment towards wrongdoers and poor enforcement of regulation, people who produce fake

"Journalists in Taiwan are constantly facing a battle between their conscience and rating. They have to compromise themselves in order to make a living, and they can never uphold their professionalism without any protection of their rights. So we need regulation from outside and the protection of the labour union."

news do not need to pay a high cost."

To solve the problem of false information, media literacy researcher Masato Kajimoto, from the University of Hong Kong, advised social media users and media practitioners to be alert to the information on websites and use multiple sources to identify the truth.

He said sometimes it might be difficult to separate professional and private life. He offered some practical tips on how to identify and verify news and online pictures, such as Google reverse image search and exif viewer, which can help to identify rumours and false pictures.

While fighting against fake news is the priority of ACJA's agenda, the Hong Kong Press Council (HKPC), Hong Kong's local newspaper industry regulatory body, focuses on unethical conduct such as privacy intrusion and sensational or indecent publication, said Professor Joseph Man Chan, who chairs the council which handles complaints from members of the public against local newspapers.

Chan stressed that HKPC's operation has to be transparent in order to establish its credibility. "All the cases that we deal with are open, and we would list our reasons if we condemn any misconduct."

Dr Kuang Chung-shiang, from the National Chung Cheng University in Taiwan, said Taiwan's news industry is scrutinised by co-regulation consisted of self-regulation, public supervision and legislation.

The Taiwanese model, put forward by a coalition of media reform in 2005, has been challenged by the fast-changing media ecology on the island in recent years, especially after the Hong Kong-based mass media group Next Media started its operation in Taiwan four years ago.

"Journalists in Taiwan are constantly facing a battle between their conscience and rating. They have to compromise themselves in order to make a living, and they can never uphold their professionalism without any protection of their rights. So we need regulation from outside and the protection of the labour union," he said.

One of his students, a journalist turned flight attendant, shared her experience at the workshop about working for *Apple Daily*, a tabloid owned by Next Media. "Due to such work culture and low pay, ambitious journalism students would rather be doing other jobs instead of becoming reporters," she said.

Peter Noorlander, CEO of Media Legal Defence Initiative in the UK, said self-regulation is an ideal model but in some places including Britain, it does not work very well. However, Noorlander stressed that the



failure of the UK's self-regulatory Press Complaints Commission should not be seen as the failure of a self-regulation model itself.

In his view, social media is not media, but life. It is not possible to regulate life. Therefore, "regulation must be underpinned by human rights standards" and only be regulated when "necessary".

But the internet has already been heavily regulated. The question is: are new laws of regulation truly necessary? Will they ever have the chance of being implemented?

Interestingly, Dr Cho Wenchu and Dr Wenting Shan from Taiwan interpreted internet censorship as a smoke screen for unfair competition in the internet industry in favour of domestic dotcoms. Apart from China, many countries have applied domestic laws that function in a protectionist manner, or at least, with a protectionist result, to obstruct American dotcoms' access to foreign markets.

For instance, Chinese indigenous dotcoms, Baidu, Sina Weibo and Renren, with similar services to their American counterparts, quickly seized the market share left by the expellees. China can ban specific content instead of whole websites (as Thailand does). Thus, the blocks on Google, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook do not seem proportionate in relation to political motives.

### ***A panoramic view of legal frameworks***

Legal experts at the workshop agreed that international human rights law can serve as the global standard in legal regulation of social media. Professor Dominic McGoldrick, from the University of Nottingham's Human Rights Law Centre, analysed the UK's legal regulation of free speech on Facebook and other social

network sites, and suggested that "relevant [domestic] statutory provisions need to be thoroughly modernised to ensure their compatibility with international human rights standards" amid the rise in prosecutions and "astonishing" growth of social media.

McGoldrick warned journalists and social network users that Facebook is not a private sphere but a public sphere, and users need to keep their private and work life as separate as possible, as privacy is no longer a social norm in the digital world.

Dr Yik Chan Chin, from Hong Kong Baptist University, also supported the importance of international human rights law jurisprudence in domestic legal regulation by examining China's defamation law and freedom of expression protection under the scope of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Chin suggested that China's defamation law merely treats reputation protection and its infringement as a tort, while international human rights law such as ICCPR and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) define the rights of reputation as a restriction to freedom of expression, therefore its protection needs to fulfil the three-part test of "provided by law; legitimate aim; necessary and proportional".

Chinese defamation law has chilling effects on individual freedom of expression. She raised the question of whether China will ratify the ICCPR and what the impacts of ICCPR will be on domestic law.

With a case for reverse perspective on free speech law, Professor Kyu Ho Youm, the Jonathan Marshall First Amendment Chair Professor at the University of Oregon, introduced the global context of media law and the first amendment right, and his comparative view on US and foreign law on media.

## Private censorship of the internet by global companies like Google and Twitter actually has more impact than public regulation.

While freedom of speech is no longer exclusive to the US first amendment, its jurisprudence is still relevant to the rest of the world as an important reference. Its right to defame governments and the notion of “responsible journalism” helped bring about the 2013 Defamation Act of the UK.

He also raised the issue that private censorship of the internet by global companies like Google and Twitter actually has more impact than public regulation. The take-down requests for Google, the auto-complete charge in Japan, and the European “right to be forgotten” are typical illustrations.

How to reform the domestic legal regulation to reflect the technological advancement and participatory nature of social media is another important question. McGoldrick suggested new law is needed for online activities, and its protection thresholds of online free speech should be much higher. Besides, employers should provide clear guidance to employees for disciplinary action against online activities.

Professor Hu Yong, from Peking University in China, pointed out that China’s internet legislation is inferior in legal hierarchy, and an essentially control-based law, which still falls under the category of departmental regulation and rule-making. The legislative body is under the supervision of the executive branch of government, i.e. the state council.

This regulatory structure has provided a bed for abuse of administrative power by government departments. Professor Hu thus argued for regulation using statutory law set down by state legislatures, i.e. the National People’s Congress, to avoid abuse of administrative power.

The need for a better law and better law-making procedure was also endorsed by Professor Zhan Jiang, from China’s Beijing Foreign Studies University, and Dr Huang Jin and Ms Dai Xiaoling, from China University of Political Science and Law.

Zhan challenged the legal foundation and legitimacy of China’s social network site real-name regulation. First, real-name regulation is based on laws that existed prior to social media’s debut and that regulate the internet services providers rather than the users; secondly, the procedures of legislation and jurisdiction are also illegal and inappropriate; and, thirdly, real-name regulation violates people’s privacy.

As a solution, Zhan urged the legislation of a new codified media law. Huang and Dai’s research on user-generated video (UGV) legal regulation also revealed

that, though it is an emerging market, the UGV is governed within the same traditional legal framework of TV in China, and a lot of legal rights issues are left uncovered under the current legislation.

### **Social media as innovative tools**

One of the main themes of the workshop was the innovative role of social media. Professor Tian Zhihui, from China Communication University, believes online communication platforms transfer and aggregate user-generated content, and that social media constructs a new relationship, changing traditionally passive audiences into active information producers and helping the dialogic construction between the government and the public.

Professor Wang Qing analysed the relationship between popular entrepreneurs’ social media use and the fluctuation of stock markets. She believes that people trust those entrepreneurs who become the spokespersons and gatekeepers of many social and political issues.

Dr Chun-hung Li and Tang Chao analysed healthcare social media and how patients ask for advice on the internet and the problems of healthcare websites in China and the US. Li said healthcare social media is a platform for people to post medical complaints and share opinions about different hospitals. However, he noted that sometimes those reviews would be removed due to conflicts of interest of different parties, and difficulties in verifying the authenticity of online reviewers.

Professor Guo Zhenzhi presented how the social media and netizens were involved in the investigation and heated discussion of two law cases. Netizens’ participation into re-investigation is not only truth-seeking, but also for fear of becoming the victim of trial manipulation by the authority. In all, the case reveals the increasing awareness of civil rights and distrust against the authority’s manipulation in the legal system, the pressure on freedom expression and the struggle of truth-seeking on the social media platform.

*The workshop was organised by the Department of Journalism at the Hong Kong Baptist University, and Centre for Journalism Studies at the Tsinghua University in Beijing, China, with the support of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, Taiwan.*  
[http://journalism.hkbu.edu.hk/news/news\\_WS130502.php](http://journalism.hkbu.edu.hk/news/news_WS130502.php)



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# Defamation Détente Gorbachev Glasnost Perestroika Invasion of Privacy

By Stratos Copteros

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**I**t was the final year of my BA in International Relations. 1988. Studying a Cold War whose freeze was thawing fast. Indeed, everything was changing so rapidly since Gorbachev's arrival that our bibliographies included that week's *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Economist* and every other current publication of a then Google-free world.

I remember how pertinent my studies felt. How excited I was at their immediate applicability. An undergraduate doesn't need much more than a sense of instant relevancy to give a subject the credence it deserves.

Today, as a media law and ethics lecturer, I have the same exquisite luck. So do my students, because much of what I teach relates directly to current events. Just look at the last two years. Between the *News of the World* scandal, the resultant Leveson Commission and the Lord McAlpine fiasco in Great Britain; the call for a media tribunal in our own country, which led to the Press Freedom Commission and its findings; apartheid era keypoint legislation being whipped out to prevent filming of certain locales; the doctoring for publication of an Afghani bomb attack photo by a prominent SA daily; the *Spear* debacle; the Secrecy Bill; speculative coverage of the Oscar Pistorius case; President Jacob Zuma finally dropping all his lawsuits against the media; and now the seizure by police of Bay TV's footage of violent protests in which a Sudanese national was killed; there's not much more I need to say to students to convince them of the merits of my course. Bonus! And despair.

Despair, because at a time when media law has been catapulted to the forefront of media-related discourse, its understanding by the practitioners it applies to, remains poor. Just days before I wrote this, I was interviewed telephonically for a daily SA newspaper about the legal implications of releasing Oscar Pistorius crime scene photographs. I spent 45 minutes on the phone explaining in detail what the potential implications were – more ethical than legal really. And yet the copy that appeared online and in a front-page article the next day was a scant representation and a clear misunderstanding of what I'd actually said. This lack of knowledge has to change; and quickly. Cyberspace is now fully in play; and the speed and scale at which this domain operates, is a quagmire fraught with peril.

Photos: Stephanie Papini



So let's talk cyber fallacy. It's an actual term bandied about mostly by media lawyers. It refers to the completely erroneous assumption that cyberspace is a unique universe where the usual rules do not apply, an enchanted environment exempt from three-dimensional reality's ethical and legal standards. It's not! The entire body of laws and norms that apply to mainstream print and broadcasting are also applicable to online and social media. And as my Introduction to Law lecturer drummed into us, "ignorance of the law is no excuse".

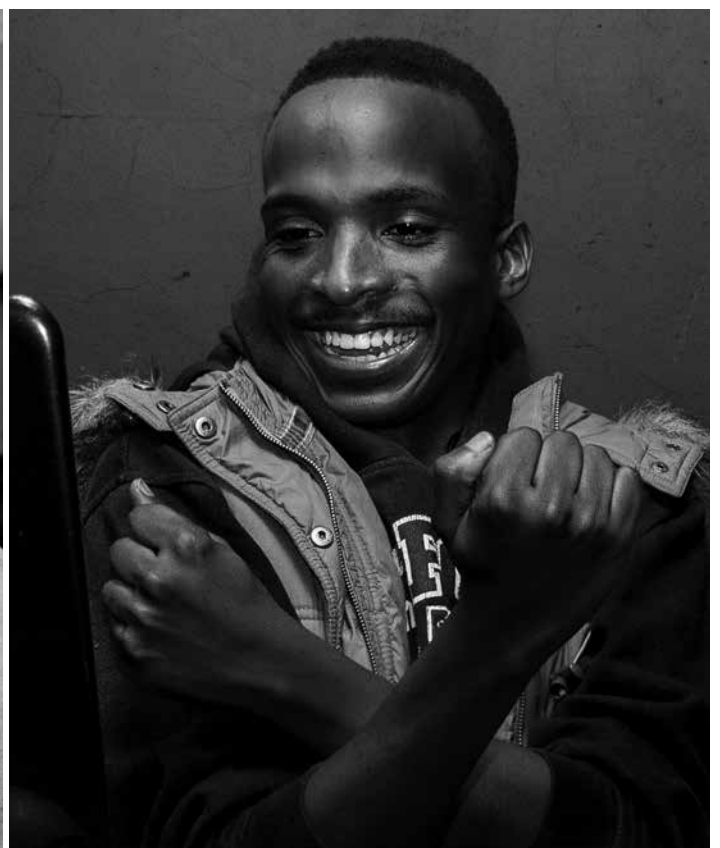
Defamation: there's a great word. A statement is defamatory if it harms the public reputation of the person or entity it refers to. To thus call someone a #\$\$%^& is not defamatory. It might be injurious, rude or insulting, but defamation it isn't. An allegation of serious impropriety though – corruption, theft, sexual misconduct and such behaviour – for very obvious reasons, is.

The potential for genuine damage to reputation is the key to defamation. Defamation is called libel in Britain; and there the same reputational rule of thumb applies. What makes South Africa particularly interesting though, is that we're a constitutional democracy with constitutionally-enshrined rights. A claim of defamation therefore fundamentally involves the balancing of two competing constitutional rights – free speech and human dignity. That's what was at play with The Spear of the Nation case – the right to free speech, including artistic expression, socio-political commentary and freedom of the press; versus our president's right to dignity and reputation. This constitutional connection is also exactly the reason why a case of defamation can make it all the way up to the Constitutional Court, the highest court in our land.

Any natural person, corporation, organisation or political party – except for government or an organ of state – can sue for defamation. In a lawsuit for defamation, the onus of proof swings from plaintiff to defendant. At first, the plaintiff has to prove that the statement was indeed defamatory. Here the law stipulates three key criteria: Clear, overt or insinuated, reference to the plaintiff, publication, and a reasonable expectation of damage to reputation. As long as the reasonable person would associate the statement with the plaintiff, whether they were openly named or their identity alluded to, the first

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requirement is met. Publication however, is often misunderstood. It doesn't mean that a statement has to be published, but that it was simply made public. This can even be a verbal statement spoken to just one other person. Finally, reasonable expectation of damage to reputation is almost self-explanatory. It includes injuring the reputation of a person in his character, trade, business, profession or office.

None of these criteria are particularly difficult to prove, especially if publication involves the statement spread-eagled across multiple media platforms around the world, as so often happens nowadays. Ultimately, once the plaintiff proves that a statement was defamatory, their work is done. The onus of proof then swings to the defendant to prove that they have a valid defence. Here, the most commonly raised defences are that the publication was true and in the public interest, it constituted fair comment, was made on a privileged occasion, or that although false, was reasonable.

Truth and public interest are a combined defence. It can't be one without the other. And courts both in SA and Britain – weary of sensationalism and media intrusion – are starting to draw a clear distinction between what is of genuine public interest, and what is merely interesting to the public. Then, with fair comment and opinion, it is important to remember that our courts recognise that comment or opinion can be scathingly vitriolic and even a tad hyperbolic, as long as it is heartfelt opinion that is projected as such, is fair, made without malice (the pure intention to injure), is substantially based on fact and in the public interest.

Privilege on the other hand, refers to particular types of places and occasions, such as courts of law or parliament. You can't exactly have rigorous parliamentary debates if defamatory statements constantly lead to court actions. Neither can an accused be allowed to sue for defamation when being fingered by a witness in court. Here, the media can draw on what is known as qualified privilege, accurately and fairly reporting what was said in parliament or in court. This covers anything stated in open court by witnesses, legal counsel, presiding officers and court documents, but only once these documents have been brought up in open court.

Reasonableness is the final defence. It's a fabulous progression in common law, brought about by a key decision of our Constitutional Court in *Bogoshi vs National Media*. It makes it possible to escape liability even if a report was untrue, if it can be proven that publication was reasonable. In such a case, the court will take into account what reasonable steps were taken to verify the truth of the statement, the nature and reliability of the information and sources on which it was based, whether right of reply was given to the affected party, the publication of such a response and the overriding need to publish. It's not a get out of jail free card, but it does take into account the manic realities of modern media production. Sometimes false statements simply slip through, even though

everything reasonable was done to verify them.

In invasion of privacy, exactly the same overarching legal precepts and switch in onus of proof apply. Privacy too is a constitutionally-enshrined right; and its invasion can either be the physical, photographic or electronic intrusion into private space, or the disclosure of private facts. In either case, this has to be based on legitimate public interest, and not simply to satisfy the morbid curiosity of celebrity culture. Yes, the courts recognise that public figures have to accept a higher level of public scrutiny than everyman. But let me reiterate that they are beginning to truly grow impatient with unfettered intrusion just because someone is famous. The thing to remember here is incongruity. If the intrusion reveals serious incongruity between public persona and private actions, the courts are more likely to accept that it was in the public interest.

OK. With Media Law 101 in our back pocket, let's hurtle back into cyberspace and the brief and wondrous spotlight on one Lord McAlpine. As former deputy chairman of Britain's Conservative Party and retired member of the House of Lords, Lord McAlpine was happily living out his sunset years until a blogger erroneously identified him as a paedophile. It was just a case of mistaken identity, but it spread like wildfire. Twitter went into overdrive. His name was tweeted and retweeted so often, and bloggers were so prolific in their output, that the mainstream press soon picked up on this. It was exactly what Winston Churchill meant by "a lie travels halfway round the world before the truth has had time to put its pants on". Of course, Lord McAlpine sued for defamation and received huge out of court settlements from the BBC and ITV. But he also had the time, money and wherewithal to track down every single person who had tweeted and retweeted his name – more than 10 000 individuals – and to threaten them with litigation. Those with less than 500 followers could get away with a £25 apology donation to charity. He wasn't as magnanimous with others. Cue in Sally Bercow.

Ms Bercow is wife of the Speaker of the House of Commons. Her sassy and outspoken public image has garnered her over 50 000 followers on Twitter. At the zenith of the McAlpine media furore, she sent out this cheeky tweet: "Why is Lord McAlpine trending? \*Innocent face\*". Funny. Not so hilarious when Lord McAlpine sued and won. In his judgement, the Honourable Justice Tugendhat stated that, "the reasonable reader would understand the words "innocent face" as being insincere and ironical... the tweet meant, in its natural and ordinary defamatory meaning, that the Claimant was a paedophile".

It may be a British judgement, but I can almost guarantee that its thinking is in alignment with our courts. Tweeters and bloggers, beware; and the time cometh when we'll be applying the fair comment and opinion defence to a Facebook remark. More than anything, everyone in media needs to know the law. It's as important now as bringing down the Berlin Wall was in '89.



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# WALKING THE (social media) LINE

By Jude Mathurine

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Journalists are moving from the margins to the mainstream. While media organisations wrap their heads around social media strategies, editors and reporters struggle to keep pace with changing policies, laws and practice.

**As media evolve into channels for networked, digital and dialogic journalism, the scope for regulation and scrutiny of professional conduct has extended from news articles and features to formal and informal social media communication. Social media behaviours include tweets, updates, comments, likes, blogs and uploads of user-generated content (UGC). Use of social media networks (SMNs) broadens the mediascape, muddies notions of journalistic identity and increases mutual dependence between traditional journalists and the people formerly known as the audience.**

Social media can no longer be regarded as a fad for sustainable media organisations. One third of the top 15 websites used by South Africans are social media. A study on the South African network society found that while only 17% of South Africans read a daily newspaper, over 22% used the internet everyday (De Lanerolle 2012). World Wide Worx reports that about 5.3 million South Africans have Facebook accounts and over 9.35 million locals use Mxit, while 2.3 million South Africans are on Twitter. Stats SA reported 35% of SA households have internet access with the majority accessing web services via mobile devices, and 80% of Facebook users access it via mobile. Mxit has over 50 million African users.

Social conversations in spaces like Mxit or Facebook

help activate audience participation and interaction, with potential brand-building utility to achieve organisational goals like promotion and marketing of editorial content and services particularly among youth. In Africa in 2010, 20% of the population consisted of youth between the ages of 15 and 24, and 70% of Africans were under 30 years old, according to the United Nations. Youth use of mobile social media like Mxit, BBM and WhatsApp is a significant plank in traditional media's editorial, marketing and revenue generation strategies.

At an editorial level, journalists who don't participate in the social media coverage of news events like the Oscar Pistorius trial in real time are regarded as the exception, not the rule. The Twitter following of EyeWitness News reporter, Barry Bateman rose 604% from 17 000 to over 12 2000 followers during his coverage of Pistorius' bail application.

Social media users are conduits, amplifiers of media messages, and potential sources. The journalistic scoop is on life-support as ordinary netizens bypass the influence of mainstream media to receive stories broken from the source. However, few news organisations have established processes and workflows for verifying online information, and even fewer have policies for transparently correcting errors and inaccuracies after publishing online. Economics also plays a role. As media

Research by the Deputy Press Ombud conducted in 2010, suggested only five percent of SA journalists had knowledge or sight of the South African Press Code.

organisations feel the pinch from falling revenues, journalists often spend more time at their desks, editorial appointments are juniorised and traditional gatekeeping is rationalised, centralised or outsourced. Lapses in professional judgement that may follow increase the scope for legal liability, as well as damage to public faith in journalism.

In a social media age, media rely more on audiences. Mutual dependence requires journalists to be aware of regulations of use, aggregation and curation of data from public social media channels. Nick Couldry argues that the inclusion of a range of new actors like citizens in the media ecology means that accountability on SMNs becomes a concern not just for journalists, but “all... who circulate speculation, rumours, facts, photos, information, and views through a global grid of communications” (in Ward and Wasserman 2010).

Challenges are issues of copyright, bias, false news, defamation and privacy. Journalists often move informal and interpersonal communications from the margins of SMNs to a more formal, visible, regulated mass media mainstream.

Consequently, journalists need to be aware of the application of existing laws and case law to platforms like social media. Publishers do not enjoy unfettered freedom of expression and media on the internet and SMNs.

### **Industry regulation**

Newman, Dutton and Blank (2012) suggests in a study on the changing ecology of news that most media in the United Kingdom have clear social media policies. The South African situation is mixed. Research by the Deputy Press Ombud conducted in 2010, suggested only 5% of SA journalists had knowledge or sight of the South African Press Code. How journalists understand the relationship between SMNs use and defamation, intellectual property violation, invasion of privacy, inaccuracy, bias, unprofessional communication and the like, may not be any better.

Online publishers who do not volunteer to join industry regulatory bodies may still elect to follow industry rules and guidelines to align to accepted standards, says information technology lawyer, Nerushka Deosaran.

“... the roles of these organisations are to create awareness of the law to its members as well as creating the best practice ‘guidelines’ of doing things.”

There are a few industry regulatory mechanisms worth noting. The South African Press Freedom Commission proposed that websites, digital publications and apps of newspaper titles that belong to Print Media South Africa (PMSA) become subject to the Press Code and the SA Press Council. The Association of Independent Publishers’ (AIP) – 250 small independent newspapers and periodicals – are also subject to the SA Press Code. AIP Executive Director Louise Vale estimates that about half their members have websites, but few use platforms like Facebook. While the dangers of social media are real, they are not on the radar of most independent publishers yet, she said.

About 126 online publishers are regulated by the

Code of Conduct of the Digital Media and Marketing Association (DMMA). The DMMA is not an industry regulatory body but a voluntary association that arbitrates and resolves minor complaints between online publishers and users. The DMMA can boot out members who transgress its code of conduct.

Several news organisations have also set up social media policies to establish what kinds of online conduct are permissible within the workplace.

### **Good social media policies:**

- empower social media use to achieve organisational goals;
- provide a framework of reference to correct inaccuracies or abuse, avoid litigation and damage to own reputation;
- and offer an instrument for human resources to assess disputes pertaining to online conduct.

Broadcasters like eNews Channel Africa and Primedia, and news organisations like Times Media Group, Independent Newspapers, *Mail & Guardian* and Media24 have social media policies in place for all titles. However, Caxton and the SABC are still developing social media guidelines and standard practices for newsrooms and journalists.

### **Legal liability**

“A new set of norms is emerging for online conduct and the social web is challenging our established norms and practices,” said Web.Tech.Law attorney Paul Jacobson. “The news media has certain responsibilities that non-news media don’t really have but paradigms are definitely shifting.”

Legislation like the Promotion of Equality and Unfair Discrimination Act which regulates hate speech and the National Health Act of 2003, which protects the privacy of medical information equally apply to traditional and social media communication. Trolling or posting provocative updates, tweets and comments could amount to cyber-bullying under the Protection of Harassment Act of 2013.

Journalists may also be restricted for sharing where they like (National Keypoints Act of 1980) or using audience UGC without permission (Copyright Act of 1978). Few local media apply fair use principles or even attribute ownership of UGC when using citizen-generated content like mobile video or social photos.

Journalists may not always share or re-share what they like, unless comment is fair, they are convinced the ideas are true and there is an overwhelming public interest to do so. In May 2012, the *Daily Sun* published screen grabs from a viral cellphone video that showed a 17-year-old girl being gang raped, which clearly violated aspects of the Film and Publications Amendment Act.

SMNs use for real time courtroom coverage may also be circumscribed. In 2012, Acting Judge Bert Bam applied sections 153 (3A) and 154(2) of the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) to forbid social network reportage during the cross-examination of rape survivor, Ina Bonette, until the end of her testimony.

While exercising the right to freedom of expression

in reporting news, journalists should be mindful of constitutional rights and how they may influence other rights like dignity and privacy, said Deosaran.

“Reporters should avoid making defamatory comments without justification...and acting in a manner that can fulfil the elements of the crime, crimen injuria,” she said.

In Dutch Reformed Church Vergesig, Johannesburg Congregation and Another vs Rayan Soknunan, 2012, the South Gauteng High Court found that creators of Facebook pages have an obligation to regulate access and moderate or remove unlawful posts. Justice Willis found that “if one wants to stop wrongdoing, it is best to act against the wrongdoers themselves”. The Willis judgement made a critical distinction between use of SMNs for social purposes relative to a communication function in the public interest.

Publishers should educate and appoint online editors and journalists who are versed in media law to judge fair comment from defamatory, racist, sexist or inflammatory speech. Social media policies and a social media strategy are essential.

Signing up the resident intern to manage social media can be risky. Comment sections should have terms and conditions of use and feature tools to allow easy reporting of abuse. The economic, logistical and capacity challenges of moderating content have seen some media forego use of UGC including comments. Some media selectively permit online commentary.

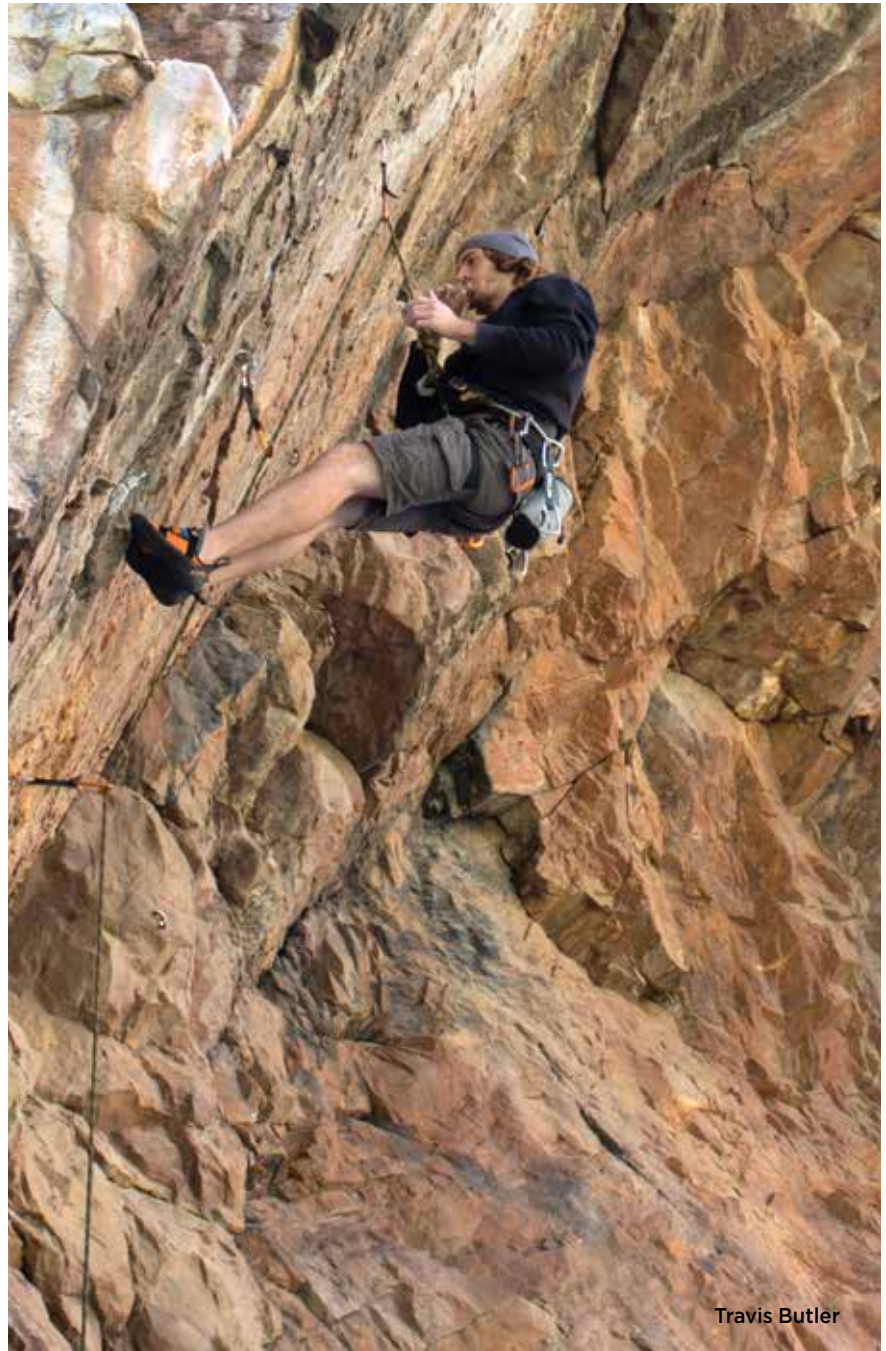
Media workers can be disciplined or fired, regardless of whether a publisher has a social media policy or not.

### ***You're fired***

In 2012, eNews Channel Africa's sports reporter Lance Witten was suspended after he tweeted “Linkin Park is so badass, people are dying to see 'em” following an accident which killed a concert-goer. He apologised and was later re-hired and ordered to go for social media training. McIntosh Polela, spokesman for South Africa's elite police unit, the Hawks, was less lucky. Polela tweeted, “I trust that Jubbub's supporters gave him a jar of Vaseline to take to prison” after Molemo 'Jub Jub' Maarohanye and Themba Tshabalala were found guilty on charges of murder and attempted murder. Despite apologising for his actions and removing the remark from his Twitter stream, he was fired after a disciplinary hearing in accordance with police disciplinary regulations. A disclaimer on Polela's Twitter account which claimed that he tweeted in his private capacity had little effect. While it may be useful for employees to use disclaimers to distinguish private and professional opinion, the lines are blurry.

“Don't say anything on social media that you wouldn't say on live television on the 7pm news,” advises Deosaran.

In 2011, SuperSport commentator Tank Lanning was fired for tweeting from a commentator's workshop. The company claimed that while Lanning's tweets hadn't breached any aspect of the company's social media policy, his behaviour had violated aspects of his employment contract by tweeting confidential and market sensitive information.



Travis Butler

## **WHAT JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA SHOULD DO**

- Be sensible and sensitive to other people's rights and interests. Apply conventional rules and norms (via @pauljacobson).
- Identify yourself as a journalist and include a disclaimer on your social media profiles.
- Don't be a cyber-bully in terms of the Protection of Harassment Act.
- Be transparent. Declare conflicts of interest.
- Have an online corrections policy that's timeous and transparent.
- Respect privacy on social media. Do not use content from private Facebook profiles unless there is an argument for public interest. This is akin to quoting “off the record” conversation (via @julieposetti)
- Vet, verify and contextualise information curated from social media accounts (via @niemanlab).
- Don't engage in character assassination, name calling, bullying and threats. Don't bait trolls.
- Facilitate easy reporting of abuse on your social networking channels.
- Employ and train journalists and online editors who can apply understandings of media regulation to newsgathering, curation, engagement, marketing, crowdsourcing and data mining using SMNs.
- Don't do anything stupid (BBC)!

In late 2012, the *Citizen* fired photographer Johan ‘Slang’ Hattingh who criticised the paper on Twitter for cloning out the images of two South Africans killed in a suicide bombing in Kabul. The picture appeared on the title’s front page. The paper used Hattingh’s employment contract to dismiss him for defamation, bringing the title into disrepute and damaging trust between employer and employee.

There is a concern that companies’ intolerance of public criticism by its functionaries may affect freedom of expression in the workplace and worker rights. The right of workers to criticise the practices of their employers is critical and protected following a Constitutional Court judgement in the case of South African National Defence Union vs Minister of Defence, 1999.

“It might be a whistle-blowing in some respects that there is justifiable basis for speaking out,” said Unesco Director of Freedom of Expression and Media Development Professor Guy Berger. “On the other hand, in many contracts, it is assumed that you signed up voluntarily and that includes abiding by terms of employment.”

#### ***Fifth estate***

If laws and social and human resource policies fail to hold media to account, people will. Networked publics can be useful, though antagonistic, in the struggle for media accountability. Ward and Wasserman note how the Fifth Estate’s online activism can spill over into offline demonstrations and campaigns that call for boycotts and lobby for institutional change (2010). In South Africa, organised civil society groups and media NGOs like Media Monitoring Africa, Genderlinks, the Freedom of Express Institute and others play a role here. More recently, organisations like AfricaCheck based at Wits University play a role in policing accuracy in media regardless of platform. AfricaCheck hopes to spread the culture and enable the practice of fact-checking, vetting and verification among the wider journalistic community. In some cases, they offer sufficient pressure or sanction to censure the press for its decisions through discussion, viral campaigns and online activism on websites and SMNs like Twitter and Facebook.

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# Mobile technology MOVING PAST THE GATEKEEPERS

By Gavin Davis

**O**pposition parties in Africa have struggled for decades in a media environment that favours incumbents. Of 54 African countries measured in the Freedom House 2012 Press Freedom Index, only five were considered to be free. Press censorship and pliant public broadcasters mean that elections can be fixed before the first vote is even counted.

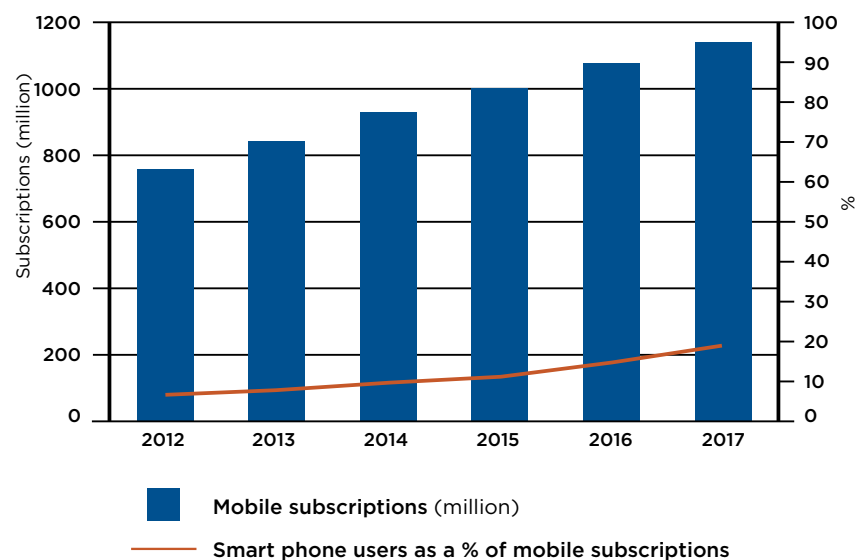
State control of the media is not the only hurdle preventing parties from getting their message to the electorate. Many face the invidious choice of either giving journalists petrol money or having their press conference ignored. "It's a pity that, as the party advocating for a corruption-free society, we find ourselves embroiled in this vice," said Kasekende Bashir of the Liberal Democratic Transparency party in Uganda.

Social media have the power to change all this by permitting parties to bypass the gatekeepers, reporters, editors and government officials, who shape or control the press agenda. The Arab Spring in 2010 to 2011 revealed how social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube revolutionised political communication in North Africa.

In Africa only about 16% of the population have internet access, less than half of the world average of 34%, according to Internet World Stats, an online demography site. A shortage of electricity and broadband infrastructure, coupled with the high cost of hardware to access the internet, mean that most African countries find themselves on the wrong side of the global digital divide.

The good news is that a mobile revolution is sweeping the continent and bridging this gap. More Africans have access to a mobile phone than clean drinking water, according to Jan Hutton, telecoms director at Nielsen, a market research firm. After Asia, Africa is the world's largest mobile phone market, with 700 million mobile connections. By 2016 there will be

The good news is that a mobile revolution is sweeping the continent ... more Africans have access to a mobile phone than clean drinking water and after Asia, Africa is the world's largest mobile phone market, with 700 million mobile connections.



**MOBILE SUBSCRIPTION AND SMARTPHONE  
USE IN AFRICA (2012 - 2014)**

SOURCE: INFORMA TELECOMS & MEDIA

one billion, a mobile phone for nearly every person, according to a 2012 report by financial services firms Frontier Advisory and Deloitte.

While not every mobile phone has social networking capabilities, this is changing too. At the end of 2012, smartphone users accounted for 6% of Africa's total mobile subscriptions. This share is forecast to rise to 18% by 2017, according to Thecla Mbongue, a senior analyst at Informa Telecoms and Media, a market research firm.

Once mobile take-up reaches critical mass, social media may well become the only game in town. Many political parties realise that they need to be ahead of the game now if they are to win votes in the future.

At a conference on political communication held in Cape Town in November 2012, opposition parties from the Seychelles to South Sudan highlighted the rising significance of social media in their communications strategies. All agreed that starting the right conversations on social media and steering engaged followers in the right direction are the keys to future success. These online conversations among many individuals are gradually supplanting the one-way broadcast model of communications.

In Botswana voters no longer trust the media and are turning to social networks for their news, reported Winfred Rasina, spokesperson for the Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD). He spends an average of two-and-a-half hours daily updating the BMD's Facebook page and interacting with potential voters.

Only 7% of its citizens access the internet, according to the International Telecommunication Union. But "Botswana has a population of only two million people,

which means that word of mouth travels quickly," he said.

Trust in traditional media is in decline, particularly among the youth, said Fungisai Sithole, chief of staff of the Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe.

"The current generation does not want to be treated as the other. They want to be engaged, they want to talk, they want to contribute," she said. To get around the drawback of low internet access and the high cost of smartphones, the party has developed a bespoke platform that uses text messages to interact with voters and members.

Another party finding innovative ways to reach the electorate is the Civic United Front (CUF) in Tanzania. It has linked its social media platforms with popular youth websites and trained a team of young activists to respond to issues.

Abdul Kambaya, CUF's national director for publicity, said that the success of this strategy is evident from the response it has elicited from its opponents. The party's website was hacked and completely destroyed six months ago.

This is a cautionary tale. As more people begin to use social media for political engagement, so too will governments increase their efforts to curtail it. Finding ways to circumvent state censorship with sophisticated social media strategies will be a key objective for African opposition parties in the years ahead.

The mobile revolution is a potential game changer in Africa, where media gatekeepers have exerted too much power for too long. Once the social media groundswell breaks, a political tipping point may well follow.



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Stephanie Papini

# Africa Check

By Julian Rademeyer

**Many years ago, as a rather naive young reporter, I worked briefly as a “fixer” for a writer from *The New Yorker* magazine. He was doing a profile piece on Wouter Basson, South Africa’s “Dr Death”, and investigating aspects of Project Coast, the apartheid-era chemical and biological weapons programme.**

When he left, he told me to expect a call from one of *The New Yorker*’s fact-checkers. “They go through everything,” he said. “It is a long process. Every note, every line, every name, every date, every quote and every fact.”

I nodded nonchalantly to hide my ignorance. Fact-checkers? I’d vaguely heard the term, but it didn’t mean much to me. Sounded like glorified subeditors, I thought, although a little more intimidating; inquisitorial even.

South African magazines and newspapers have little formal tradition of fact-checking in the US and European sense. It is a task that has largely been left up to reporters, news editors, subeditors and proofreaders.

Some papers, like South Africa’s *Sunday Times*, get reporters to check each other’s copy by comparing dates, names, places, spellings and quotes with original source material and filling out an “accuracy check” form.

I am not aware of any papers or magazines in South Africa that have full-time research and fact-checking departments.

Internationally, *The New Yorker* is one of the best-known examples. It employs more than a dozen fact-checkers who scrutinise everything, from journalism and poetry to fiction and art reviews. Even the cartoons are given a once-over. The German news weekly, *Der Spiegel*, reportedly has the largest fact-checking operation of any magazine in the world with 80 full-time staffers in its “Dokumentation” department.

Today, as the Southern Africa editor of AfricaCheck.org, I am, for want of a better description, a fact-checker.

Africa Check is a non-profit website established by the AFP Foundation, in conjunction with the Wits University journalism department.

We operate independently on a tiny budget, a skeleton staff, a growing pool of freelance writers and

researchers, and litres of coffee and tea. We strive to be fair and impartial, but we don’t play favourites.

We are entirely dependent on funding and donations and our backers include Google, the Open Society Foundation and the African News Innovation Challenge.

We are not a media watchdog, as some would appear to think. Our aim is to hold public figures and institutions, including media organisations, to account, to encourage good journalism, debate and, above all, accuracy. We want our readers to question and challenge what they see, read and hear on a daily basis. And that includes the reports we produce.

The website is modelled on similar websites that have sprung up in the United States and Europe over the past decade.

There’s politifact.com, which began in the newsroom of what was then the *St Petersburg Times*, and paved the way. There’s factcheck.org, which describes itself as a “nonpartisan, non-profit ‘consumer advocate’” for US voters, and the UK-based Full Fact website which tries to “make it easier to see the facts and context behind the claims made by the key players in British political debate”.

Fact-checking is not an abstract pursuit. It can have real impact. All too often statements by politicians, public figures and journalists make statements that go unchecked.

How true, for instance is the often-repeated claim that more than 90% of South Africans have access to “clean and safe” drinking water? Or the claim, as reported by the *Sowetan*, that 12.7% of schoolgirls in South Africa are HIV positive?

Do the police face R7-billion in civil lawsuits, as claimed by the minister? Or is the real figure closer to R14-billion? Are the impressive conviction rates routinely cited by the Justice Department a useful benchmark of prosecutorial success?

What about promises that 58 dedicated sexual offences courts will be fully operational by September this year, or Jacob Zuma’s promise in his State of the Nation address that 98 new schools would be completed in the Eastern Cape by March this year?

Do 400 000 whites live in squatter camps in South Africa, as claimed by the BBC’s World Affairs editor John Simpson? Does Helen Zille’s claim that nobody in Cape Town has to use a bucket toilet hold true?

These are just some of the claims we have checked in the past two months.

We are still finding our feet, but the response has been encouraging. Our readership has nearly doubled in the past month and continues to grow. The stream of comments, queries and suggestions increases each day.

Next year, South Africa will hold one of the most important elections in the past 20 years. Promises will be made and facts stated. Some will be true, but many will be spurious. And we’ll be there to try and sort fact from fiction.

Visit our website at [Africacheck.org](http://Africacheck.org) or find us on Twitter @AfricaCheck.



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# Putting dissent ON HOLD

By Anne Wolf

**W**as it coincidence or was it deliberate? Following the January 2013 terrorist attack at the natural-gas complex in the Saharan town of In Amenas, the Algerian government once again spurned the adoption of modern mobile phone standards. The government blamed administrative procedures for its decision. Others viewed this rejection as the regime's latest step to curb dissent.

The In Amenas hostage siege led to the deaths of at least 38 civilians and 29 militants. Shortly after this attack, newspapers reported that several high-ranking officials were concerned about the risks of third-generation (3G) telecommunications standards, particularly in the government's fight against terrorism. The *Daily Dawn*, an Algerian newspaper, cited anonymous sources, presumably close to the government, that revealed "the wider security environment in the Sahel" is the real reason behind the delay. "What happened at In Amenas, including the publishing of photos, has been aimed at misleading public opinion."

Many activists interpret the government's ongoing postponement of the provision of 3G as yet another attempt to shackle dissent. Creaking telecommunications standards and a complex set of internet laws and regulations, particularly aimed at controlling information on social media sites, make anti-government activism in Algeria increasingly complicated.

The government seems intent on hiding behind the shield of one of the world's most archaic information and communications frameworks.

During the Arab uprisings two years ago, social media platforms surfaced as a force of popular empowerment. Bloggers throughout North Africa and the Middle East helped to rally mass street demonstrations, which led Tunisia and Egypt to revolution, Morocco to simulate reform and Libya into civil war.

Amid such sweeping political change across the region, Algeria emerged as the only country in the Maghreb where the government retains a firm grip on the country, despite widespread poverty and high unemployment, particularly among Algeria's youth.

Pundits attempting to explain "Algerian exceptionalism" are quick to point to the country's history, in particular the civil war in the 1990s, which cost more than 150 000 lives, to argue that Algerians favour political stability over what might end in chaos and armed conflict.

Many Algerians are hardened after their own long struggle against Islamic extremists. They watch with trepidation the resurgence of Islamists, particularly of the violent Salafi-jihadist stripe, in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt. Many say this fear of violence was vindicated during Algeria's 2012 legislative elections, which saw the defeat of the Islamists, although opposition forces have contested the official results. The voters apparently revealed that they favour the devil they know.

Explaining Algeria's "exceptionalism" through its history and experience with Islamic radicalism,

During the Arab uprisings bloggers throughout North Africa and the Middle East helped to rally mass street demonstrations, which led Tunisia and Egypt to revolution, Morocco to simulate reform and Libya into civil war, but cyber bullying, numerous laws, regulations and the country's timeworn infrastructure make the Algerian internet a difficult site for dissidence.

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however, is misleading. Since the Arab spring, social activism and demands for regime change have swollen.

But "*le pouvoir*" ("the power"), the government and the secret services, the Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité (DRS), have quickly battered protesters and dissidents.

The other weapon the government and the DRS wield to defend their dominance is their unyielding grip on information and communications technology, particularly mobile phones and social networks.

"With the Arab revolutions, the Algerian regime suddenly realised to what extent Facebook and Twitter could become a real threat to their authority," explained Yacine Zaid, a blogger and senior member of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights.

"The money spent on fake Facebook profiles and groups have increased dramatically over the past two years," said Zaid, who created his blog in 2007, becoming one of Algeria's first bloggers. "The amount of intimidation I experience, including direct threats to kill me, has grown in past months and currently amounts to several instances per day," he added during an interview in March.

This internet bullying is often called computer-generated *baltaqy* (criminal or thief in Arabic), referring to the violent thugs that former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak unleashed against street protesters during the 2011 uprising. "The Algerian *baltaqy* is increasingly engaged in a cyber war with militants," explained an Algerian blogger who wished to remain anonymous.

"One of the most important techniques to contain militants is to publish false allegations and private information, such as telephone numbers, family pictures and addresses, through pro-regime blogs and newspapers in order to defame and intimidate oppositional forces," he added. "This makes it more difficult to receive reliable information from social media websites."

Besides cyber bullying, numerous laws, regulations and the country's timeworn infrastructure make the Algerian internet a difficult site for dissidence. In 2009 Algerian authorities adopted a law criminalising online activity that runs "contrary to public order or decency". As a result, many regime-controlled internet cafés, the most popular places for Algerians to connect to the world wide web, now have closed-circuit television cameras recording the faces of their online customers.

Owning a website bearing the Algerian country code top-level domain, .dz, (derived from Dzayer, the local name for Algeria), is next to impossible. "Applications need to pass through meticulous bureaucratic vouching to guarantee the website will be used according to the terms and conditions set by the authorities," explained Mohammed Larbi Zitout, a former Algerian diplomat

who now lives in exile in London. "This is why most Algerian websites have other domain names such as .org, .com and .net."

Adding to these complications is the Algerian internet's notorious sluggishness. Most users rely on old-fashioned dial-up connections. Ookla, a US company which compares download speeds, ranks Algeria's velocity near the bottom, 178 out of 182 countries.

Very few Algerians go online, only 5.2 million, or 14% of the nation's 36 million people, making it one of the world's least connected countries, and the 34th least connected of 54 African countries. The few that go online are not regular, daily internet users, but casual ones, browsing the net mostly while sipping coffee at cyber cafés. The government is deliberately manipulating internet speed and connectivity, argued Zitout. "The infrastructure for a faster and higher level of internet connectivity is already there, but the regime is unwilling to use it," he said.

Mobile phone technology in Algeria is also limited, mostly by outdated creaking equipment and the state-run telecoms Algérie Telecom which operates without competition. Mobile phones were crucial during the 2009 Iranian elections and the Arab spring. Protestors used them not only to call demonstrators to rallies but uploaded video footage that highlighted the brutal police crackdowns.

But Algeria lacks 3G and fourth-generation (4G) telecommunications standards, which permit whizzy and faster sharing of messages, photos and videos.

Despite these barriers, insurgents still turn to the internet because newspapers, radio and television, under strict government control, do not provide a platform for protest. In 2013 Reporters without Borders placed Algeria close to the bottom in press freedom, with a ranking of 125 out of 179 countries.

"The regime employs a carrot and stick approach to control the media," Zitout said. "The carrot element is provided by symbolic charges, generous tax schemes and advertising contracts, which are often the most important sources of income, for those newspapers that behave well." At the same time, "the regime imposes printing charges and taxes, encourages intimidation of journalists and bans advertising contracts for newspapers critical of the regime. This makes most newspapers that do not adopt a pro-regime line unsustainable," Zitout concluded.

The regime's increasingly elaborate effort to control modern technology underlines its fear of the internet. Given the absence of a free press and modern phone and internet technology, the opposition will continue to rely on its snail-like, dial-up connections to social media sites. Algeria remains "exceptional" and stable, unlike turbulent Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.



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Matthew Kay



# HEALTH Journalism

# VERACITY, TRANSPARENCY AND INCLUSIVITY

plus

## ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

By Harry Dugmore and Jade Smith

Discovery Centre for Health Journalism

How do we know – and how can we talk about – quality in journalism? In particular, can we discern good health journalism from great health journalism?

**A**s a centre with a brief to encourage “more and better” health journalism in South Africa, we’ve had to think hard about definitional issues and about balancing subjective and objective gauges of quality. We’ve developed an initial appraisal of health journalism, locally and internationally, and we’ve created a normative framework that we hope will enable journalists and educators to have better discussions about what is meant by quality in health journalism. This framework will hopefully inform what kind of journalism education – degrees, short courses, topic guides, symposia – might promote higher levels of quality in reporting on medical science.

We are proposing that quality health journalism has to be, at root, discernibly effective and ethical journalism. For us, this effective and ethical journalism has five interconnecting elements that are worth exploring and explaining. Of course, these proposed elements are foundational to good journalism in general. We’re trying to explore how journalism about medical science, to be done well, requires additional layers – additional expertise – that other journalism mostly does not.

But first, what do we mean by effective? Simply put, we would argue that to be effective, in the context of reporting on medical science, a piece of journalism needs to provide knowledge and information that is *useful* and *beneficial*.

These are imprecise terms, to be sure, and raise questions of beneficial to whom and useful for what? Effective may mean merely popular to some, even if the journalism in question is inaccurate or sensationalised.

But health journalism needs to be held to a higher standard, of both minimising harm and doing some good, at least for ordinary people. This utilitarian argument, despite its problems, provides at least a starting point for the proposed five elements of our framework.

The framework proposes that effective and ethical health journalism has elements of **veracity**, **transparency** and **inclusivity** as *core* elements, and **engagement** and **empowerment** as very desirable, but arguably optional, extra elements. But we are suggesting that good health journalism needs a judicious combination, ideally, of all five.

### *Veracity*

Veracity incorporates the more general journalistic ideal of accuracy, but also asks if writing about health imposes special and additional accuracy needs. A key part of accuracy when writing about health concerns *locating* the science properly. Trenchant critic of British health journalism, Ben Goldacre<sup>1</sup>, suggests “... science itself works very badly as a news story: it is by its very nature a subject for the ‘features’ section, because it does not generally move ahead by sudden, epoch-making breakthroughs. It moves ahead by gradually emergent themes and theories, supported by a raft of evidence from a number of different disciplines on a number of different explanatory levels. Yet the media remain obsessed with ‘new breakthroughs’”.

Locating the science in a proper development framework, in terms of knowing the difference between what is established and largely ‘agreed on’ in a particular field, and where the ‘frontiers’ of that field are, would

In a deadline-bound environment, it is occasionally tempting to copy, paste and lightly edit a pharmaceutical company's press pack, but this is PR, not journalism.

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address *the* main critique of medical journalism made by scientists. The very 'newness' of whatever 'new' research the journalism is about needs to be contextualised so that the significance of the research can be located more precisely.

In addition, there is, possibly more than in other beats, a need to be scrupulously accurate about getting the numbers right. This is not just about translating and explaining numerical concepts and statistics, but also about locating the numbers in the bigger picture of the particular medical science research for a given topic.

Numbers are tricky: a new treatment might double the number of people out of a thousand who get cured of a condition, compared to another treatment. But if that doubling is from four in a thousand people treated to, say, eight in a thousand people treated (and, say, the new drug costs 10 times more than the old drug), the claim of double efficacy, while correct, needs to be properly explained.

These differences between absolute and relative numbers are a key differentiator in terms of any assessment of veracity and the overall quality of piece of journalism.

We thus propose that veracity is, for health journalism, a more comprehensive notion of accuracy, taking care to create a more located sense of where the science is at, and taking care to make sense of the numbers and stats in ways that articulate the difference between absolute and relative benefits and risks.

### **Transparency**

Transparency is mostly about disclosing vested interests of various kinds, and being meticulous about referencing all sources used. Conflicts of interest are often hidden in published research: all too often, research is funded by companies whose profits can be amplified by the results. Big Pharma (and small pharma and multinational food companies) also hide unflattering results, and even the bastions of good science (usually university-based research institutions), have incentives to tweak their results.

Globally, a new movement to legislate or otherwise encourage the listing and reporting of *all* research has gained new momentum in the past few years after a number of large pharmaceutical companies have been exposed burying studies that reflect poorly on new treatments. All Trials Registered (<http://www.alltrials.net/>) is something journalists should consider actively aligning themselves to.

In a deadline-bound environment, it is occasionally tempting to copy, paste and lightly edit a pharmaceutical company's press pack, but this is PR, not journalism. In July 2012, GlaxoSmithKline was ordered

to pay a record US\$3-billion fine after it admitted to, among other things, trying to win favour with doctors by paying for overseas trips, hunting trips, and spa treatments<sup>2</sup>.

Journalists are similarly targeted. Fancy product launches, replete with generous swag bags, are fine to attend, but it is important to mention the location and lavishness of the launch in the resulting journalism.

At a deeper level of transparency, even expert opinions should, ideally, be evaluated by other experts, for the reader to get an idea of what the debate is about. Vague references to research ("studies have shown..."; "scientists say..." and the like) are less and less acceptable globally. Any research mentioned should ideally be fully traceable – linked if publishing online, at least – for readers (and scientists) to more easily find and verify the claims made in the article, if they so desire.

Full disclosure of conflicts of interest – researchers' or journalists' – needs to become more of the norm, so readers can factor this into their evaluations of new treatments or of any research covered by journalists.

### **Inclusivity**

Inclusivity is an antidote for a major critique of health journalism: the 'othering' of groups of people by some health journalism. Journalism can be judgemental, and is often so in terms of people's bad habits – without considering other factors that contribute to the choices and contexts that people live within.

Of course people have differing degrees of agency with respect to their health, but a balance needs to be found between acknowledging that this agency is not the sole factor that determines their health, and letting all of us off the hook by adopting a somewhat fatalistic perspective. Recent academic literature on obesity, for example, suggests that a fatalistic frame is used more often than not, either overtly or subtly suggesting that nothing can be done by individuals or societies in the face of the complexity of obesity.

A local example of both fatalism and othering is illustrative. "Save me from my big bum" barked the headline on the *Daily Sun's* mobile website on 15 May this year<sup>3</sup>. The story described the source's weight as being "the same as a small cow", assumedly to put it into perspective for the reader, and foregrounded the woman's "huge backside". This story incorporates a kind of negative engagement because of its sensationalist approach, but in terms of inclusivity, the story is anything but: it is mostly demeaning, implying that people struggling with weight problems are a spectacle suitable for the front page of a newspaper.

This kind of journalism is easy to caricature, and is fortunately relatively rare, at least in terms of this kind

of overt level of belittling, demeaning and othering some groups of people. But more subtle disdain and distancing can offer filter through, especially in journalism about lifestyle diseases, where smokers, drinkers and the fat and unfit can easily be seen as “bringing it (diabetes, lung cancer etc.) on themselves”.

Blaming the victim is rarely helpful, but absolving people of all agency isn’t effective and ethical health journalism either. The notion of inclusivity seeks to find a more ready balance between context and choice, and a greater empathy in reporting of the tensions between these.

### **Engagement**

Engagement, tries to capture something of how compelling a story is, and how a reader’s attention is peaked and held, so that the important health information is conveyed most effectively. Effective engaged journalism walks an ethical tightrope, however – a health story can be perceived as boring (full of jargon or details about the numbers that might lose audiences perhaps), but it is just as possible for a story to be too engaging, with claims of miracle cures, or approaches which are overly voyeuristic and exploitative.

Gary Schwitzer, publisher of *healthnewsreview.org*, a watchdog website for journalism in the US, found that, of nearly 1 000 stories between 1997 and 2002 that discussed trials of a drug for the common cold, about a third described the drug in sensational terms. These terms included “cure”, “miracle”, “wonder drug”, “super drug”, and “a medical first”<sup>4</sup>. According to Schwitzer: “The trials were compared with the search for the Holy Grail and with man’s landing on the moon. But the drug was never approved.”

To make stories engaging, journalists often use sick people’s stories as case studies to drive home the importance of tests, to inspire hope and raise awareness. Often this creates compelling, award-winning journalism, arguably the epitome of engagement. But this approach too raises significant issues. Are such patients being exploited for their stories – and how can this be ameliorated? What do journalists owe their subjects in terms of coverage and follow-ups? Is it legal, and appropriate, to publish their names, even with their informed consent? Do case studies scare people, or distort understandings of a particular illness? Or is there no better way to foster both understanding and empathy?

Engagement when writing about health is often a

difficult balancing act between veracity and outright entertainment. How this is better achieved, and how it is taught, is one of the key challenges for health journalism education.

### **Empowerment**

Empowerment, the final element of our framework, is mostly dependent on journalists’ own motives for tackling any story in the first place. One end of the empowerment scale sees journalists as neutral disseminators of that which is new: a “here is the research, explained; take it or leave it” approach. The other end of the spectrum is a conception of the role of journalists as health advocates and even as health activists.

Regardless of where journalists might locate themselves on this spectrum (at any given time and for any given topic), stories should ideally provide information that at least goes a little way to facilitate change, at least in stories where behaviour change is implicated. In practice, this could be as simple as ending a story with, “if you think you might have these symptoms, speak to your GP”. Or, “go to this website for further information”.

But empowerment is about more than just directions for action; it is about creating the space for something to be done, or, at least, as a catalyst for thinking about doing something. It is about making it easier for audiences to act, to find out more, if they feel that way inclined. It is not about being prescriptive or prescribing, but perhaps about empathy with audiences and a duty of care towards them.

### **A foundational framework**

Thinking about quality in health journalism across these five elements is, we hope, a way to enlarge the conversation and create a more rigorous typology of what is most useful to discuss and think about. It may be too simplistic to suggest that ‘good’ health journalism is some kind of combination of these five elements, as each story has something of its own logic and flow, but as a set of concepts, we hope these five elements are useful for looking at, and doing, health journalism.

And, in terms of an overall pedagogy with respect to creating curricula, devising short courses and guides, and other ways of impacting on the skills and aptitudes of journalists who want to write more and better health journalism, we’re hopeful that these five elements can become a foundational qualitative framework.



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# NOTES

## FROM THE CUTTING EDGE

### MULTIMEDIA, PHOTOJOURNALISM AND VISUAL STORYTELLING

In a pioneering study, commissioned by World Press Photo, David Campbell examined the current practices in multimedia against the background of the disruption in the traditional media economy, and the revolution in how people consume news today. On the World Press Photo site <http://www.worldpressphoto.org/multimedia-research> you can download the full report and hear from Campbell and the makers of multimedia in a series of five video conversations with some of the leading players in the field.

By David Campbell

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## What is MULTIMEDIA?

Searching for a single definition in answer to this question is neither possible nor desirable. At its most basic, “multimedia” signifies some combination of images, sound, graphics, and text to produce a story. In different realms of practice people speak of cross media, transmedia or mixed media. In photojournalism, multimedia has often been first understood as photography, plus something else, principally the combination of still imagery with other content. Nowadays we see it in multiple forms ranging from online photo galleries where pictures are combined with text captions, to audio slideshows, linear video (both short- and long-form), animated infographics, non-linear interactives, and full-scale web documentaries and broadcast films.

The digital revolution has been a defining development in the emergence of multimedia that blurs the boundary between still and moving images. But that boundary has long been blurred. Even a brief consideration of the history of image making shows considerable overlap between still and moving images. Close-ups and freeze frames are moments in which cinema employs the still image, and photo-stories and sequences testify to the influence of cinema on photography. Famous photographers like Man Ray, Paul Strand and Gordon Parks were all involved in film making and films like Chris Marker’s *La Jetee* (1962) and Agnes Varda’s *Salut Les Cubains* (1963) were based on still photographs. Ken Burn’s creative use of archival pictures in *The Civil War* (1990) was so powerful it gave rise to an effect now immortalised in video editing software. Modern television is not averse to deploying stills in either opening credits (as in David Simon’s *Treme*) or in news broadcasts, when a slower pace is needed to underline the significance of the event (the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the invasion of Iraq being two such cases), or when video is unavailable.

The roots of multimedia go deeper still. In the media history of photographic images, prior to mass reproduction of images in print becoming possible, pictures were displayed to the public with the help of technological devices such as the magic lantern (as well as the gloriously named phenakistiscope, zoetrope, praxinoscope, mutoscope, etc.) that created the perception of moving images in theatrical settings.

Moving forward again, we can recall other photographic projects in which images were entwined with other forms of content. Nan Goldin’s famous *Ballad of Sexual Dependency* was originally shown in the early 1980s as a constantly evolving slideshow with music. Pedro Meyer’s *I Photograph to Remember* (1991), Rick Smolan’s *From Alice to Ocean* (1992) and *Passage to Vietnam* (1994), and Tim Hetherington’s *House of Pain* (1996) were all on CD-ROMs and it was speculated that CD-ROMs might replace books as the chosen platform for photographic



presentation. Gilles Peress' *Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace* (1996) was an interactive photo essay, while Ed Kashi's *Iraqi Kurdistan* flipbook style production (2006) closed the circle by deploying a 19th century technique on a 21st century platform.

Photojournalism has always been influenced by technological changes, and the arrival of DSLR cameras with video capability – the Nikon D90 in August 2008 followed shortly thereafter by the Canon 5D Mark II – have again highlighted the relationship between still and moving images, providing practitioners with dual image capability in a single camera body.

What is the significance of this history? It confirms that any attempt to strictly define multimedia would exclude more than it includes. And it demonstrates that what we need is not a restrictive definition of one genre, but an expanded understanding of the photographic, especially the long-standing and complex relationship between still and moving images, possibly what Tim Hetherington meant when he spoke of a “post-photographic” world. This is not a world in which one visual form has died, but a world in which multiple visual forms are alive and stronger than ever.

This is why this study speaks of “visual storytelling”. It opens up the field to different communities who share

Five-year-old Zheng Junhao, one of China's “Left Behind Generation” sleeps on the porch after returning home from school before his grandparents had come back from the fields for the evening. The Left Behind Generation is estimated at 58 million children whose parents have migrated to the cities for work and have left them behind with grandparents or other relatives who shelter and feed them.

Sharron Lovell who took this picture works with David Campbell on multimedia project. See her work at <http://www.sharron-lovell.com/>

a common purpose in image-oriented reportage. It is the zone in which photojournalism, videojournalism, documentary, cinema and interactive storytelling have the potential to intersect. This does not create a new visual genre, but it constitutes a space in which photojournalists can bring their aesthetic abilities and commitment to reporting, and learn from those operating outside of photography.

This is not the convergence of everything into one, or a place where a single new form replaces all others; none of this leads to the conclusion that all forms of print are passé. Instead, we have arrived at a place where image making is important to storytelling, and storytelling encompasses many forms across many platforms.

# Digital and the desire for LONG FORM JOURNALISM

**T**he disruption of the internet, the turn to online news sources, and the global spread of mobile technology are sometimes seen as producing a new age of distraction and superficiality.<sup>1</sup>

Without claiming that these are in fact the best of times for visual storytellers, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that contemporary developments are building on and encouraging a healthy appetite for engagement with news and information.

Here is what we found in the World Press Photo/Fotografen Federatie multimedia research project (see section 2 of the report for details and sources):

Over the last two decades – and consistent throughout that period – American data shows people enjoy reading (51% say they enjoyed it a lot), and there has been no decrease in the number reading a book on a typical day (c. 30%). Now, though, the proportion (currently 20%) reading those books via electronic devices is growing.

In Europe and the US there is a strong appetite for news, with 75% or more of people accessing news daily.

International news is a topic of interest for 44% plus in Europe and the US.

At least two-thirds of the 16-24 age groups in Europe and the US are interested in news, so the future is not as bleak as sometimes feared.

Significantly, mobile technology is helping to cultivate this appetite for news:

- accessing news is one of the top things mobile consumers do
- it increases the amount of news they consume
- it increases the number of longer stories they read
- organisations like the *Wall Street Journal* report that people spend at least as much time (40-50 mins) on their tablet app as they did with the printed paper.

Web video is the subject of current debate, with some producers questioning its value. That argument makes some good creative points that need to be examined in more detail, although there is wide variation in what counts as web video. But it is clear that news consumers like linear video. Media organisations we surveyed repeatedly said it was one of the two most popular formats for people coming

to their sites. As a result many media organisations (especially those formerly known as newspapers) are investing heavily in video production. All this makes online video the fastest growing multimedia format, with encouraging audience behaviour for those producing stories:

- News is a popular category on YouTube (it was the most searched-for item in four out of 12 months in 2011).
- There is no strict correlation between length of video and popularity. One-third of popular videos were two to five minutes in length, and nearly one fifth were longer than five minutes.
- Oyala, a large video streaming platform, reported that long form videos of more than 10 minutes accounted for 57% of viewing time on tablets they served.

Multimedia completion rates can also be good:

MediaStorm says that more than half, and often two-thirds, of those viewing their stories online stay with them to the end, even when stories run up to 20 or more minutes.

We can also point to studies commissioned by the Associated Press demonstrating that audiences desire breadth, context and depth, news consumers feel they have the headlines and what they want is the background. To that end, they value the depth that visuals (both still and moving) can bring.

This shows the audience is out there; they have an appetite for visual stories, and are consuming long form journalism and video. This does not mean the audience for visual stories can be easily found or quickly engaged. It still takes a good story, and one that is accessible to as many as possible. But both audience desire and our ability to reach them are encouraged by the digital transformations many feared would have a negative effect on the future of visual stories.

*This is the seventh in a series of posts highlighting the content of "Visual Storytelling in the Age of Post-Industrial Journalism", the World Press Photo/Fotografen Federatie study of the global emergence and development of multimedia in visual storytelling, especially photojournalism. The posts are searchable with the "Multimedia Research Project" tag.*



*David Campbell is a writer, researcher, teacher, videographer and producer who analyses the contexts that shape visual storytelling and which he publishes on his blog [www.david-campbell.org](http://www.david-campbell.org). With Sharron Lovell he won a Best of the Best award in general excellence at The Society of American Business Editors and Writers 2010 annual Best in Business Journalism competition for "Living in the Shadows: China's Internal Migrants." Campbell is affiliated to several universities and associated multimedia journalism programmes.*

## Endnotes

1. This position draws on the likes of Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows* and crops up in articles such as "Smart readers are too distracted to read smart content." There are two problems with these claims. First is that the science on the impact of technology on thinking is contested, as the arguments reviewed here make clear. Second is that the claims are absolutist, giving a sense there is a general social-psychological condition that automatically affects all. *The New York Times* ran a good series on brains and computers in 2010 but its opening character revealed that "distraction" might be a conscious choice. While 17-year-old Vishal Singh was used as an example of one whose love of computers and the internet meant he couldn't focus on school homework, he had no trouble concentrating unreservedly on his true passion – film making – spending hours editing short sequences and getting an A in his film studies class. As such, he is hardly "wired for distraction".



## *Social Media for Journalists: Principles and Practice*

MEGAN KNIGHT & CLARE COOK

Sage Publications 2013

Reviewed by Jude Mathurine

## BOOK REVIEW

# Social media for journalists unpacked

When asked what titles new media teachers and practitioners should have on their shelves, I would volunteer *Multimedia Journalism* by Andy Bull, *Flash Journalism* by Mindy McAdams, *MediaActive* by Dan Gillmor, *Journalism Next* by Mark Briggs and Jonathan Gray et al's essential *Data Journalism Handbook*. However, many books focused on emerging media phenomena and practices fail to relate debates, models and concepts in media and communication theory to the application of new media, digital tools, trends and case studies – and vice versa. These shortcomings often make texts less accessible to lay actors on the one hand and academics on the other.

Megan Knight (a former head of the Rhodes University Journalism and Media Studies, New Media Lab) and Clare Cook's *Social Media for Journalists: Principles and Practice* (Sage) bucks this trend with a book to help students and practitioners understand how potential for new arrangements between the media and the people "formerly known as the audience" disrupts journalism in a multiplatform media environment.

The title carefully unpacks how social media applications support and disrupt traditional journalism functions of research, writing, editing and distribution and weighs in on social media's influence on issues of media accountability, regulation and revenue generation. The result is a book that connects the dots between concepts, theory and practice. While the book's title suggests that its focus is social media and networks, the text offers a lens to understand many changes taking place in traditional journalism and the wider media ecology.

Author Megan Knight says the book attempts to explore the underlying structures and systems of new forms of social interaction, and of journalism, and through those reach an understanding of the fundamental nature of these new forms of journalism.

"Throughout the book we have approached the subject...as a new way of doing journalism, and although these tools will come and go...the changes in the boundaries and relationships between audiences, producers and advertisers will only embed themselves deeper into the practice of journalism," she said.

The core lesson of the book is that social media is not a fad, neither is it a simple function that can be

devolved to unpaid interns tasked to manage Facebook pages. As Cook and Knight write: "The journalists' modern day toolkit is not about using everything all the time or shouting at everyone every minute. It is about adapting to the culture of social media and selecting the right tool at the right time for the right audience."

Cook and Knight validate social media as an essential complement to contemporary journalism whether for agenda setting, sentiment analysis, research, brand building, reputation management, revenue generation or user engagement. Social media demands critical competence in a range of interconnected knowledge areas.

*Social Media for Journalists* is not a how-to book that will date with the next update to Facebook or Twitter. A focus on particular practices and phenomena such as crowdsourcing, social curation, citizen journalism, data journalism, data discovery, social media ethics and regulation, revenue generation (rather than specific tools and platforms like Wordpress, Wikipedia or Pinterest) promises to give the book more enduring utility.

Cook and Knight marry contemporary quantitative and qualitative research, interviews, examples, case studies and personal learning from own experimentation and experience as journalists and media educators (both are senior lecturers at the University of Central Lancashire School of Journalism and Digital Communication) to discuss the evolving principles and techniques of social media production. While of benefit to teachers of new media specifically, and journalism in general, contents of the book will also resonate with students, online editors and even PR practitioners.

The book does have a little room for improvement however. The publishers' use of social media and an interactive website to support the book would be welcome. Future editions of the book should also look to improve quality of reproduction of visualisations like graphics and charts. Finally, a section on analytics to inform professional social media use and social media campaigns needs to be included. Nonetheless, *Social Media for Journalists* may become a mainstay in general journalism programmes, as well as specialist programmes in digital and networked journalism.

*Social Media for Journalists is not a how-to book that will date with the next update to Facebook or Twitter.*



*Jude Mathurine is a lecturer in the Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media studies, where he lectures new media and heads up the New Media Lab. Feedback on this review is welcome @ newmediajude.*



# The rise of social media IN AFRICA

Mwangi Nahašhom works at a small pharmacy in the village of Olekasasi, close to Nairobi National Park in Kenya. Newspapers do not get delivered there, though it's only an hour or two from the capital city. Even so, the morning I met him, he had already read the day's news. He gets it on his mobile phone.

By Indra de Lanerolle

**H**is routine is to look at the *Daily Nation* Facebook page and from there click through to their website if anything interests him. He also uses social network services to keep up with his friends. For the first time in his life, he can get information on the country, on his community, and his friends, at an affordable cost.

A large scale survey conducted by Research ICT Africa (RIA) – a network of researchers in over 20 African countries headquartered in Cape Town – shows that Mwangi is part of a new wave of mostly-mobile internet users on the continent (Calandro, Stork and Gillwald, 2012).

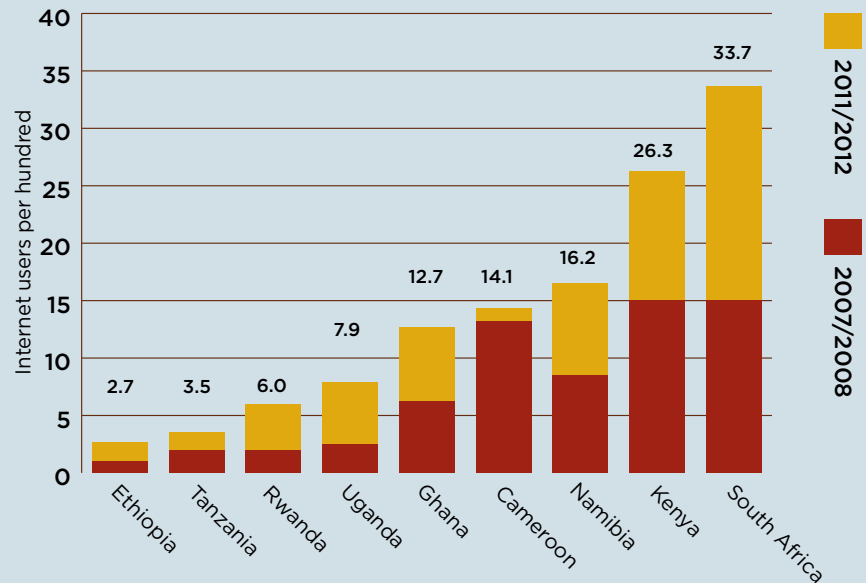
According to this research, over one in three South Africans now use the internet, as do more than a quarter of Kenyans. The RIA household and individual survey 2011/2 was conducted in 12 African countries. It is a representative survey of adults aged 15 and over conducted face to face in rural and urban areas. It follows a similar survey conducted in 17 countries in 2007/8. The chart shows the growth in internet use in nine countries that were included in both surveys. In most of the countries internet use has at least doubled over the period.

#### Access and affordability

At the South African Network Society Project at the University of Witwatersrand, we collaborated with the RIA team in developing detailed questions on internet use and working with them in analysing the internet data from the survey. Our research

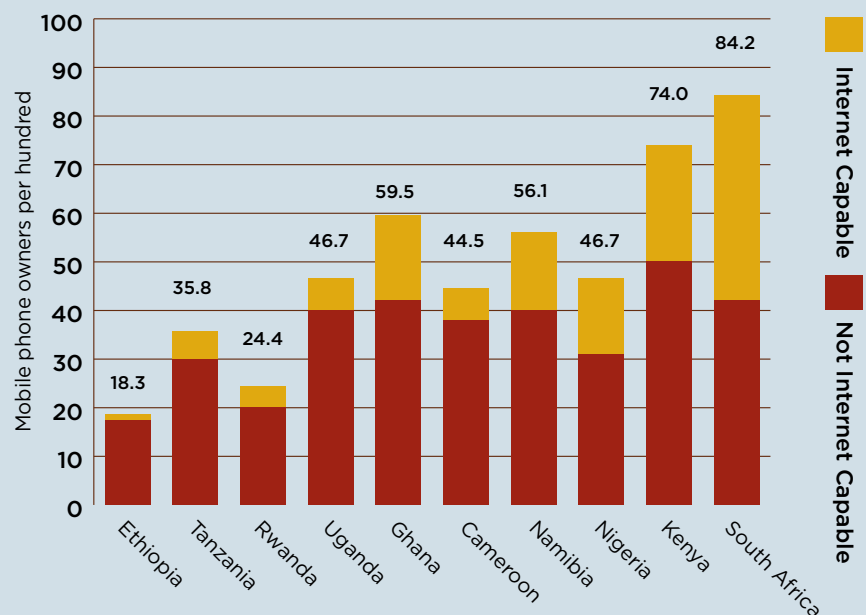
## INTERNET ADOPTION IN AFRICA

Source: Research ICT Africa. Household and Individual Surveys 2007/2008 and 2011/2012



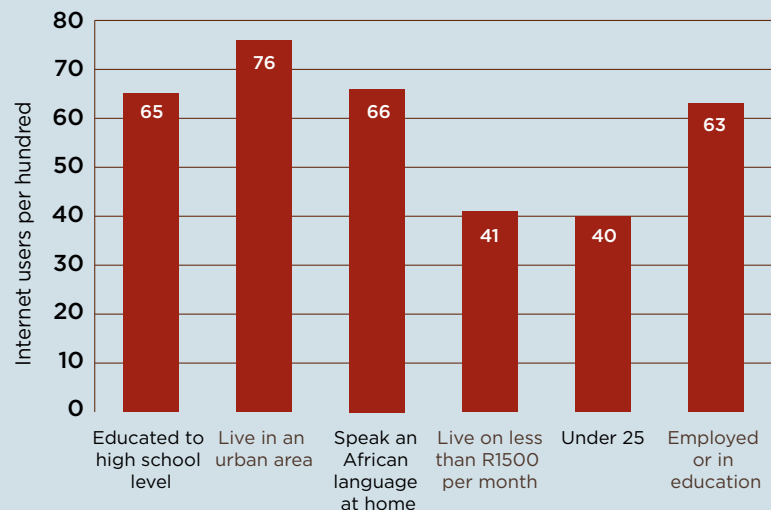
## MOBILE PHONE OWNERSHIP IN AFRICA

Source: Research ICT Africa. Household and Individual Survey 2011/2012



## SOUTH AFRICAN INTERNET USERS PROFILE

Source: De Lanerolle (2012)



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## Journalism in Africa has played a role in calling those in power to account. In many instances it has spoken truth to power.

suggests a combination of reasons for this growth. The first factor is accessibility – in many countries most people now have access to mobile networks and more and more phones are internet capable – you don't need a so-called smartphone to go online. Even in those countries where the minority own mobiles, mobile phone ownership far exceeds computer ownership and mobile phone connections are many times greater than fixed line connections. In the countries with the highest levels of internet use, at least a quarter of all mobile phones are capable of connecting to the internet. And this is likely to increase in the near future. Nokia today sells only four models in Africa that are not capable of accessing the Internet<sup>1</sup>.

The second factor is affordability. In many countries, data costs are falling. In South Africa, mobile data costs have fallen from two rand per megabyte (MB) to less than 20 cents. And mobile operators (unlike almost all of their fixed-line counterparts) offer this data pre-paid and often in small bundles. In Kenya, Mwangi can buy a voucher for around three cents (US) that gives him 5MB of data. He checks Facebook up to 20 times per day and spends about 15 cents a day on data.

As a result, social network services like Facebook and local online information services provided by news organisations like the *Daily Nation* offer compelling value for low income users, enabling many of them to access relevant information and to communicate comparatively cheaply with their friends and family.

### A new wave of internet users

This possibility has not been realised for most Africans yet. Mwangi is an early adopter in a country with high levels of internet use. Networks need to be expanded and prices need to fall in order for growth rates to be maintained. Internet adoption in Ethiopia for example is only a tenth of the rate in Kenya. But the trend is clear. Thanks to mobile wireless networks, mobile phone ownership, and shared access facilities in schools and colleges, workplaces and internet cafes, the internet in Africa is no longer for the elite. Our analysis of South African internet users shows that four out of 10 users have incomes of less than R1 500 per month. Most are not educated above high school level and one in three is neither employed nor in education.

### Mass media for Africa?

In Europe and the US, many see the internet as a threat to journalism. There are concerns about the collapse

of the existing mass media news and information networks, their business models made unsustainable by the internet (Pew, 2013). Others worry about the social and political impact of the fragmentation of mass media into online political echo-chambers (Sunstein, 2007). In Africa, we cannot simply import these perspectives uncritically. We need a more reflective, reasoned and specific historical view of the journalism that may be threatened on the continent. In many countries, Africans have never had affordable access to independent journalism. State interests have often dominated broadcast journalism and print journalism usually has been restricted and tailored to urban elites. In South Africa already, more people go online daily than read a newspaper (De Lanerolle 2012). But the reality is that less than one in five South Africans read a newspaper every day (De Lanerolle 2012).

Journalism in Africa has played a role in calling those in power to account. In many instances it has spoken truth to power. But it has not succeeded in providing timely diverse and relevant information to most Africans. Mobile wireless networks may be the first distribution channels that offer the possibility of diverse news and information sources available to the majority of Africans and people are moving to it in part because of the failures of the journalism channels of the past and present.

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# CHUNGKING MANSIONS

and the

# African telecom BOOM

Nathan Road is Hong Kong's busiest shopping street. It is lined with skyscrapers and decorated with neon signs of every size, colour and shape. Most of the logos are familiar: McDonald's, KFC, Samsung, Rolex, Carlsberg, 7-Eleven, Standard Chartered. This is Asia's Times Square, a luminous roll call of the world's biggest companies and products, a shrine to consumer culture in the modern world.

By Simon Allison

**NOTES**  
FROM THE **CUTTING EDGE**

**W**orkers, tourists and others cram the neon shadows of the sidewalks, clutching engorged wallets and sleek plastic bags. The luxury goods in the shop fronts of polished glass and mood lighting beckon their business. Lots of money changes hands. Many shiny new items are purchased. This is the apotheosis of globalisation as we know it best, big companies, handsome profits, fancy boardrooms, high-flying executives, top-quality goods.

This is not the globalisation I have come to Nathan Road to see. I know I am getting closer to my destination when a man outside a Rolex store approaches. "Want nice watch? Mister, nice Rolex for you? I give you best price."

Despite admiring his brazen attempts to shift fakes not a metre outside a shop displaying the genuine articles, I shrug him off and turn into a narrow passage that takes me to the heart of a building called, in Hong Kong's typically optimistic style, Chungking Mansions.

This three-towered utilitarian block is one of Hong Kong's most notorious buildings. Unlikely as it may seem, it is one of the major drivers of Africa's technological revolution.

The building's history is infamous. Erected in 1961 to fulfill Hong Kong's insatiable need for low-cost housing, it soon turned into one of the most legendary stops on Asia's hippy backpacker trail, thanks to the proliferation of tiny, cheap guesthouses on its upper floors, many still operating.

These tourists enticed merchants of tacky goods, whose stalls swamped the building's lower floors. In turn, this activity attracted illegal immigrants, drug dealers and prostitutes, turning Chungking into Hong Kong's seediest underbelly, a place locals avoided completely and even police feared to tread.

In recent years, the place has cleaned up its act somewhat, but still offers the city's cheapest accommodation. It is home to a large South Asian community (primarily Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) and plenty of cheap tat: luggage, souvenirs, fake football shirts, etc.

But in the last decade or so, shopkeepers have introduced a new product which has kept Chungking Mansions ticking: the mobile phone.

Pause and shift your geographical attention to the markets of Africa, a continent that has also embraced the mobile phone in recent years. The informal nature of this business makes it difficult to cite exact figures, but it is likely that most mobiles sold in Africa are not traded through official, licensed channels.

They are hawked in markets or sold in small family-run shops displaying a dizzying array of brands and phone styles, many unfamiliar.

Often the handsets are simply lined up on shelves,



a tangle of headsets and charger cables in a box at the vendor's feet. While quality may be unpredictable, price is not. These phones are inexpensive, much cheaper than their equivalents sold in slick shops or by service providers. Without these low-priced phones, the African telecommunications revolution may never have left the ground. But where do they come from? And how do they get here?

The first question is easy. Their provenance is China, which makes the lion's share of the world's mobile handsets. According to figures released by China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the country produced more than 915 million handsets in the first three quarters of 2012.

By way of comparison, analytics firm Gartner estimates that around 1.2 billion handsets were sold throughout the world in this period. While China manufactures many smartphones too (including the iPhone and the Samsung Galaxy series), it specialises in the budget handsets favoured in Africa, meaning that the vast majority of handsets in Africa will have been made in China.

The more interesting question is how these cheap Chinese phones reach Africa's markets from the huge factories in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, two major cities on the mainland north of Hong Kong. It is a story of low-end, informal globalisation on a massive scale, with dingy Chungking Mansions as its backdrop.

For African traders, there are obvious barriers to the Chinese factories and handset wholesalers. The first is language. Mainland China does not, as a rule, speak English, and African traders are yet to pick up Cantonese or Mandarin in any significant numbers.

Visas are another obstacle. China requires citizens

of most countries to acquire visas in advance. This can be difficult for a small-scale African businessman who might not be able to demonstrate the necessary financial proof that he is economically independent. A third is connections. The factories are spread out around the sprawling megalopolis of Guangzhou and Shenzhen, difficult to find unless you know in advance exactly where you are going. All this makes it hard for traders to find the products or negotiate for them.

The simple solution is Hong Kong: easily accessible with many flights linking it to African countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa. The island's relaxed entry policy means that most nationalities can get in without a visa. Much of the city's business is conducted in English so communication is easy. For the business connections: simply head to Chungking Mansions, take the stairs to the first floor, and start negotiating with the dozens of wholesalers operating from tiny shops filling the towers with every possible kind of handset.

The importance of Chungking Mansions to the African telecommunications boom cannot be overestimated. Academic Gordon Mathews of the Chinese University of Hong Kong spent five years studying the building and wrote a book on it called *Ghetto at the Centre of the World*.

In 2009 some 20% of all handsets in Africa, about 10 million, physically passed through this building, he estimated, and even more arrived in Africa thanks to deals made and business relationships formed within its walls.

"Low-end globalisation is globalisation not as practised by the big multinationals with their batteries of lawyers and their billion dollar budgets," Mathews said in an interview with CNN. "It's globalisation done

China phones, however, are affordable. Chinese companies manufacture these handsets and brand them with their own logo. Often, they bear a striking resemblance to premium brands, but crucially, do not claim to be the real thing (except one obvious iPhone knockoff that carried a picture of a smiling Steve Jobs on the home screen).

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by individual traders carrying goods in their suitcases back and forth from their home countries.”

To understand Mathews, I have come to Chungking Mansions to buy phones. A Zambian friend has asked me to buy 20 handsets for a maximum of \$15 each, which he intends to sell in a rural Zambian town.

This puts me in the same position as many would-be cellular entrepreneurs who are drawn from thousands of miles away by the building's whispered but well known reputation as a place where good business is done. My first lesson is that my order is laughably small. While some shops deal in hundreds of handsets, most only accept orders of a thousand handsets. One hopeful merchant even offered the exclusive rights to import his product into my country of choice.

My tiny order and small budget rule out some of the more serious-looking shops. They sell genuine new and used phones that cost the same as in any other shop in Hong Kong, beyond the prescribed budget.

Some of them also sell fakes, exact replicas of top-brand originals in appearance, and used fakes, second-hand handsets where the genuine exterior has been preserved but the electronics inside have been replaced. These sell for significantly less, but no shopkeepers would even admit the existence of potentially-illegal goods to first-time, unproven buyers like me.

China phones, however, are affordable. Chinese companies manufacture these handsets and brand them with their own logo. Often, they bear a striking resemblance to premium brands, but crucially, do not claim to be the real thing (except one obvious iPhone knockoff that carried a picture of a smiling Steve Jobs on the home screen). These phones are enormously popular in some parts of Africa, particularly Nigeria, as they offer more features than well-known name-brand phones at a fraction of the price.

Take, for example, the phones I ended up buying. The KGtel 8520 is made by a Chinese firm I have never heard of, and modeled on the BlackBerry 8520. Even the software looks the same. There are some obvious differences, of course, most notably it is a bit thicker, lacks a track pad and does not connect to the BlackBerry messenger services. But it also has features that the BlackBerry does not, such as a torch and dual-SIM capability, which allows the phone to run SIM cards

from two different networks at the same time.

Then there is the price. The KGtel sells for \$15 in Chungking, while the current BlackBerry equivalent goes for about \$250. This huge price difference provides the potential for serious profit. Mickey, a Nigerian trader, can stuff his suitcase with 600 similarly-priced phones and sell them at home for triple the price, a conservative estimate, he says. For his outlay of \$9 000 he can recoup \$27 000, which, after travel, expenses, tariffs and/or the inevitable cut paid to customs officials, is still a profit of around \$15 000.

In other African countries with less supply and higher selling prices, the margins are even wider. My Zambian friend reckons he can get between \$80 and \$90 a handset.

As I collect the phones, I suddenly realise why traders get away with such hefty margins. I am nearly out the door when the shopkeeper's assistant, another Nigerian, employed to bring in customers and translate, slips something into my hand. “These are the stickers,” he says. “Keep them safe.” I look down, and there are 20 stickers each bearing the BlackBerry name and logo, designed to fit perfectly into an indent on the KGtel handset. It is a deception that would not fool anyone who has seen a BlackBerry, but many people in Africa have never seen one.

These days, as the trade in mobiles from China to Africa has become more established, the importance of Chungking Mansions is decreasing. The serious players in the industry, the ones who import containers rather than suitcases of phones, now deal directly with mainland factories. Some of the more adventurous smaller traders, looking for a better deal, are also venturing across the border, where China's recent economic progress is making it easier to do business. This is reflected in Kenya Airways announcing in April that they are introducing direct flights between Nairobi and Guangzhou.

These new developments should not detract from Chungking Mansions' continuing significance as a gateway for African traders into China. It will retain its place in history as the predominant single physical space that propelled Africa's mobile boom. It remains a symbol of the informal, low-end globalisation which expedited Africa's high-tech transformation.



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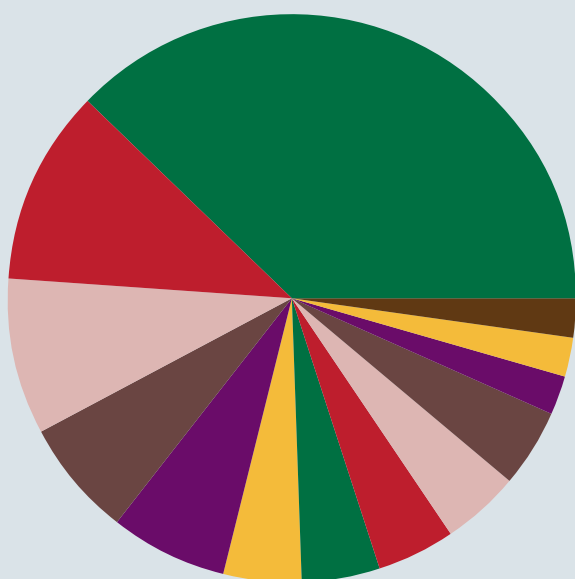
# M-Farm and iCow

## THE WORLD OF APPY AGRICULTURE

### mAgri culture

NUMBER OF MOBILE AGRICULTURAL (mAgri) SERVICES PER COUNTRY

Source: GMSA



John Mwangi stands in his wooden shed counting bags of maize neatly bundled in burlap. The 90kg bags sit on slats raised two feet off the earthen floor, protecting the maize from damp and rodents. A few hens scratch the earth, pecking at the grains that have fallen out. The 44-year-old farmer finishes counting at 149 and takes out his cellphone. He enters the number into a message and hits the send button. A few seconds later, he receives a text message with the latest price of maize in Nairobi. He puts the phone back in his overall pocket, content that he knows how much he will earn from these bags of maize.

By Joel Macharia

Mwangi is one of 6,400 farmers in Kenya taking advantage of this new high-tech service, powered by M-Farm, according to their spokesperson, Jimmy Wambua. Three young software developers in their early to mid-twenties started the company in 2011 to provide market prices to farmers. Previously Mwangi sold his maize to brokers who arrived with trucks and dictated the maize price. He had no way of finding out the actual market price and often felt cheated. Now, not only does he know how much he can demand, but he is able to come together with other farmers and command higher prices.

M-Farm is one of many services developed in the past five years on the back of Kenya's lead in information and communications technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones. An increasing number of young Kenyans are developing software, apps and cellphone-based programmes to help small scale farmers increase their agricultural skills and yields. At the most recent PivotEast, East Africa's premier mobile start-ups competition and conference, held in June 2012, three out of five finalists were young entrepreneurs who had created agrarian apps.

Agriculture is the backbone of Kenya's economy, earning over 24.2% of the country's \$33 billion GDP and employing 75% of the country's workforce. Farmers, mostly working on smallholdings of less than five acres, produce the bulk of Kenya's cash and food crops such as tea and coffee, the country's largest agricultural exports, and maize, Kenya's staple. While their production is quite considerable, Kenya's rural areas remain the country's poorest.

In addition to the price information, M-Farm offers farmers the chance to sell their crops collectively and to buy their seed, fertilisers and other inputs together, simply by using their mobile phone or logging on to the M-Farm website. Each M-Farm agent aggregates the produce of about 100 farmers and

sells it as one lot. The agents also sell seeds, fertiliser and other inputs in bulk at discount prices. Everyone gains as the farmers earn more for their crops and the bulk buyers and sellers reduce the number of farms they visit.

M-Farm collects wholesale market price information on 42 crops in five markets in Kenya: Nairobi, the capital; Mombasa, on the coast; Kisumu, Eldoret and Nakuru in the west. The company employs two full-time college-educated independent agents to collect prices from wholesale traders located in each market. Farmers can then use a free mobile app or send an sms request to see the latest information on specific crops.

Another mobile phone service is iCow. One of its products helps beef farmers track their cows' gestation periods to increase livestock numbers. Farmers use an sms code to register their cows and their insemination date. The service then sends sms prompts to the registered farmer on the expected date for calving, or the best days for new insemination. The service also sends weekly sms messages to subscribers with tips on breeding, nutrition, milk production efficiency, and other best dairy practices.

iCow also posts the location of the nearest veterinarian or artificial insemination specialist on its website, or sends farmers an sms with the information. Through its iCow Soko ("market" in Swahili) farmers can trade livestock and livestock by-products on their cellphones.

Another web and mobile-based tech programme is Kilimo Salama, which means "safe farming" in Swahili. Run by the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA), part of a Swiss agribusiness operating in 90 countries, in partnership with UAP Insurance of Kenya, and Safaricom, Kenya's biggest mobile network operator, it offers crop insurance against drought or excessive rains. Smallholders purchase cover through local agro-dealers while buying their seeds, fertiliser and insecticides. Using solar powered weather stations, Kilimo Salama collects information about extreme weather that may reduce yields and sends farmers these reports via sms.

If the company's climate station registers extreme weather, it sends insured farmers a mobile money payment that covers the costs of their seeds, fertiliser and other inputs such as insecticide that have been insured. Even if the entire crop is lost, the insurer provides the farmer with the funds to buy next season's seeds.

Premiums are calculated based on the area's drought risk. Farmers split the price with seed and other agribusinesses by each paying 5% on average on top of the price of a bag of seeds. According to the SFSA website, a farmer can insure a two dollar bag of seed for ten cents. If there is a drought, for example, the farmer will receive a payout of two dollars for each bag and can begin afresh at the next growing season. Through Kilimo Salama Plus, farmers can also insure their total anticipated harvest

value by paying the full premium amount.

Safaricom's M-Pesa, a mobile phone money transfer system, has been at the forefront of Kenya's agri-technological innovations. About half of Kenya's estimated 43m people use M-Pesa. Not only can farmers make and receive payments for seeds and crops, but financial institutions, such as savings and credit cooperatives and microfinance schemes, can disburse loans and collect payments. Almost all financial institutions in Kenya now offer M-Pesa services. Coupled with the company's saving and credit service, M-Shwari ("cool" or "calm" in Swahili), M-Pesa is also bringing farmers into the formal banking system.

Have farmers benefited from this information and communications technology innovation? Yes. Technology has boosted farmers' earnings. Access to market information through cellphones led to an increase in farmers' incomes of between 16.5% and 36% in Uganda, and 10% in Ghana, according to a 2012 World Bank report. A recent Vodafone report estimates a potential increase of \$48 billion in agricultural income in Africa by 2020 due to the spread of mobile technology.

In Kenya's central Kinangop region, farmers who sold collectively more than doubled their receipts for produce such as snow peas and sugar snap peas, says M-Farm's Wambua.

"Farmers previously got from five shillings (\$0.06) per kilo for snow peas, 40 shillings (\$0.48) if they were lucky. Now they get up to 90 shillings (\$1.07) per kilo," he says. M-Farm-subscribed growers also say that access to current market information has given them a transparent bargaining platform to use when selling individually to brokers or middlemen.

Innovation in agricultural IT is concentrated in two areas. The first is delivering via mobile phones information such as market prices and tips to improve crop and animal husbandry. The second is extension of financial services, such as M-Pesa's mobile money system. While these innovations have greatly improved access to market information and financial services, there remains a massive gap in improving access to markets once the crops are harvested.

The typical chain for horticultural produce in Kenya involves a series of middlemen ranging from transporters to wholesalers to retailers. Streamlining this often cumbersome and lengthy process would provide farmers with higher prices and consumers with cheaper products. The Kenyan government has also jumped on the ICT bandwagon.

In April 2013 the agriculture ministry announced that it would collect and distribute real-time market information to farmers. Over the next 18 months, the government plans to supply 1 450 laptops and smartphones to agricultural extension officers to collect and post these reports.

But it is technology driven by the private sector that is making significant strides in helping farmers. Kenya's agriculture will require considerably more government support in the future.



*Joel Macharia's primary concern as the CEO of Capital Associates, a Kenyan private investment firm, is to change the way in which fresh produce is distributed in Kenya.*

*He was one of Business Day's Top 40 men under 40 in 2012. macharia@macharia.co.ke*



## *New Media Influence on Social and Political Change in Africa*

ANTHONY A. OLORUNNISOLA & AZIZ DOUAI

IGI Global 2013

Reviewed by Tallulah Habib

## BOOK REVIEW

# Interrogating the impact of new media in Africa

**If a free and thriving media is an intrinsic part of a genuine democracy, what does that say for democracy in an age where everyone who has access to the internet – via computer or smartphone – is essentially a part of the media?**

We have seen a number of examples recently of peoples using this “new media” to speak out against their governments. The Arab Springs are hailed as an illustration of the power of social media. Some even go so far as to claim that social media was a key instigator of the uprisings that swept across the Arab world in early 2011, that discontent expressed first on the internet developed into protests through the real world streets. If new media has the power to bring about political change, then it could very well serve to initiate a third wave of democracy and have a huge impact on the future of the African continent. But is it realistic to attribute so much influence to a medium in its infancy on a continent where many people do not have access to ICTs and where even those with such access might be faced with other digital divides like language, literacy and tech-savvyness?

These questions are addressed in *New Media Influence on Social and Political Change in Africa*, a collection of individual academic essays that seek to interrogate, on a case-by-case basis, the impact that new media has had on politics on the continent in recent years.

The first section of the book deals with how new

information and communication technologies have informed traditional media’s struggle for political and social reforms in Africa. The second section asks, “How have new media transformed Africa’s social and political landscape?” The editors explain that the question is intentionally broad, inviting a wide range of views on diverse experiences.

While the editors and many of the authors are not based in Africa, there is something to be said for an outsider’s objective perspective. In the first few pages the editors are clear to point out how a western framework is problematic when dealing with the African context. As a result the text manages to avoid the failings of so many other works which would seek to examine Africa through a lens that taints it as the troubled dark continent. In each article the unique cultural and political setting is taken into account. Overall the book is well-balanced and commendably objective, seeking neither to hail new media as some great equaliser of all, nor to understate the possibilities present when technology has put mass communication within reach of a significant portion of the population.

While new media in general and social media in particular has been the subject of much discussion in recent years, it is refreshing to read an examination focused on the local context. I would recommend the book to any student of the media studying in Africa and hoping to gain an understanding of the larger role of the media, old and new, in politics.

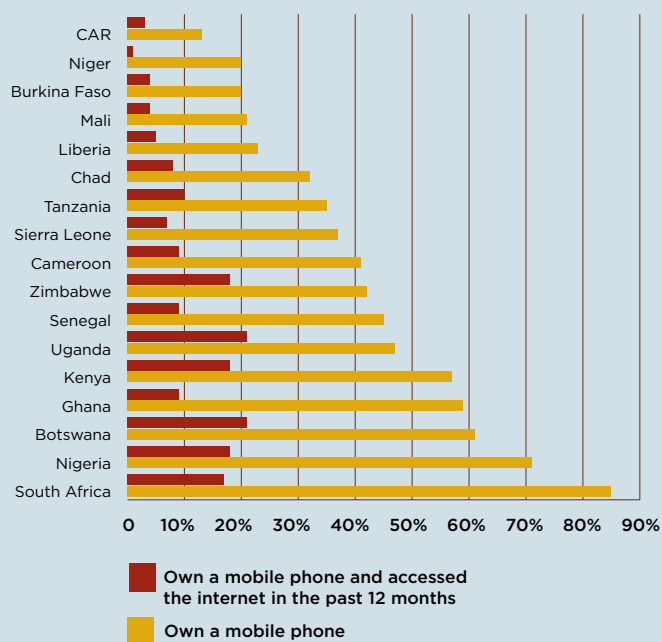
*While the editors and many of the authors are not based in Africa, there is something to be said for an outsider’s objective perspective.*



*Tallulah Habib graduated from Rhodes University with a Bachelor of Journalism specialising in new media in 2010. Since then she had been working for ITWeb, a technology news media house, first as a journalist and later as a social media manager. She now holds the title of social media strategist. tallulahlucy@gmail.com*

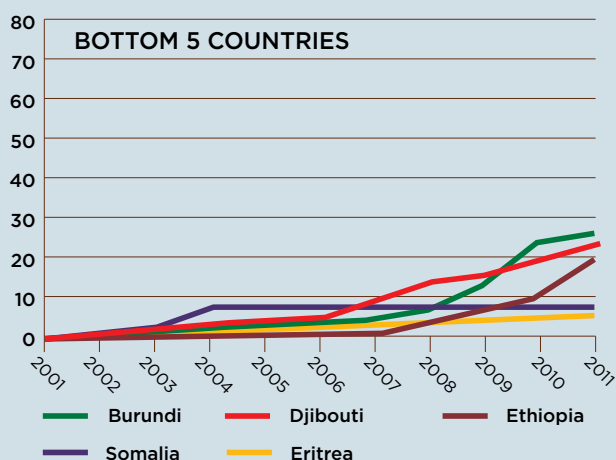
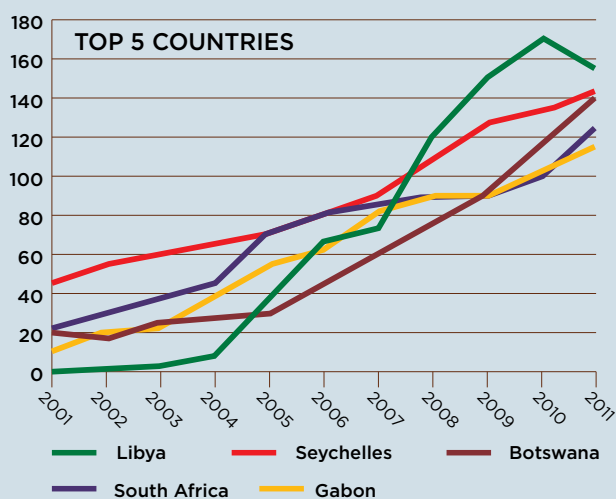
## MOBILE AND INTERNET SAVVY, 2010

Source: Gallup; countries included in the poll



## AFRICA'S MOBILE PHONE SUBSCRIPTIONS PER 100 PEOPLE

Source: International Telecommunication Union



# Big Brother, too

New tech tools for hacks, whistle-blowers and activists

Armed with a mobile phone, anyone can share news stories, video footage and radio broadcasts with the world. Often called citizen journalists, these mostly untrained volunteer newscasters, activists and whistle-blowers can take advantage of powerful new technologies, many created in Africa, to collect and distribute their reports. Many of these new digital tools are inexpensive or even free. Often, they do not require internet access.

By Adam Clayton Powell III

**T**he ubiquitous mobile telephone makes this all possible. According to a multi-country 2012 Gallup survey, half of all Africans surveyed living on less than \$1 a day had access to a mobile phone, that is they either owned one or were able to borrow one from a relative, friend or neighbour.

Absolute majorities of Africans living on less than one dollar a day owned their own cellphones in countries including Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. Together with those who reported they had access to a relative's or friend's mobile, cellphone penetration exceeded 80% of poor Africans in countries including Botswana, Kenya and Zambia. There was only one country, Mali, where a majority of those living on less than one dollar a day did not have access to a portable handset.

More and more Africans are expected to use mobile phones. Alcatel Lucent is projecting a 60% increase in the number of mobiles on the continent, from 500 million in 2012 to 800 million in 2015, according to an Inter Press Service report. Of these, 80% will be internet-enabled. By comparison, just 12 years ago, there were only five million mobile telephones in all of Africa. This means activists and citizen

**NOTES**  
FROM THE CUTTING EDGE

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SMS is another powerful technology. In Kenya, anyone with a cellphone can use Hatari, a tool that lets members of the public report bribes and corruption by email, text or tweet.

journalists can distribute reports without the need for radio, newspapers or television.

Meanwhile, the power of inexpensive, low-end cellphones has increased, making possible access to tools that only a decade or two ago would have been considered science fiction.

Consider email. Now anyone with a cellphone has access to email messaging even if their telephones do not have internet access. For example, Gmail sms from Google is a free e-mail service that runs on “dumb” mobile phones with no internet access. Users can send and receive email in the form of SMS messages on low-end phones that are not equipped with Wi-Fi or third-generation (3G) internet capability.

Sms is another powerful technology. In Kenya, anyone with a cellphone can use Hatari, a tool that lets members of the public report bribes and corruption by email, text or tweet. Another is M-Maji, which provides real-time information about clean water, prices, suppliers and availability, to urban slum dwellers on cellphones.

Mimiboard, a virtual notice board, is another rapidly spreading innovation. It won the most votes at last year’s Open Innovation Africa Summit. Using the web or sms, users can post events and information about social and political issues, sports and entertainment in their communities.

Mimiboards have already attracted citizen journalists and activists who may not be able to operate openly. For example, The Zimbabwean, a digital news provider published by dissidents in exile, has already launched Mimiboards for several local regions, according to its website.

Freedom Fone, another platform created in Zimbabwe, allows citizen reporters to use phones to file audio reports on events as they happen. During a breaking news story such as an election, or a crisis such as a flood, anyone can dial a number, follow voice menu prompts and provide updates, leave voice messages to receive field reports or use polls for focused feedback.

Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are already using these tools. “We use mobiles for new media campaigns for public awareness,” Sam du Pont, former programme officer for internet freedom at Freedom House, a US NGO with regional offices in Africa, told me in an interview. “The tools we use are predominantly mobile-based. The groups we work with use the web, email, and social media to certain degrees. But for any communication for mass scale, we use sms.”

NGOs and international media organisations also

provide training to citizen journalists in the use of these tech tools. Voice of America (VOA) has trained about 100 correspondents in the Democratic Republic of Congo to use low-end inexpensive mobile phones to send stories, photos and even videos directly to Facebook and Twitter.

The head of the network’s French to Africa Service said the contributions of the citizen reporters supplement the work of professional broadcasters.

For the more ambitious (and technically-skilled) citizen journalist who has a higher-end smartphone, there is the personal radio station, which can now be started for little or no money. Journalism.co.uk, an online publishing company, recently posted a guide that explains how to create a radio station using Airtime, a free or paid-for radio management application. The radio station runs from a web browser and includes the option of streaming live reports from a smartphone.

An ambitious citizen journalist can combine these tech tools with sms and audio to create news stories aimed at anyone with a cellphone. Unlike most of the world that is accustomed to the 15-second sound bite, Africans have embraced mobile delivered audio in ways that are quite different from the rest of the world.

“Africans are listening to their phones for 20-minute programmes,” Steven Ferri, VOA’s Africa web managing editor said. “No one in America would do this.”

That is the good news. The bad news is that autocratic governments have learned how to use new technologies to locate citizen journalists and subject them to harassment and worse.

“Mobile is a scary platform,” Freedom House’s Du Pont said. Cellphones “are one of the least secure technologies we have for secure communications. Any sms that bounces off the (cellphone) tower can be read by the mobile operator, but also by anybody sitting beneath the tower with a thousand-dollar piece of equipment.”

The broader danger was described concisely in the 2011 annual report of Amnesty International: “Technology will serve the purposes of those who control it, whether their goal is the promotion of rights or the undermining of rights. We must be mindful that in a world of asymmetric power, the ability of governments and other institutional actors to abuse and exploit technology will always be superior to the grassroots activists, the beleaguered human rights advocate, the intrepid whistle-blower and the individual whose sense of justice demands that they be able to seek information or describe and document an injustice through these technologies.”



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# Buzzing about data journalism

By Raymond Joseph

**A**nyone who is the least interested in new developments in media cannot have missed the buzz being generated around “data journalism” on Twitter, G+, Facebook and any other forums where journalists hang out.

Data journalism, along with the burgeoning of social media platforms with useful reporting applications, is helping change the face of media in this second decade of the 21st century. Leading the field internationally are publications such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, while more and more journalists in the United States and Europe are cottoning on to the possibilities that this ability to access and interrogate data in ways not possible before helps deepen reporting and enhance storytelling abilities, both on and offline.

Driven by demand, universities, colleges and other institutions that teach journalism are increasingly offering courses in data journalism, incorporating web scraping and basic coding, as part of the curriculum.

But in South Africa things are moving at a snail’s pace, with only Wits University offering formal training in this field, although Google and Wikiscraper have also done some ad hoc training in the uses of their tools.

HacksHackers, an international organisation with chapters in most major cities around the world that brings journalists (hacks) and coders (hackers) together, has stepped into the breach to try and inculcate a culture of data journalism in South Africa’s newsrooms. Chapters have already been founded in Johannesburg and Cape Town, creating a space for journalists, coders, data experts and other likeminded people to network

and collaborate on data-driven projects. Several hackathons – one- or two-day gatherings at which coders, journalists and activists, have collaborated to develop useful apps and tools – have already been held.

But few South African journalists, other than a handful of pioneers, like Media 24’s award-winning Investigations Unit led by part-journo-part-geek Andrew Trench, are using it as part of their reporting toolkit on a regular basis.

Part of the problem is a generally technophobic South African journalism community that still struggles to get their heads around anything more than the basics of the growing array of social media platforms that are changing the way journalism is practised.

To be clear, no-one is suggesting that all South African journalists should strive to become expert coders and programmers in order to practise data journalism. My mantra as convenor of HacksHackers Cape Town is a very simple one: you don’t need to be a mechanic to drive a motor car; you just need to know a mechanic to service and repair your vehicle. I, for one, cannot hack code, but I have learned enough to be able to communicate what I want to someone who can, when working on data-driven reporting projects.

And it is in that collaboration between people with different skills sets that the real power of data journalism lies. It has upped the game in newsrooms where data journalism is practised, with journalists, coders and data wranglers (geeks who scrape websites and then clean “liberated” data sets) and graphics artists collaborating on ways of telling stories in interesting

And it is in that collaboration between people with different skills sets that the real power of data journalism lies. It has upped the game in newsrooms

Another major hurdle to data journalism is the almost universal lack of access to public data paid for from the public purse, which is all too often claimed as being copyright protected.

and innovative ways, including the creative use of infographics.

Another major hurdle to data journalism is the almost universal lack of access to public data paid for from the public purse, which is all too often claimed as being copyright protected. And even when it is available, it is inevitably not accessible in a user-friendly, machine readable format like Excel or CSV. More often than not it is only available as user-unfriendly PDFs where, data journalists will tell you only half jokingly, data goes to die. While it is possible to extract data from PDFs, it is time-consuming and, in the absence of access to the original raw data, only yields what the person who made it chose to include.

Writing on *Daily Maverick*, Adi Eyal, a leading Open Data advocate who heads up the CodeforSA initiative, says: "It seems somewhat absurd that publicly funded institutions in South Africa should be allowed to copyright data produced using public funds." He cites the example of the publicly-funded Municipal Demarcation Board, that last year received R38.5-million from the National Treasury.

"Unfortunately there is a lot of commitment to our data and it is copyright to us and we cannot allow you to use it commercially at all," Eyal was told after he asked whether he could download data from their site and use it for commercial purposes.

There are other examples of public-funded data that is closely guarded and difficult to access, like the City of Cape Town, which manages a very rich dataset on municipal valuations, and the National Assembly, which hosts an "intriguing database" on gifts received by parliamentarians and other elected officials. But, "we are explicitly excluded from using this data for anything but personal use," says Eyal.

When I approached the City of Cape Town some time back about getting access to data on toilets, especially the number of people still using the infamous bucket system, I didn't get very far as they were unsure of its accuracy and were reluctant to hand it over.

This is a far cry from the United States where the White House recently released an executive order signed by President Barak Obama committing all federal government data to be open and machine-readable.

"Making information resources easy to find, accessible, and usable can fuel entrepreneurship, innovation, and scientific discovery that improves Americans' lives and contributes significantly to job creation," reads the White House executive order issued in May 2013.

I constantly find myself frustrated at the excuses I hear in conversations with South African editors and journalists when I try to persuade them why data journalism is important. Too often it's a case of "we don't have the resources or manpower" or variations on those themes, rather than "how can we make this happen?"

So the reality for now is that until media houses invest in equipment, training and hiring people with the right skills sets, the mainstreaming of data journalism in South African will remain a distant dream and the domain of a handful of determined pioneers.



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## USEFUL LINKS

- How to get started in data journalism: [www.goo.gl/mDh4f](http://www.goo.gl/mDh4f)
- Data Journalism Handbook: <http://datajournalismhandbook.org>

## FREE DATA TOOLS

- Easy to use open source data scraper: <http://www.haystaxdata.org/>
- An excellent, free and simple to use dataviz tool: <http://datawrapper.de/>
- This searchable resource lists NGOs and NPOs in South Africa by sector, with contact details, and was created in a day at a HacksHackers Cape Town hackathon: <http://carolune.org/c4d/index.php>
- This photo editing tool was created at a hackathon in New York: <http://evanw.github.io/webgl-filter/>

## SOME GREAT EXAMPLES OF WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH DATA VISUALISATIONS

- World arms trade: <http://workshop.chromeexperiments.com/projects/armsglobe/>
- Charting the wind: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/08/charting-wind?fsrc=scn/tw/dc/windmap>
- How Twitter reacted to the resignation of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak: <http://gephi.org/2011/the-egyptian-revolution-on-twitter/>
- Examples of data stories from *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*: <http://www.marijerooze.nl/thesis/graphics/?paper=All>
- Finalist stories for the Data Journalism Awards 2013: <http://www.globaleditorsnetwork.org/dja/>

## EXAMPLES OF SA DATA STORIES/ VISUALISATIONS

- Journalism salary survey undertaken by HacksHackers Cape Town to illustrate data mining, cleaning and visualisation: <http://salariesurvey.hackshackers.co.za/>
- Visualisation: battle for the 2016 municipal elections <http://za.okfn.org/2013/03/23/battle-for-local-municipalities/>
- Visualisation: battleground wards in Cape Town <http://za.okfn.org/2013/03/22/battleground-wards-in-cape-town/>

## OPEN DATA RESOURCES (COLLECTION OF CLEAN, LIBERATED DATA SETS)

- African open data: <http://opendataforafrica.org/>
- Liberated South African data: <http://africaopendata.org/group/south-africa>

# Great data stories

By Margaret Renn

**L**es Diarios Secretos – the Secret Diaries – is a great story and a great data story.

Four young Brazilian journalists exposed a racket, run by state politicians and officials, employing ghost workers. Some were retired employees or politicians; others were just names they had stolen. The furore caused by the story was so great the state government in Parana had to resign. The data was gathered on a vast Excel spreadsheet, running to tens of thousands of entries, every item culled from official or fraudulent “official” documents. Nothing was available online.

The key data was a list of names of the ghost workers. The only numbers were dates and salaries. So here, in one place, you can see data journalism in action, in a video the journalists prepared for last year’s Power Reporting investigative conference, held at Wits University: [www.journalism.co.za/powerreporting](http://www.journalism.co.za/powerreporting)

The reason for telling this story is to dispel the notion that data journalism is about figures. That you need to be good at mathematics, or have numbers at your fingertips.

People confuse data with numbers. Write down the name, hair and eye colour of everyone in your office or class, put the results into three columns in an Excel spreadsheet and you have a database. You can extrapolate all manner of variables using “data sort”. Now you have the data, the question remains, what’s the story?

Data journalism is about using these techniques to find stories. The data can come from government (the British MPs’ expenses scandal is an excellent example), public bodies, private companies, or you can create your own. The possibilities are endless. And you can mix data sets too.

Andrew Trench, investigations editor at Media24, worked with the Institute of Security Studies to calculate crime rates in South Africa. They took the crime figures for each area, overlaid the population figures for the same areas, and discovered that the worst crime rate per 100 000 of population is in a small area on the edge of Bloemfontein, and seven of the top 10 worst crime rates are in Cape Town. Not quite the outside world’s conception of crime in South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Data journalism as a tag doesn’t quite cover what we are doing. The term computer assisted reporting (CAR), which sprang into life in the 1980s in America, is perhaps more accurate. The skills are related and overlap. Using your computer you can find data from all over the world that relates to South Africa. You can

drop it into Excel to sort and shape it. You can download software to visualise or map it, to translate it into or out of English, French, Spanish; the possibilities for good journalism inside your computer are endless and changing all the time.

Two years ago we decided to introduce data journalism training into the mainstream of our Wits Journalism programme. It is now an integral part of the course for career entry Honours students, it’s taught as part of the Masters in Investigative Journalism and we run an array of courses at the annual Power Reporting investigative journalism conference.

Wits Journalism has been organising this three-day working conference, held in late October, for eight years and the computer classes have become an increasingly important stream, for everyone from beginners to the most advanced participant. We bring in international trainers and go from a basic entry-level introduction to Excel to something that will interest and excite the likes of Andrew Trench, who also teaches at the conference. Trainers come from the US, the UK and the Netherlands, and from a number of African countries.

Ron Nixon, an investigative journalist at the New York Times and a data specialist – he was training director at Investigative Reporters and Editors for several years – has joined Wits Journalism as a Visiting Fellow to teach a data-based investigative course. The course is built around an actual investigation.

For two years we have also done a week-long advanced data journalism course for those who are already practitioners and need the focus and concentration of a whole week to improve their skill level. This course covers an Excel refresher, learning SQLite, and an emphasis on that same core question: what is the story?

Finally, thanks to the Valley Trust, we have the funds to send two journalists for a year to IRE’s computer-assisted reporting conference in the US. There is one condition: having been to the conference these journalists join our team that teaches data journalism at Wits and at Power Reporting. Training the future South African trainers is an integral part of what we do.

We hope to bring data journalism and computer-assisted reporting into the main stream of South African journalism education, and from there into the main stream of South African journalism.

## Endnotes

1. <http://www.andrewtrench.com/2011/09/16/a-murder-map-of-south-africa-interactive/>

The reason for telling this story is to dispel the notion that data journalism is about figures. That you need to be good at mathematics, or have numbers at your fingertips.



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Neo Ntsoma

# Baited by junk news

The reporting around the bail hearing for Oscar Pistorius following the tragic events in the small hours of 14 February really does highlight the rot that set in when the internet became the primary medium of news consumption.

By Brett Lock

CLICK ON THIS!

**W**hen I was involved with the Rhodes Journalism Department's New Media Laboratory in the mid 1990s we were quite starry-eyed about the possibilities of this new-fangled "internet" thing. Even when we pioneered the idea of news aggregation through our "Gogga" project, we were so focused on the brilliant possibilities that we failed to see the banal probabilities. I don't remember anyone theorising about what the effect of reporting would be in a post Google News world.

Now we know.

The issue is very simple. Newspapers no longer sell papers. They sell banner advertising on their web pages. They make their money from "clicks" and to get a user to click, you need to bait your hook. In the past, a newspaper only had to worry about the one or two competitors in its region publishing in the same language, and even this was tempered by social and political allegiances. People generally only read one paper out of habit, but all that has changed. Not only can you click

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Every newsroom these days needs a hack practised in scouring social media sites like Twitter and Facebook in search of a careless status update or picture which can be infused with dramatic significance following a scandal or tragedy.

through news on a variety of competing sites, but local, national and international news sources are mixed into a single stream all screaming for attention.

It wouldn't be so bad if this meant more variety and wider perspectives, but it doesn't. Like the big food chains have homogenised "junk food", so we now have "junk news". To keep us clicking, and reloading banner advertisements, news consumers must be turned into news gluttons.

If ever there was an example of supersizing the news, it is the Pistorius coverage. Let me say I have no opinion on the athlete's guilt or innocence. Firstly, because I am neither an investigator nor a juror; but secondly, it is my act of resistance against a mass media which desperately needs me to have a strong opinion to keep clicking, to keep commenting (this pointless but now-ubiquitous feature of online news inviting reader "opinion" below every story). Each click, each comment, each page refresh is another micro-payment from the advertiser, the life's blood of the modern "newspaper".

So, not only were details of the case exaggerated to generate bigger headlines, but peripheral issues suddenly took on elevated relevance to escalate the drama. Not only was Pistorius facing murder charges, but the lead detective in the case faced several cases of attempted murder himself. Even his brother was up for a homicide!

Where one might reasonably have relied on the press to provide clarity on the facts of the case, today's press wilfully obscures perspective and context to justify these headlines. So was it any surprise when the "several attempted murder charges" faced by the cop turned out to be a single incident in which he fired at fleeing suspects in a minibus, or when Carl Pistorius was acquitted of "manslaughter" charges relating to a traffic accident five years ago in which the other party was found to be at fault? Not that it matters. For a few days, the press got its "OMG!! WTF??" response from click-happy punters gagging for more drama.

Yes, as a reporter you can call people living half-a-kilometre away "neighbours" and technically get away with it, but you have to ask if your intention is to inform or excite: are you producing journalism or entertainment? When your readers tuck in, will they end up full but undernourished by McNews, or will they be better informed?

But the real issue is beyond mere concern for the intellectual nourishment of readers. We should be worried about how easily click-bait headlines skew the

news agenda. Who would have bothered reporting on a five-year-old traffic accident, much less framing it as a "culpable homicide" case, had the one party's more famous relative not been facing murder charges? Even the BBC covered the story with the dramatic headline: "Oscar Pistorius brother Carl also facing homicide trial." Note the sneaky use of the word "also".

Social media isn't helping either. Every newsroom these days needs a hack practised in scouring social media sites like Twitter and Facebook in search of a careless status update or picture which can be infused with dramatic significance following a scandal or tragedy. In the Pistorius case, a single tweet many months before expressing concern about an intruder was enough to generate a *Huffington Post* headline: "Olympian Joked About Killing Intruder On Twitter".

As I write this, headlines are popping up on Google News: "Leaked pictures show bloodied bathroom where Oscar Pistorius shot his lover Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day." To start with "pictures" is an exaggeration. There is only one. The picture adds nothing to our understanding of the case. It is purely a salacious and grotesque baiting of a news hook, and it is carried in almost identical form in papers across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and China. Why?

Well, that's the curse of news aggregation. In the mid-90s, my colleagues and I imagined a brave new media landscape facilitated by the internet, where greater understanding would follow from cross-cultural and trans-national news, all delivered with local perspectives. Instead we have blandly aggregated news courtesy of Google, Yahoo, MSN and other de facto internet concierges. The internet has become blander than cable-TV news, endlessly recycling the same top stories daily, hour after hour, desperately fishing for the one hook that might persuade you, pointlessly, to change channels only to see the same from a vaguely different angle. Disposable news.

One could put a positive spin on it and say it aids the notion that we're all living in the same world, with the same concerns, but that is PR gloss and we know it. In reality, we have the perfect armchair news: little of it is news we can use to change our local environments. Sure, we're angrier, more indignant, and more opinionated, but not about anything we can get up and do something about.

But that's the point. To keep clicking, we have to be sitting down. Junk news is making us emotionally obese.



*Brett Lock, a former Rhodean, now lives in London and runs a small design and web development studio. He is also an enthusiastic political blogger and a contributing editor to the well-known trans-Atlantic blog, Harry's Place. He also has a podcast about South African music at [tunemewhat.com](mailto:brettlock@gmail.com).*



# THE MARIKANA aftermath



# Imagining a way forward after Marikana

What happened during the fatal miners' strike at Lonmin in Marikana in August 2012 did not end there.

By Niren Tolsi

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**T**here were 34 people killed in a massacre on August 16. Those miners that survived and were arrested allege torture and brutality by the police. People also died violently before and after that date also.

But, what happened in Marikana in August last year did not end there.

Families were left without husbands, brothers, sons and fathers – breadwinners. For the Masuhlo family, they had lost a daughter and mother when Pauline Masuhlo, an ANC councillor in the Madibeng municipality and a campaigner for better social conditions in the squalid informal settlements around Lonmin's shafts, died from injuries sustained during a government clampdown of Nkaneng informal settlement on August 25.

Families – the nuclear and extended ones in rural areas, and sometimes satellite “second” families at Marikana – are now bereft of wages and remittance so important for their survival. There is also the trauma inherent in the violent manner in which their loved ones died.

Rural communities have lost people who, with their wages, bought football kits and balls for the local teams they grew up in or coached. They have lost mediators, friends they drank with and elders who advised on issues affecting them. Churches have lost pastors and choir members. Shebeens have lost scallywags.

The deaths have changed families and communities, it has certainly changed how they see their relationship with a democratically elected government.

A 24-page supplement published in the *Mail & Guardian* on the one year anniversary of the Marikana massacre is the first step in a project that started in December last year and will continue for a further year at the very least. It seeks to answer the question: What happens after Marikana?

These are complex answers that cannot be fully documented by two journalists, but the project does seek to move away from the mainstream media's snapshot pictures and easy headlines. It aims to investigate the *real* cost of Marikana to families, to communities and, through this microscope of the intimate, this strange new South Africa that “Marikana” has ushered in.

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What we as a nation are still hoping to answer, are the more political and philosophical questions of who took the gun from the metaphorical “white man” and why was the first shot fired?

To do this requires being embedded in space and subject. It requires returning the journalistic form to its best traditions of immersion and social investigation. It requires time, or “slow journalism”. It requires returning.

Santu Mofokeng’s vital documentation of sharecropper Kas Maine was not an Instagram exercise.

Nor did social documentary photographer Chris Ledochowski’s work in the Cape Flats emerge from Twitter conversations and Google.

These are singular individuals with different training, drives, demons and curiosities. But their art of composition, light, drawing out texture, depth and attention to detail was honed in some way by the social documentary approach to “go back”. To return.

In doing so these characteristics of photography transmuted onto the national narrative and how South Africa understood itself. Their work shed light, added depth to knowledge, texture to understanding and brought out the detail in this country through the little-big stories they told so artfully.

Neither Paul Botes nor I consider ourselves in the league of Mofokeng, Ledochowski or the many fine writers and photographers who have documented this contradictory and sometimes cruel country with such bravery and intelligence. But, with this project, we do subscribe to what makes journalism thoughtful, responsive, empathetic and relevant.

We feel this is important in an age when journalism can be reduced to superficial instant-news. We feel it is important because we, South Africans, need to understand what happens after Marikana: to the families and, through their eyes, what is happening to ourselves and our democracy.

It is vitally important because after spending almost eight months with the Marikana families, there is an overwhelming sense that they have been abandoned. By government, by Lonmin and by their fellow South Africans.

There is scant political will to provide the financial and structural mechanisms required to ensure that a stuttering Farlam Commission of Inquiry actually delivers on its mandate to uncover the truth of the fatal strike and give closure to the families.

Traumatised families dealing with unresolved grief are descending further into poverty. Our world can never be the same. What happened at Marikana was a deep echo from our apartheid past. It was unrestrained and brutal. It was also state-administered.

The attendant imagery of Marikana is frighteningly cyclical: The massacre resurrects the killing of students by apartheid police on 16 June 1976 in Soweto and the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March 1960 when 69 people died.

The miners congregating on the Marikana koppies are reminiscent of the Pondo Revolt of 1960 and their gatherings and massacre on Ngquza Hill in the Eastern Cape, a province where the majority of the dead miners came from, as is the sight of the helicopters that hovered over the miners and the massacre last year. Jonny Steinberg, in his paper, *A Bag of Soil, A Bullet from Up High*, included in the book *Rural Resistance in South Africa*, documents a source’s retelling of the massacre at Ngquza as passed on by a previous generation: “The whites took Botha Sigcau, king of Eastern Mpondoland, up in a helicopter. They flew him to Ngquza, and there the helicopter stopped, hovering just over the rebels. Then the white commander put a rifle in Botha Sigcau’s hands, and he said: ‘Whether we end this rebellion is your decision to make. We can do nothing if you cannot fire the first shot. The choice is in your hands, not ours’. Botha Sigcau thought for a little while, took the rifle from the white man, aimed at the rebels below, and fired the first shot. It hit a man in the chest and killed him. That is how the massacre began.”

South Africans have seen the footage of the Marikana massacre. The country knows who fired the shots. What we as a nation are still hoping to answer, are the more political and philosophical questions of who took the gun from the metaphorical “white man” and why was the first shot fired?

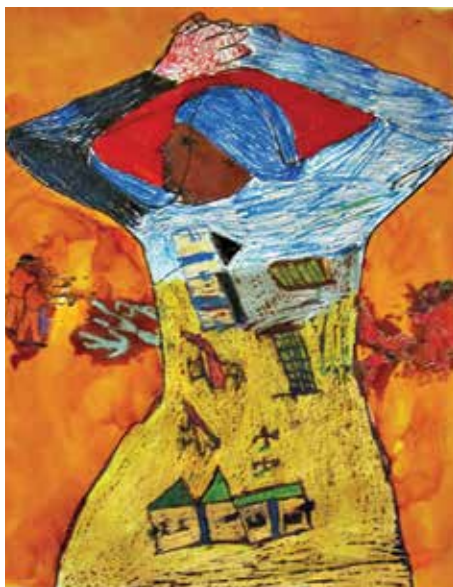
Questions this project hopes to answer with the voices of *all* the families of those who died in Marikana.

It is a mammoth project, one that involves driving long distances into the deep recesses of rural South Africa and getting lost often. It has meant navigating the role of traditionalism and patriarchy in who gets to tell what stories and how grief is confronted. It has meant encountering the indomitable spirit of South African women often. We hope to do their stories justice.

*Paul Botes and Niren Tolsi hope to publish a book of family portraits and their verbatim accounts at the end of next year. All profits from sales will go to the families. They also hope to have a multimedia exhibition that will travel to the areas in which these families live.*



*Niren Tolsi is a senior journalist at the Mail & Guardian and a founding editor of The Con (www.theconmag.co.za). He believes journalism is always in need of a defibrillator. nirentolsi@gmail.com*



AGNES MAKOPANO THELEJANE



SONGSTRESS NOTUKILE NKONYENI



NOKUTHULA EVELYN ZIBAMBELA

# Lives shaped by **mines and migrancy**

We present here eight narratives told through visual art and in words, of women who are family members of men killed in the Marikana Massacre. These stories came from a workshop with the women held by Khulumani Support Group, over the weekend of 19 and 20 May 2013, while the women were in Rustenberg attending the Marikana Commission of Inquiry.

**T**he lives of the women who speak in the stories have been intertwined with the men who were killed in this strike: they shared the men's needs and struggles, their children, their decisions, their dreams of the future.

Yet with all the attention that the world has given to events at Marikana and the aftermath, these women have been left silent. Even while the government has accepted that they attend the Commission of Inquiry, so that they can "see truth revealed", they have not been asked to speak of their own truths about what happened, about their knowledge and concerns.

One of the family members at the commission, in a discussion with Khulumani Support Group in February, commented that the commission treated them "like trees or stones", silent, bearing witness, but with nothing to say when confronted with horrific events that strike each of them, leaving "a hole in my life, and in my heart".

In these stories, the women speak lives still shaped by the mines and the migrant labour system. They look at how those killings hammered their lives, their families, their plans. And they look at what must be done, to continue their lives beyond the tragedy and loss of Marikana.

**AGNES MAKOPANO THELEJANE**  
I don't know how I am going to talk about

the drawing here. I am Makopano Thelejane. I am a daughter of Mrs Jane and Mr Julius Xokwe, from the same Pabalong village in Matatiela of my husband, Mr Thabiso Johannes Thelejane, who was killed by police in the Marikana Massacre on the 16th of August 2012, in the killings that are known throughout the whole world.

## **SONGSTRESS NOTUKILE NKONYENI**

I am an adult lady, called Songstress Nkonyeni, a child of Mdumazulu location AA, in Ngqeleni in the Eastern Cape.

On the 13th of August my brother and other workers were on their way to see the management, demanding an increment. That day they did not carry weapons – no implements, no pangas or spears. They were stopped by the police; the police shot at them, and they ran away. I need an answer, what was the reason to kill them, on the 13th?

## **NOKUTHULA EVELYN ZIBAMBELA**

I am Mrs Zibambela. This is my picture, which resembles me: a woman and a mother whose husband was killed in that Marikana Massacre.

As you see in this picture, this woman is lying there, so many days after her husband went missing. It was five days after the incident happened that she received the news that her husband was among those people that were killed in the massacre.

### XOLELWA MPUMZA

My name is Xolelwa Mpumza. I lost my parents in 2007 and 2008. We were left alone, five children, two girls and three boys. Although we were only children then, we now have our own children who also depend on us. We love each other, we also love our children. So it was hard and difficult to be left by our loved brother by the name of Thobile Mpumza, who was killed last year in 2012, August 16. That news that one of us had been killed by the police at Marikana brought us darkness.

### NTOMBIZOLILE MOSEBETSANE

I'm Mrs Mosebetsane. I am Ntombizolile Mosebetsane from the Eastern Cape, Lusikisiki district, in Luqoqweni village. As you know I am here because of my husband who passed away during the Marikana Massacre.

As of now I do not feel well because he was the breadwinner, and he left me with a small child. The child asks me every day "mom, where is my father?" I don't have any answer to that question. All in all I can't express myself; I can't forget and forgive what happened, because I ask myself: "How am I going to raise this child and who is going to be a breadwinner now as I am unemployed?"

### NOMBULELO NTONGA

My name is Nombulelo Ntonga, from Cofimvaba, at Guse village, where I was born. That is where I am living now with my children. My husband's area is at Elliotdale and Mqhele village, in Xhora. I lost my husband in that Marikana Massacre. This left me suffering, struggling, with a big hole in my life and a pain in my heart.

### THEMBANI MTHINTI

In my picture I am lying down as I was lying down like that, holding my hands up, when I learned of my husband's death. I was thinking, praying, as I lost my husband, what would happen to those children – who is going to raise them? As many as they are, and as little as they are. That Marikana massacre left me without having a home for my children.

### BETTY LOMASONTFO GADLELA

My name is Betty Lomasontfo Gadlela. I was born in 1969 in a poor family.

My culture: I am a Swazi lady, coming from Swaziland, in the Manzini district. Gadlela worked for the Lonmin company, in the Karee Mine at Marikana. He was working there in South Africa in order to provide for his home, for his own family, and for all of the relatives. Gadlela was working so that his children would be educated; that they would get food, be properly dressed, and have a home. This was not easy for him, working alone in South Africa.

On the 16th August 2012, which was a Thursday, he was killed by the police there in Marikana.



XOLELWA MPUMZA



NTOMBIZOLILE MOSEBETSANE



NOMBULELO NTONGA



THEMBANI MTHINTI

"I lost my husband in that Marikana Massacre. This left me suffering, struggling, with a big hole in my life and a pain in my heart." *Nombulelo Ntonga*

These pictures come from the Khulumani Support Group book of narratives by Marikana widows and older Katlehong women launched at Wordfest during the National Arts Festival 2013.  
<http://www.khulumani.net>



BETTY LOMASONTFO GADLELA

# The language of listening

Unless you're, say, the National Press Club of South Africa, who decided that the South African rhino was the newsmaker of the year for 2012, there should be no doubt that the Marikana massacre was the biggest news event of last year. Some observers, like the University of Johannesburg sociologist, Professor Peter Alexander, even consider the massacre one of the turning points in South African history. How did the South African media respond to what was evidently a historic moment?

By Herman Wasserman

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**T**he footage that the world first saw of the shooting of the striking miners at Marikana was filmed literally from behind the backs of firing policemen'. This alignment of journalists with positions of authority when covering conflict is not unusual, but it has implications for how the media's role in society will be evaluated.

Alexander, whose book *Marikana: A View From The Mountain And A Case To Answer* draws on interviews with mineworkers who survived the attack by security forces, said at a Rhodes Humanities seminar earlier this year the media "let us down" in their reporting of the event. "The media's first response to the massacre was financial: 'What does this mean for the rand?'" Alexander said. In his research in the immediate aftermath of the massacre, Alexander and his team found that there were in all likelihood more than one site where the killing had taken place, and that the killing was more extensive in geographical terms than had been reported in the media up until that point. From the interviews, Alexander surmised that there was a second site where most of the miners were killed, the so-called "killing koppie". His research suggests that most of the miners ran away from the firing police shown in the initial television footage, towards the "killing koppie", where police were allegedly lying in wait for them.

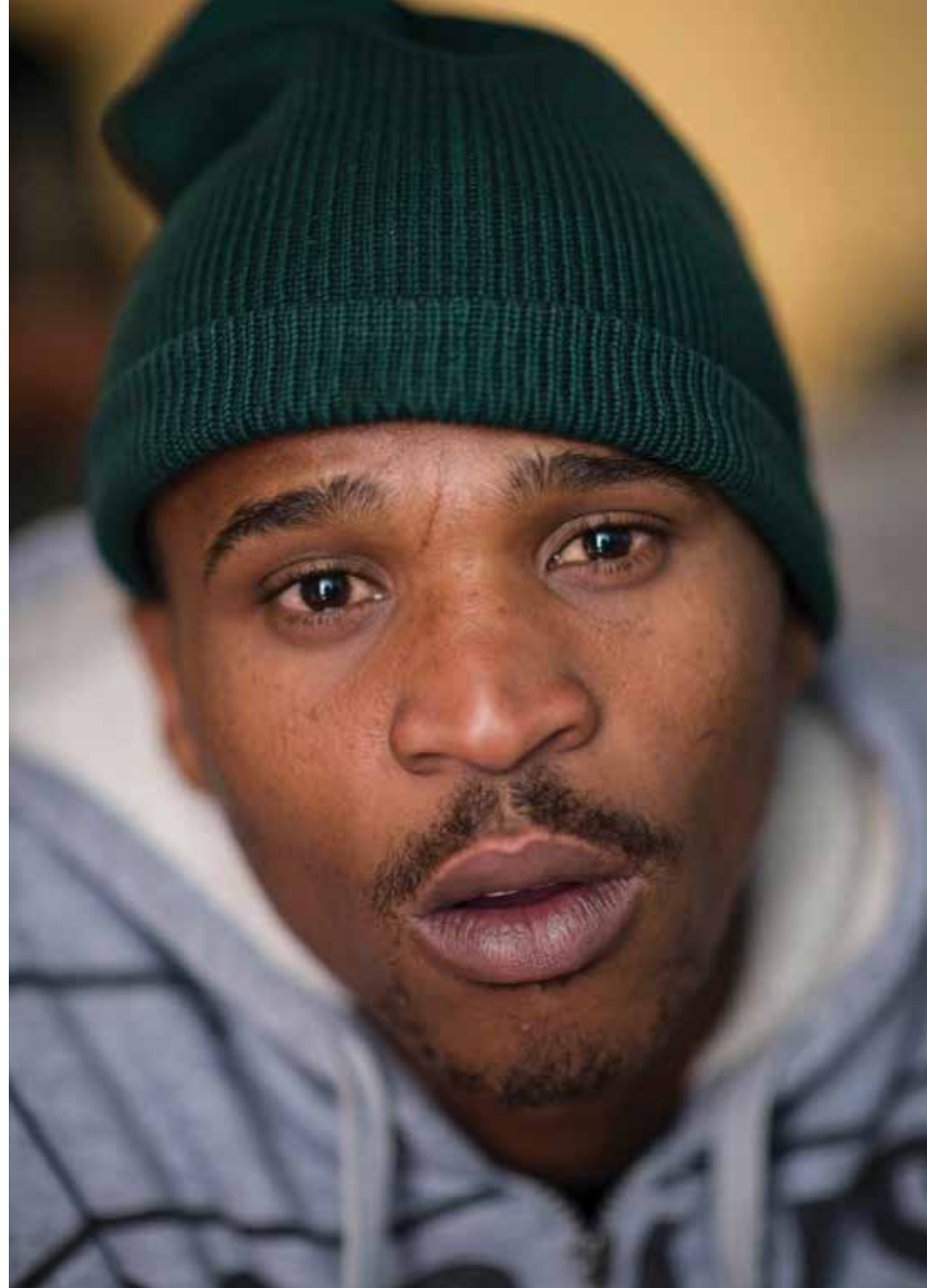
The veteran photojournalist, Greg Marinovich, writing for the web publication *Daily Maverick*, also did follow-up investigative work after the initial massacre and confirmed the findings of Alexander. Marinovich reported that "the majority of those who died were killed beyond the view of cameras", some shot at close range or driven over by police vehicles. Initially, these revelations were either scoffed at or ignored by mainstream journalists. Alexander has commented on this in an interview with Mandy de Waal in the *Daily Maverick*: "What was apparent to me on both Saturday and Monday, when the ministerial group was there, was that journalists just stand around but don't really investigate or speak to any of the workers. The journalists interacted with the politicians, the police and sometimes with AMCU (the Association for Mineworkers and Construction Union) or NUM (the National Union of Mineworkers). But there are hardly any accounts of events from people who were on the mountain when the massacre occurred."

In his talk at Rhodes, Alexander criticised the media's reporting of the massacre, as well as the currently ongoing Farlam Commission of Inquiry, for coverage that tended to be episodic rather than analytical. "This leaves a space that should be filled by social scientists," Alexander said. Indeed, a group of social scientists did respond to the way the massacre was reported on in the media. In September last year, social scientists from institutions around the country and abroad brought out a statement<sup>2</sup> that pointed to social science's practice of critically examining social structures, social processes and social context, and the aim of social science research "to reveal phenomena that are hidden, rather than rely on reports of what is

immediately visible". The statement went further to implicate media coverage in providing a view of the events that was biased towards official accounts: "Popular perceptions of the Lonmin Marikana mine massacre were initially shaped by TV footage of a single part of the massacre, viewed from the standpoint of the police. This account was reinforced by media briefings, prejudiced reporting, and opinions that blamed the violence on inter-union rivalries. Social scientific research giving weight to accounts by workers has emphasised the culpability of the police, flawed and biased official versions of events, sympathetic treatment of popular culture, and the unity of workers around a demand for a living wage."

Content analysis of coverage by Rhodes University's Highway Africa Chair, Jane Duncan, found that workers were used as sources for information in only 3% of the stories about the massacre. The majority of sources were business (27%), mine management/owners (14%), political parties (10%), government (9%) and the police (5%). A further study by the media analysis company Media Tenor over a longer period, from 24 August to 19 September, found that only 15% of the reports had mineworkers as their sources. Politicians and trade union officials made up the bulk of the sources, with mining management and mine workers given the same proportion of coverage (15%).

Journalists often tend to speak the language of authority. That is because the alignment of journalism with power mostly takes place unintentionally as a result of established journalistic routines and practices associated with the notion of "professionalism", rather than through conscious choice. Journalism operates as a "system of meanings and common-sense understandings", according to American media sociologist Stephen Reese, which appears natural but is subject to various levels of influence, internally in news organisations and externally in the media's relationship



to society. Individual journalists work according to deeply ingrained professional routines that shape their coverage. Reese shows that while journalists may rigorously adhere to the objectivity principle and avoid clear conflicts of interest by refusing "freebies" or payments, the alignment of journalism with elite interests may be inherent in the routines that privilege authoritative sources in positions of power, or come about as a result of connections between owners and managers of news organisations and other social, economic or political elites.

There were some examples in the coverage of Marikana where journalists did manage to break free from the pack and tried to let other voices be heard. Apart from Greg Marinovich's seminal work mentioned above, *City Press'* online feature "Faces of Marikana"<sup>3</sup>, which won a Sikuville award for SA Story of the Year, was one of the few mainstream stories that went beyond mere reporting of the conflict. In "Faces of Marikana" family members of the victims get to speak, telling their stories about loved ones who died and recalling them with pride and dignity as human beings and

**Anele Zonke was tortured by police while in custody. Wonderkop, Marikana, North West, 1 November 2012. Photo: Greg Marinovich**

not just as statistics of the dead. Often they do so in their own language. This feature is an example not only of how journalists can listen to the voices of those who are routinely excluded from the mainstream media, and use their resources to reach out to people who might not immediately offer comment or issue statements in the way that police or business are resourced to do, but also an excellent example of how print publications can use the converged media space to tell stories in a different way.

Ultimately the challenge that the Marikana massacre poses to journalism in South Africa is not primarily one of technology, contacts or resources. Marikana demands of journalists to rethink where they are located in relation to post-apartheid society, who they listen to, and whose stories they want to tell. It demands of journalists to respect the dignity of the dead, the dignity of the poor and the dignity of those that remain hidden in the shadows after almost 20 years of democracy.

The respect for human dignity is not only a cornerstone of the South African constitution; it is also a value that can be found in ethical frameworks around the world. To view human life as sacred and human beings as having an inherent dignity means to look for the ways that our narratives are connected, interrelated and interdependent. In his work on voice, the British academic Nick Couldry emphasises that people's voices are socially grounded and therefore not the practice of isolated individuals. But for people to narrate their lived experiences, they depend on being heard: "Voice as a social process involves, from the start, both speaking *and* listening, that is, an act of attention that registers the uniqueness of the other's narrative," says Couldry. The resonance of this interdependent view of speaking and listening with the underlying African ethical principle of ubuntu is obvious: "I am because you are", or, to rephrase, "you can tell your story because I am listening to it".

For the South African media to enable a variety of voices to be heard, especially those that are routinely silenced or drowned

The failures of the media at Marikana should be a clarion call to journalists to develop a better imagination about what it might be like to live on the margins of a highly unequal society like South Africa.

out by the noise emanating from political stages, boardrooms and news conferences, they would need to exercise their powers of imagination. Ethics, the philosopher Alain de Botton has it, means "the command that one try to imagine what it might be like to be someone else". To cultivate an ethics of listening would require of journalists to develop their moral imagination. This is a task best performed by the humanities and the social sciences, which is why a humanities education should be seen as vital for the deepening of South African democracy. Martha Nussbaum, in her book *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, emphasises the importance of this moral imagination for the well-being of democratic societies: "(T)he ability to imagine the experience of another – a capacity almost all human beings possess in some form – needs to be greatly enhanced and refined if we are to have any hope of sustaining decent institutions across the many divisions that any modern society contains."

The failures of the media at Marikana should be a clarion call to journalists to develop a better imagination about what it might be like to live on the margins of a highly unequal society like South Africa. It should prompt them to reconsider whether their role in South African society should be seen in more dimensions than that of the fierce watchdog – at least to widen their professional identity to becoming "imaginative listeners". The feminist scholar Carol Gilligan's "ethics of care" can be instructive in such a reconceptualisation of journalistic identities. An ethics of care is rooted in an understanding of human dignity as based not on "abstract speculations" but in relationships that are "grounded in listening". "The most basic questions about human living – how to live and what to do," Gilligan says,

"are fundamentally questions about human relations, because people's lives are deeply connected, psychologically, economically, and politically".

"To have a voice," she says, "is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act."

This ethics of care and imagination is one of commitment, of compassion, of immersion – values that are frowned upon in the liberal-individualist journalistic mantra of professionalism and detachment. The aim of such an alternative journalism would not be merely to record the events of the day, or to write down quotes like stenographers where the powerful of the land hold court. It would require a much more pro-active commitment to the restoration of the dignity of the marginalised, an effort to discover interconnections between people and, let's face it, the financial sacrifice to engage citizens across the entrenched segmentations of race and market.

An ethics of listening is something different from the bleeding heart sympathy for poverty that so often results in what Lilie Chouliraki called the "spectatorship of suffering", a voyeuristic perspective on the poor or marginalised that deprives them of their own agency in order to forge the togetherness of privileged audiences. The ethics of listening is everything but a safe and cosy position devoid of politics. Listening is difficult. It can be uncomfortable. And it might require learning a whole new language.

*This article draws on the author's inaugural lecture, published as "Journalism in a New Democracy: The Ethics of Listening" in Communicatio 39(1). Downloadable: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02500167.2013.772217#.UbHbqJw7W7s>*

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#### Endnotes

1. See eNCA footage captured and discussed here: <http://www.citypress.co.za/news/watch-marikana-who-shot-first-20120821/>
2. See <http://marikanastatement.blogspot.com/>
3. <http://www.m24i.co.za/facesofmarikana/>

After ten minutes after he left, the police spread out the wire. There were trailers that had the wires and after that...they started to shoot at us. And while they were shooting at us we could not run to the shacks where we live, we could only run towards the front there and that side was already closed off.

SURVIVOR

WAITING TO BE HEARD

# Voices from Marikana

Excerpts from *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer*

They lied about rubber bullets. They did not use them. People were not killed because they were fighting. We were shot while running. [We] went through the hole, and that is why we were shot.

MINER

## MINERS

You were shot if you put up your hands. I was taken by a gentleman who was of Indian ancestry. He held me and when I tried to stand up I was hit with guns, and he stopped them.

There were no warning shots.

I get very amazed when the police say they were defending themselves, what were they defending themselves from?

I will just look at them and they are like dogs to me now...when I see a police now I feel like throwing up... I do not trust them anymore, they are like enemies.

I am still traumatised by the incident. Even when I see it on TV, I still get scared because I could not sleep the days following the incident. It is worse because this has been done to us by a government we thought, with Zuma in power, things would change. But we are still oppressed and abused.

Before, we had no borders in Africa. So it was colonisation who came with borders.

Those people who were saying that RDOs (rock drill operators) are machine boys who are illiterate what do they need R12 500 for? They are still using the old school excuse [and this is because] they have no idea how difficult the job of an RDO is at all. [That is why they think] that we deserved peanuts.

## SURVIVORS

And we went as workers to the NUM offices but we were shot at by the NUM people and two people died and we ran and they came after us until we passed the ground and they stopped chasing us when we got to the grounds and that is when we came here in the mountain, and we saw that we were beaten and blood has spilled also and our people have died too.

Then we decided that when there is a fight a man should also have his own knobkerrie and then we decided to go get our knobkerries and we went back to the mountain again and we slept there until Sunday.

On Friday [the 17th] the South African President Zuma [came]... He said he will bring his people here to come and kill us and then it was clear to us that he was the one who told his police to kill us...

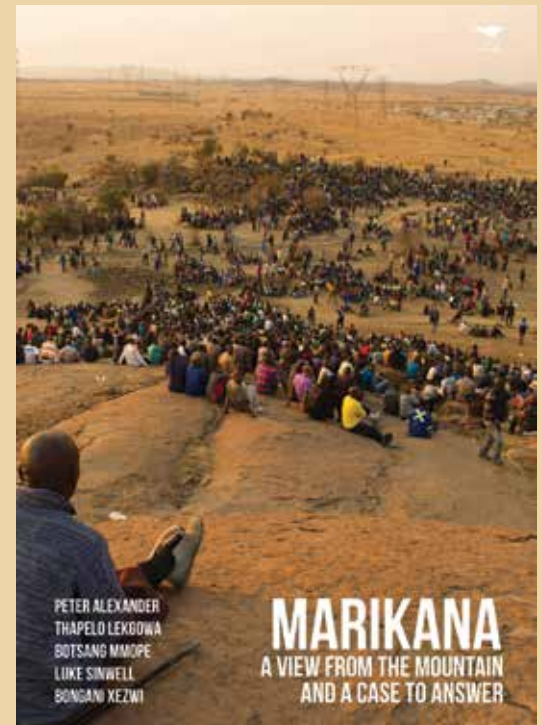
And this thing, people [the media] say that unions are at war, saying that NUM and AMCU are fighting. Those are lies. Here workers are the ones at war.

"Mr Zokwana I am happy that you came to us, and we plead with you to come out so that we can be able to speak with you." And Mr Zokwana said, "No, it is the rule here in South Africa that we should not come out of the Hippo when we speak with you."

It was the union leaders, the union committee. They were the ones who shot at us, they killed two boys. We ran and left them there. Even the mine security guards were shooting, but not at us. They were shooting upward in order to scare us and we ran away and left for the mountain. When we tried to go to them on Sunday the mine security guards shot at us.

Hey, my man, my head was not working on that day and I was very, very numb and very, very nervous, because I was scared. I never knew of such things. I only knew of them like what had happened in 1976 and what happened in 1992, because of history. I would hear about massacres you see. I usually heard of that from history, but on that day it came back, so that I can see it. Even now, when I think back, I feel terrible, and when I reverse my thinking to that, I feel sad, still.

**Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer**  
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## SURVIVORS

And after the soldiers arrived with the two Hippos the police said they will not take that wire out and they will go on with doing their jobs, and that is when we got hurt. Like me, I was able to save myself, because when I ran, I ran to this side and a lot of people who got hurt ran towards that mountain there. Those are people who got hurt the most, they ran towards that kraal there and some were left behind here and some were taken by soldiers going towards that mountain. What happened in that mountain, god knows, because by then they were using that green tear gas, bluish like the sky because that mountain was green. What happened in that mountain I cannot say because I was very far by then and the helicopter was shooting at us too and that went on like that on Thursday on 16 August.

This struggle is from Lonmin in its entirety, what we wanted was money. We were not fighting. I heard management say that we were fighting the unions. We were not fighting the unions, we just wanted money: R12 500.

I lied on the ground when they shot, because if you stood up they said that you were going to get hurt. I was crawling and then proceeded to lie on the ground, and that was how I survived... By crawling on the ground and lying down flat, I crawled out of the scene and ran to a nearby shack.

They said, "Right here we have caused women to become widows. We have killed all these men." It was the police who spoke in that manner. The police were speaking in that manner. Even at the police station in Phokeng, we were asked why we wanted R12 000 because we were uneducated.

## SURVIVORS

Others ran to Marikana and those who ran to Marikana were shot at the most, even from helicopters. Others were run over by Hippos. It is not everyone who was shot at, others were stepped on by Hippos...

I can say that what happened... We were killed for nothing. They were fighting us for our money. We were not fighting with management. We simply wanted to know when they were going to give us our money. Management thought it was better for them to call the government to come and kill us.

Listen Sir, this is how the story goes... when the workers went that side to tell them that we wanted more money, we found that NUM had not confronted management about this issue. So, we told them that we could see that they were unwilling to help us, so we will go to management ourselves because we were the ones who were suffering, and they were just sitting comfortably and drinking tea. When they got to their office they found us there and asked us why we had gone above their heads. Then on Saturday morning they [NUM] went there wearing their red shirts and they shot people.

[We] were arrested on... the 16th and left on Thursday the 20 something... It was on Thursday when we were taken to Mogwase because our case was postponed to the 6th... We were treated badly... we couldn't eat, not phone our families to tell them where we were. As a person with TB, I was unable to take my medication. I was unable to call my children. I even told the police that I was a widower, and my children were left by themselves... I couldn't tell my children where I was.

I earn R4000, but it does not last. Children must go to school, and when they go to school, they need some lunch money, and books are expensive. The children are really struggling...we don't have enough clothes. The workers of Lonmin are really struggling, but we work very hard. You will hear that the stocks are up, but we get nothing in return. The white people reprimand us if we do not do our work properly or make a mistake. It would have been better to be reprimanded knowing that we were getting better pay. The white people pay each other better, but we get nothing.

**SURVIVOR**

# The right to peaceful protest is dying in South Africa

It has been nearly 20 years since the first democratic election in South Africa and public protests are as much a feature of our lives now as they were in the 1980s. For the most part, media coverage of these protests focuses on the ones that go bad and turn violent.

By Stuart Thembisile Lewis

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**P**rofessor Jane Duncan, the Highway Africa Chair of Media and the Information Society at the Rhodes School of Journalism and Media Studies, argues that this depiction fails to take into account the bureaucracy used by South African municipalities to illegally prohibit protests.

Our Constitution holds that “[e]veryone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions”. This is reflected in our legislation. The Regulation of Gatherings Act (RGA), originally proposed by the Goldstone Commission, is designed to protect public protests and gatherings as essential to the democratic process.

The RGA only allows the prohibition of protests in very certain circumstances. There must be evidence that a proposed gathering will seriously disrupt traffic or result in violence that the South African Police Service (SAPS) will not be able to contain. This information must be deemed credible as well as given under oath.

With Andrea Royceppen, a Masters student in the Rhodes Political and International Studies Department, Duncan has conducted extensive research into the state of the right to protest in South Africa over the two-year period of 2011 to 2012, focusing in particular on the Rustenburg Municipality.

This research will form part of Duncan’s new book project, provisionally titled *The Rise of the Securocrats?* This book seeks to evaluate the claim made by Paul Holden, co-author of *Who Rules South Africa?*, that the

African National Congress (ANC) has fallen under the sway of the “securocrats and fat cats”.

Duncan presented the research in a seminar entitled “The Regulation of Protests under Jacob Zuma” earlier this year that I was lucky enough to attend. The research is also available to the public online at *The Daily Maverick* site in a two-part series: “Inside Rustenburg’s banned protests” and “Death by a thousand pinpricks – South Africa’s ever vanishing right to protest” <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-03-07-inside-rustenburgs-banned-protests/>. The statistics that made up the research were sourced from the Rustenburg Municipality’s own records as well as the SAPS’s Incident Registration Information System (IRIS).

In Rustenburg, the overall number of gatherings increased from 162 in 2011 to 226 in 2012. Roughly 19% of both these figures were classified as protests, forming the minority of applied-for gatherings over the time period.

In 2011, only 32% of protests were approved while another 39% fell into the murky category of not being specified as approved or not. In 2012, the number of approved protests remained steady at 33% while those not approved spiked dramatically from 29% to 53%. The unspecified protests shrunk to only 14%.

Duncan attributes this massive change in percentages to the municipality becoming “more categorical in their decisions... [and] more prone to prohibiting protests”. The unspecified protests may very



Paramilitary police units like the Special Task Force and Tactical Response Teams have become the norm in crowd control. This has often resulted in more violent police responses to protests

well be indicative of the common complaint among activists that municipalities often notify protesters of a prohibition verbally so as not to leave a paper trail, says Duncan. This means that the number of prohibitions could well include the entire not-specified figure.

Whether or not this is true, the prohibited figures in Rustenburg far outstrip the “unrest-related” incidents in the IRIS database for the same period. IRIS records all violent and peaceful marches in the country. “Unrest-related” incidents make up around 10% of the annual national total number of gatherings. These incidents are ones that the SAPS noted as becoming violent and the ones that the media tend to focus on.

Duncan blames the municipality for these radically-skewed figures, saying that they have illegally set the bar for lawful gatherings far too high. The RGA only requires the convenor of a gathering to provide a municipality with notification of their intention to gather as well as furnishing them with details regarding the leadership of the gathering, its purpose, proposed route, time and date and similar details.

The Rustenburg Municipality, however, requires a list of letters to be provided. These include a permit to use a public road, a letter of permission from the local tribal council and an acknowledgement letter from the intended recipient of any memorandum of demands. None of these letters are mentioned at all in the RGA and are therefore illegal requirements.

Duncan also noted that this practice is not unique to Rustenburg, or even ANC municipalities, but

occurs nationally, even in the Makana municipality of which Grahamstown is a part. Activists with local organisations like the Unemployed People’s Movement (UPM) or Abahlali baseMjondolo can attest to this. I have covered several stories in which UPM protests were prohibited illegally, including at least one when the notification of the prohibition was given telephonically to the convenor on the day of the event.

Duncan also notes that the police are also engaging in more aggressive tactics and their attempts to enforce the prohibition of protests or to disperse violent protests have become more violent. In the past, the SAPS employed the Belgian method of crowd control and policed protests from a manageable distance.

Recently though, paramilitary police units like the Special Task Force and Tactical Response Teams have become the norm in crowd control. This has often resulted in more violent police responses to protests. The SAPS have also switched to the French method of crowd control used heavily by the Sarkozy administration in France, a much more violent and in-your-face style than the Belgian method, that they learned when Sarkozy’s government helped train 8 500 South African police prior to the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

Duncan’s conclusion is clear: South Africans’ right to peacefully protest is being swallowed by manipulative bureaucratic practices and violent policing practices. This is also passing by unnoticed by most mainstream South African media institutions.



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# Media in MOZAMBIQUE



In 2013 a partnership between the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, and the Escola de Comunicacao e Artes (ECA) at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique was forged through funding by IREX. The aim was to share experience, expertise and skills through lecturer and student exchanges. Part of this programme, which has already seen lecturers from both universities visiting each other, was an information exchange in the form of articles from members of the ECA in the Rhodes Journalism Review. These are aimed at giving RJR readers some insight into the media in Mozambique and the complexities which researchers and educators face within this landscape.



**Mario Moises da Fonseca**  
*Lecturer in journalism at the ECA*

Da Fonseca examines the potential for the press in Mozambique to foster political will and participation. He examines the role of the media through the significant political and historical milestones in the country, and key moments of intersection between the press and the political institutions. The continuing historical and political influence on the press is further examined in the current Mozambiquan landscape.



**Ernesto Nhanale**  
*Researcher and lecturer in journalism in Mozambique*

Nhanale writes about the need to ensure the right to access to information in Mozambique, and the campaigns that have been implemented to promote access to information. Mozambique is a democratic country, with a progressive constitution, but academics, civil society and journalists still find that despite legal provision (both nationally and internationally) for access to information that there is a lack of implementation on the ground. He argues that without information, citizens are not able to engage in democratic practice in a meaningful way. He goes on to suggest recommendations for the debates around this issue which will take place in the National Assembly.



**Constantino Luciano Gemusse**  
*Lecturer in journalism at the ECA*

This article is an examination of the way in which two newspapers (*Noticias* and *Diario de Mocambique*) in Mozambique constructed a national project to combat absolute poverty in the country. It investigates the discursive processes and communicative structures used by the programmes to engage with their readers and with Mozambiquan society in general.



## Imprensa e poder político em Moçambique

Interessa-me particularmente o debate que se levanta sobre o papel da imprensa nas sociedades democráticas, particularmente a sua capacidade de fiscalizar e influenciar as decisões políticas. Para Moçambique, o debate sobre este tema, à partida, só faz sentido quando se analisam os órgãos de comunicação surgidos nos anos 90, após a aprovação da Lei de Imprensa, que não têm - ou não deviam ter - no seu capital social, nenhuma participação do Estado ou de sujeitos empresariais a ele ligados. Estes órgãos tomaram “um pouco mais a sério” o seu papel de *watch dog*.

Por Mario Moises da Fonseca

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## A liberdade de imprensa é institucionalizada quando o conjunto de papéis se torna hábito para os indivíduos na sociedade e, para o efeito, precisa ser longamente praticada.

**E**mbora haja uma grande divergência de respostas sobre se a imprensa influencia ou não o poder político, sobretudo o executivo, na tomada de decisões, as vozes que defendem a não influência são mais notórias. Os motivos por que os cidadãos, e particularmente os próprios jornalistas, julgam que a imprensa não influencia as decisões do poder político tomam muitas vezes as cores das vestimentas de quem enuncia o discurso e não vou aqui enumerá-los. Vou, porém, recordar que em Fonseca (2010) concluo, em parte, que a fragilidade dos grupos de pressão que, em Moçambique, se furtam ao seu papel de representar os cidadãos na exigência de direitos, contribui para fragilizar a própria actuação da imprensa.

O segundo motivo por que a imprensa exerce fraca influência sobre o poder político relaciona-se com a institucionalização das liberdades de associação e de imprensa em Moçambique, a sua génese e a acção dos diferentes actores. É com este segundo argumento que pretendo precorrer algumas linhas deste artigo para explicar o estágio da liberdade de imprensa em Moçambique, alicerçando-me na ideia de Berger & Luckman (2004) sobre a origem das instituições e dos papéis sociais. Para dar sentido a esta análise, precisamos aceitar alguns pressupostos expostos pelos autores.

O primeiro considera que “toda a conduta institucionalizada

envolve certo número de papéis e estes participam do carácter controlador da institucionalização”. Reconhecendo que “todos os papéis representam a ordem institucional”, é legítimo sustentar que os jornais, como parte dos defensores da democracia, como controladores dos poderes públicos e como promotores da cidadania cumprem um conjunto de papéis para representar, na sua dimensão, a instituição liberdade de imprensa. São pois os papéis, incluindo os seus apêndices de conhecimentos, que garantem a realização da ordem institucional e conferem-na um sentido objectivo.

O segundo pressuposto indica que “a actividade humana está sujeita ao hábito”. É o hábito e a rotina que atribuem carácter significativo às acções dos indivíduos, tornando-as parte integrante do acervo de conhecimentos, não só na sua conduta como também na conduta da sociedade em geral. A liberdade de imprensa é institucionalizada quando o conjunto de papéis se torna hábito para os indivíduos na sociedade e, para o efeito, precisa ser longamente praticada.

O terceiro pressuposto postula que “as instituições têm sempre uma história da qual são produto”. Considerando este pressuposto, começamos por questionar de qual história resulta a liberdade de imprensa em Moçambique, para depois tentarmos compreender a sua acção e a influência dos órgãos de comunicação na política.

O jornalismo em Moçambique, durante o regime de Estado de partido único, era praticado, na sua plenitude, em instituições tuteladas pelo poder político e, até a assinatura do Acordo Geral de Paz (AGP), não temos registo de qualquer reivindicação ou exigência, estrita e específica, por parte dos profissionais ou grupos de pressão, em prol da liberdade de imprensa e demais direitos dos jornalistas. Os órgãos de comunicação social, no período antes da década 90, confundiam-se com as instituições do Estado, tanto no sentido de tutela como na organização editorial.

O contexto político vivido desde o período da colonização, que se inicia no século XVI e termina em 1975, ano da proclamação da independência, e deste período até à assinatura do Acordo Geral de Paz em 1992, não permitia constitucionalmente algumas liberdades, dentre as quais, a liberdade de imprensa.

Tal como refere Eduardo Siteo na edição do Jornal *Savana* de 06 de Julho de 2007, o crepúsculo do contencioso ideológico socialismo-capitalismo nos finais da década de 90 terá forçado a FRELIMO a aprovar a primeira constituição multipartidária de Moçambique, abandonando, por assim dizer, o estatuto de partido-Estado. A constituição de 1990 surge na sequência das negociações de paz entre o partido Frelimo e o então grupo de guerrilha - hoje partido - Renamo e serviu como garantia da base jurídico-constitucional que tornou possível a cohabitação de várias alternativas políticas na edificação de um Estado de direito democrático.

O sociólogo moçambicano Elísio Macamo lembra que, com a assinatura do AGP em 1992, o partido no poder viu-se “obrigado”, por regras político-

## As instituições estão aí, exteriores ao indivíduo, persistentes na sua realidade, queira o indivíduo ou não.

constitucionais, a restringir as instituições do Estado à funcionalidade e papel que os cabem numa república democrática e de base parlamentar, bem como a criar outras necessárias no novo contexto político.

A constituição de 1990 foi o primeiro dispositivo legal a determinar o exercício do direito à informação e a criar condições para o surgimento de uma imprensa independente do governo. Este cenário pressupõe também uma viragem para o modo de agir das instituições do poder político e no seu relacionamento com a imprensa, impondo novos desafios a esta última e aos seus profissionais. Consequentemente, dá lugar ao início de um novo tipo de relação entre a imprensa e o poder político, que deve ser vista sem descurar os preconceitos que cada actor tem da instituição que representa em relação a outras.

Os receios em relação ao surgimento de uma imprensa livre não deixaram de existir e, até, nalguns casos não faltaram tentativas para dificultar, ou mesmo impedir, o seu pleno funcionamento. Chamo aqui o Relatório do *Media Institute of Southern Africa* (2005), para recordarmos a interpretação que a classe jornalística fez da manifestação pública do antigo presidente da república, Joaquim Chissano, apresentada num discurso proferido aquando das obras linguísticas e de radiodifusão. Chissano terá manifestado a sua “preocupação relativamente à proliferação dos *media* massivos. Muitos jornalistas criticaram o discurso de Chissano dizendo que se tratou de um desabafo por ter sido obrigado pelas circunstâncias a viver num ambiente de abertura...”.

No início sugerimos um acordo para conceber a Liberdade de Imprensa como instituição. O sentido *proto* das instituições, demonstrado por Berger & Luckman (2004), aponta, como condição para o mundo institucional ser experimentado na forma de uma realidade objectiva, a necessidade de ter “uma história que antecede o nascimento do indivíduo e que não seja acessível à sua lembrança biográfica. Portanto, que existia antes de ter nascido e vai existir depois de morrer”.

Esta condição é essencial para que as instituições se tornem facticidades históricas e objectivas que se defrontam com o indivíduo na qualidade de factos inegáveis. As instituições estão aí, exteriores ao indivíduo, persistentes na sua realidade, queira o indivíduo ou não. Este até pode desejar que não existissem; mas elas resistem às suas tentativas de alterá-las ou de evadir-se delas.

Ocorre-me aqui emprestar o discurso de Silva e Nharreluga (2002), quando referem que “no caso de

Moçambique, onde, por maioria de razões – passado histórico e um quadro político, económico e cultural marcado por sérios obstáculos à realização da cidadania - a prática democrática é ainda um enigma histórico”. A realidade de uma imprensa com papel interventivo junto do poder executivo, e o relacionamento entre instituições com base numa cultura democrática no nosso País, está longe de ser experimentado como uma realidade objectiva para os indivíduos, tendo em conta o tipo de relações que se haviam estabelecido no passado muito recente. Muitos actores sociais e políticos que fizeram parte do contexto da restrição de liberdades são hoje obrigados a encarar a liberdade de imprensa como uma realidade objectiva, abandonando o “*modus vivendi*” anterior, com o qual, em muitos casos, já se haviam conformado ou, noutros, colhido os seus benefícios.

A concepção da imprensa e do modo de agir dos jornalistas em Moçambique, além de ter registado abalos no contexto político, resultantes das fases históricas que o País atravessou - desde o fim do período colonial e durante os 15 anos de vigência do estado monopartidário - era desproporcional a uma democracia com liberdade; portanto, a instituição imprensa foi existindo fora do contexto de liberdade e pluralismo, e nada assegura que tanto os jornalistas como os actores do poder político se refaçam do mundo objectivado num passado muito recente, ainda que tenha aparecido, tão de repente, a liberdade de imprensa. Com algum exagero, pode-se questionar em que medida os actores estavam preparados para serem livres?

A situação “paternalista” vivida anteriormente, tanto pelos jornais como pela equipa de jornalistas em relação ao Estado, ainda habita o mundo subjectivo destes profissionais e chega a confundir-se, nalgumas situações, entre o papel que era suposto desempenharem e o que eles realmente são: produto de um processo histórico. Idêntica questão pode-se aplicar aos actores do poder político.

Praticar jornalismo nos moldes democráticos, ou outra actividade numa área de conduta institucionalizada, implica a existência num mundo social definido e controlado por um corpo de conhecimentos configurados estruturalmente e consolidados com o tempo. O que se está a verificar, actualmente, é uma tentativa de ruptura com o paradigma anterior, que, em muitos casos, degenera em conflitos resultantes da falta de aceitação do modelo de uma imprensa livre e de verdadeiros grupos de pressão que poderão influenciar no futuro as decisões do poder político.



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# O Debate **Direito à Informação**

Media in  
**MOZAMBIQUE**

CONTRIBUIÇÕES PARA O  
DEBATE NA ASSEMBLEIA  
DA REPÚBLICA<sup>1</sup>

Quase oito anos depois de um grupo de organizações da sociedade civil liderado pelo MISA-Moçambique ter submetido à Assembleia da República (AR) um anteprojecto de lei sobre o Direito à Informação, a AR anunciou, em Fevereiro de 2013, a inclusão do anteprojecto nos pontos da agenda dos debates da presente legislatura.

By Ernesto Nhanale

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## **A** urgência de uma lei de Direito à Informação para promover um desenvolvimento participativo – Contribuições para o debate na Assembleia da República<sup>1</sup>

Esta notícia foi bem acolhida pelas diversas entidades e organizações sociais que compreendem o papel da informação na garantia de um desenvolvimento sustentável e inclusivo, visto que é através da Informação que os cidadãos tomam conhecimento e participam das questões da gestão pública por meio de opiniões e de escolhas livres.

O anúncio da inclusão do anteprojecto da lei sobre o Direito à Informação não só foi importante pelas perspectivas que se abrem para que o país possa ter a lei, mas também porque abre espaço para um conjunto de debates e questionamentos pertinentes sobre o objecto da própria lei. Grande parte dos órgãos de comunicação social que divulgaram esta notícia deram a entender que o anteprojecto agendado pelo parlamento é de uma lei de “acesso às fontes de informação”, o que criou um certo equívoco à opinião pública nacional sobre o real objecto do anteprojecto.

Este texto discute a urgência da lei de Direito à Informação como instrumento fundamental para a promoção do desenvolvimento inclusivo, em relação ao qual o país está atrasado, fazendo distinções sobre a sua abrangência, embora o próprio direito à informação tenha como uma das suas dimensões o acesso à informação a partir dos meios de comunicação social.

Além de deixar as suas contribuições sobre o conceito de direito à informação, este texto procura mostrar a importância da lei da óptica do exercício da cidadania, justificando a expectativa social e dos diversos grupos de interesse na urgência da aprovação de uma lei que garanta o “direito à informação” e não, simplesmente, o “acesso às fontes de informação jornalística”. No final, apresenta algumas sugestões para a actualização e o debate da proposta de lei na AR.

### ***O Direito à Informação e a sua importância***

O acesso à informação é um direito reconhecido nos vários instrumentos e convenções internacionais. A declaração Universal dos Direitos Humanos, no seu artigo 19, prescreve que *“Todo ser humano tem direito à liberdade de opinião e expressão; este direito inclui a liberdade de, sem interferência, ter opiniões e de procurar, receber e transmitir informações e idéias por quaisquer meios e independentemente de fronteiras”*. A convenção das Nações Unidas contra a corrupção, nos artigos 10 e 13, refere, respectivamente que *“Cada Estado-parte deverá (...) tomar as medidas necessárias para aumentar a transparência em sua administração pública (...) procedimentos ou regulamentos que permitam aos membros do público em geral, obter (...) informações sobre a organização, funcionamento e processos decisórios de sua administração pública (...)”*. Por sua vez, a declaração internacional de Principios de Liberdade de Expressão, no item 4, refere: *“O acesso à informação mantida pelo Estado constitui um direito fundamental de todo indivíduo. Os Estados têm obrigações de garantir o pleno exercício desse direito”*.

Como se pode notar, o acesso à informação pode ser considerado o insumo fundamental para o funcionamento da democracia, especialmente por se consagrar como um dos mais importantes pilares de garantia da participação dos cidadãos. Como não pode haver democracia sem participação, também não pode haver participação sem que haja acesso à informação (Canela & Nascimento, 2009).

O Direito à Informação é reconhecido em quase todas as constituições democráticas como um direito fundamental indispensável à participação dos cidadãos na vida política, pois só pode participar quem estiver suficientemente informado.

Ao se firmar como estado democrático, Moçambique fundamenta-se na participação e acesso à informação. Enquanto país democrático, a sua Constituição reconhece este direito através da expressão do artigo 48º: *“todos os cidadãos têm direito à liberdade de expressão, à liberdade de imprensa, bem como o direito à informação.”*

Embora esteja previsto na Constituição da República de Moçambique (CRM), o exercício do direito à informação tem sido, muitas vezes, barrado pela falta de uma lei que o regule. Foi neste contexto que, a 30 de Novembro de 2005, um grupo de organizações da sociedade civil encabeçado pelo MISA Moçambique submeteu à AR um ante-projecto de Lei de Direito à Informação, agendado para debate em 2013.

Ao agendar esta lei, a AR coloca em consonância o ordenamento jurídico moçambicano com as diversas convenções internacionais de que Moçambique é subscritor. Por outras palavras, muito antes da aplicação prática da lei, ao aprovar uma lei de acesso à informação, Moçambique estará a honrar os seus compromissos internacionais e a caminhar a passos largos para a satisfação do ideal de ser uma



democracia efectiva.

Moçambique ainda se ressent de graves problemas de transparência<sup>2</sup> e de participação na vida política<sup>3</sup>. Com uma lei desta natureza, tais problemas poderiam ser ultrapassados. O acesso à informação pelos cidadãos pode ser de extrema importância para a resolução desses problemas.

Estudos que analisam o papel dos jornalistas na promoção da cidadania e da transparência evidenciam um deficit na informação produzida, causado, sobretudo, pelas fragilidades no acesso à informação. Um estudo realizado pela AfriMAP e OSISA (2009), sobre Democracia e a Participação Política em Moçambique, mostra que, fora da sua expectativa, os meios de comunicação social têm desempenhado um papel fraco na produção de uma informação com interesse público, promoção da transparência e boa governação.

A lei do acesso à informação funcionaria, desde logo, como um mecanismo de obrigação das instâncias públicas e privadas de oferecer informações de interesse público, levando a uma maior transparência nos processos de governação. O artigo 9 da Carta Africana sobre os Direitos Humanos e dos Povos, um dos instrumentos internacionais que inspira o debate da importância do acesso à informação para a promoção da boa governação, defende que *“Os órgãos públicos não detêm informação para si, mas actuam como guardiões do bem público, de modo a que todos tenham direito de acesso à informação, sujeitos somente a regras claramente definidas, estabelecidas por lei”*.

Esta declaração é reveladora de que a informação sob a guarda do Estado é sempre pública, devendo os cidadãos a ela terem acesso sem nenhuma restrição. O acesso a estes dados – que compõem documentos,

arquivos, estatísticas – constitui um dos fundamentos para a consolidação da democracia, dado fortalecer a capacidade dos indivíduos de participar de modo efectivo na tomada de decisões que os afectam.

A nível da participação política, supõe-se que o cidadão bem informado está em melhores condições de conhecer e aceder a outros direitos essenciais como o direito à saúde, educação e benefícios sociais. Por estes motivos, o acesso à informação pública tem sido cada vez mais reconhecido como um direito em várias partes do mundo. Na maior parte dos países, as leis do acesso à informação já foram aprovadas e existe uma regulamentação clara sobre como é que as entidades públicas devem divulgar informações de interesse geral ou colectivo, salvo aquelas legalmente consideradas confidenciais, independentemente das solicitações.

É, precisamente, na questão da confidencialidade que em Moçambique se enfrentam as maiores barreiras de acesso à informação. Em muitos casos, as entidades públicas evocam a questão do “segredo de Estado” para recusarem aos cidadãos o exercício dos seus direitos. No debate da legislação sobre o direito à informação, também deverá haver clareza sobre a definição e limites do conceito de segredo de justiça.

Por falta de uma lei que obriga as instâncias governamentais a considerarem a informação um recurso público e motor de desenvolvimento, pouco se tem aproveitado das ferramentas oferecidas pelas Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação muito bem desenvolvidas. Através do uso da internet, muitas das informações consideradas de interesse público poderiam ser disponibilizadas. Tal facilitaria o processo de prestação de contas ao público de forma directa, sem a intermediação dos jornalistas.

Será nestes espaços de digitalização que o governo

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No debate da legislação sobre o direito à informação, também deverá haver clareza sobre a definição e limites do conceito de segredo de justiça.

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## A tipificação da informação sigilosa deverá ser debatida por todos nós e ser claramente definida na lei do acesso à informação.

poderá ter a oportunidade de fornecer aos cidadãos a informação sobre os contratos dos megaprojectos, a transferência de recursos financeiros, os gastos da despesa pública, só para citar alguns exemplos. Não se pode olhar para a digitalização como um processo de ampliação de espaços de comunicação, sem que os conteúdos de informação estejam mais disponíveis aos cidadãos.

A questão da digitalização, na perspectiva de disponibilizar informação aos cidadãos através da internet e de outros recursos digitais, é um elemento não patente no anteprojecto apresentado ao Parlamento em 2005 e que poderia constituir uma valiosa contribuição para o debate da lei de Direito à Informação, na sua concepção mais abrangente.

Os objectivos estabelecidos no anteprojecto da lei sobre o Direito à Informação, e o próprio debate a ser realizado pela AR, não devem ser confundidos com uma lei que regulamente a relação entre os jornalistas e os servidores públicos. É, sim, uma lei que estabelece um âmbito geral do direito à informação de todos os cidadãos, mas através da qual os jornalistas podem retirar benefícios fundamentais, visto que a sua actividade depende, essencialmente, das fontes de informação.

Por isso mesmo, gostaria de convidar aos ilustres representantes do povo a considerarem o Direito à Informação como um instrumento fundamental para os projectos de desenvolvimento nacional, sobretudo porque possibilitam ao cidadão que se empodere, ao se tornar um “olheiro” sobre o que acontece no país e como está a acontecer.

### **Algumas contribuições para o debate na Assembleia da República**

- É preciso reter a ideia de que a lei de acesso à informação não é um instrumento que vai regular somente a actividade dos jornalistas, mas todo um instrumento de exercício de um direito cívico de usufruto directo por todos os cidadãos;

- A lei de acesso à informação deve garantir que a informação sob guarda dos governantes seja acessível aos seus legítimos proprietários, os cidadãos. O Direito à Informação deverá ser considerado um factor primordial de participação em processos de monitoria das actividades dos governantes;
- A aprovação da lei do Direito à Informação deve ser um imperativo para o processo de desenvolvimento do país, sobretudo num momento em que a gestão dos recursos públicos se torna um factor de interesse da maior parte dos moçambicanos;
- É preciso abandonar o tradicional debate sobre as relações entre as fontes de informação governamentais e os jornalistas, visto que a proposta da lei é um dos principais passos de contribuições para reduzir as margens de manobras em informações de carácter sigiloso. A tipificação da informação sigilosa deverá ser debatida por todos nós e ser claramente definida na lei do acesso à informação.

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### **Endnotes**

1. Artigo publicado na 3ª edição do *Boletim Debates* do Centro de Estudos Interdisciplinares de Comunicação (CEC).
2. A corrupção, uma das marcas da falta de transparência, tem sido vista como um dos problemas que põem em causa a boa governação e o desenvolvimento em Moçambique. Estudos realizados pela Transparência Internacional, através do índice de percepções sobre a corrupção no sector público, indicam que, em 2012, Moçambique caiu da posição 120 que ocupou em 2011 para a posição 123, de um conjunto de 176 países avaliados.
3. Embora as eleições sejam realizadas regularmente, há enormes desafios que Moçambique deverá ultrapassar para que elas se constituam num espaço efectivo de participação dos cidadãos. Analisando os dados estatísticos sobre o nível de participação do eleitorado nos processos eleitorais moçambicanos, nota-se uma grande subida no nível de abstenções. Desde as primeiras eleições gerais em 1994, que tiveram uma participação de 88% do eleitorado inscrito nas urnas, nas eleições gerais de 2009 as abstenções chegaram a ultrapassar os 50% do eleitorado inscrito.

# A luta contra a pobreza absoluta

Dentro de uma concepção sistémica, o jornalismo é uma área específica da comunicação social e uma actividade profissional singular que exige, para melhor compreensão das suas dinâmicas, uma abordagem a dois níveis: o das suas particularidades organizacionais, pois é parcialmente isolado do ambiente social que o envolve, e o da sua interacção com a totalidade de factores políticos, sociais, económicos e culturais que delimitam a sua existência.

By Constantino Luciano Gemusse

Media in  
MOZAMBIQUE

**M**as em ambos os casos, porque prevalecem as características fundamentais de todo o processo de comunicação - enquanto dinâmicas de uma interacção social mais ampla e de um sistema de veículos organizados, responsáveis pela produção, difusão e armazenamento de conteúdos simbólicos -, estão presentes determinados princípios que comandam esse mesmo processo.

O programa de combate à pobreza absoluta foi lançado no contexto da campanha eleitoral de 2004. Num momento como esse, espera-se que a sociedade seja bombardeada por diferentes propostas de candidatos a cargos diversos. Por isso, nos seus discursos, os candidatos procuram evidenciar as suas competências através de um conjunto de acções, projectos e programas que prometem desenvolver, caso sejam eleitos. Com essa estratégia, visam obter uma sanção positiva do eleitorado e, com isso, conseguir o voto. Note-se, porém, que, para tal, candidatos e partidos políticos servem-se dos meios de comunicação, pois reconhecem a potencialidade destes para agendar a população.

O impacto dos meios de comunicação sobre a sociedade é cada vez mais forte. Grandes volumes de textos circulam a alta velocidade em todas as esferas de conhecimento e, ao mesmo tempo, multiplicam-se os canais de acesso aos diferentes conteúdos, mostrando-se urgente a sua avaliação, com o intuito de descobrir as inúmeras possibilidades de acesso à informação que esses veículos oferecem à humanidade.

Desde as eleições gerais de 2004, até ao momento, a nação moçambicana tem acompanhado quase todos os dias o discurso sobre o combate à pobreza absoluta, comunicado tanto pelo governo quanto pelos próprios meios de comunicação de massas. As expressões “combate à pobreza absoluta”, “erradicação da pobreza”, “luta contra a pobreza absoluta”, “redução da pobreza absoluta”, entre outras, já fazem parte do repertório da maioria da população.

Tomamos como premissas, primeiro, o facto de que, para atrair a adesão da maioria da população a esse projecto, a *media* impressa optou por reproduzir, muitas vezes na íntegra, os discursos do governo sobre o assunto e reforçar a postura do governo, que recorre a fundamentos históricos, à memória colectiva sobre os esforços empreendidos, no passado, pelo partido no poder, que culminaram com a independência do país.

A segunda premissa é de que, na divulgação desse projecto, a imprensa adopta estratégias discursivas de estímulo, de reforço e de negociação do universo de referência, além da legitimação do lugar de fala do governo que apela ao público a vê-lo como “o libertador” que outrora livrou o país da dominação colonial e, agora, tem a competência de o tirar da pobreza absoluta.

A terceira e última hipótese é respeitante à divulgação do projecto da luta contra a pobreza absoluta. Aqui, a imprensa assumiu um papel de reiteradora, ou seja, serviu de porta-voz do governo, ao oferecer aos leitores um panorama mais informativo e consonântico.

Na visão de Baccega (1995: 10), “os discursos são a base na qual se assentam os meios de comunicação social. São vozes e pontos de vista escolhidos para a divulgação, que nos dão a base para nos inserirmos no mundo”. Nesse sentido, a comunicação é uma das instituições que “levam a pensar”, sobretudo pela aura de conhecimento

Com essa estratégia, os objectivos da imprensa visam ajudar o governo a mobilizar os cidadãos a aderirem às suas propostas de governação.

agregada à informação.

Esse ponto de vista é reforçado por Crato (1992: 163), para quem “a notícia, sendo então, não um reflexo puro do acontecimento, mas sim uma sua representação comunicada ao público, é ao mesmo tempo objectiva e subjectiva. É objectiva, na medida em que traduz o acontecimento, e necessariamente subjectiva na medida em que o representa e codifica segundo normas sociais de comunicação”.

O contrato de comunicação torna-se efectivo a partir da articulação do discurso cuja finalidade é informar, convencer, mas, ao mesmo tempo, precisa captar o interesse e a atenção do leitor, seduzi-lo a acreditar nesse discurso posto como verdadeiro. A articulação se inscreve no interior do contrato de comunicação, levando em consideração a instância de produção (emissor ou enunciatário), a instância de recepção (receptor ou enunciatário) e o produto final (a notícia).

Para Ferreira (*apud* França, 2002: 268), o contrato de leitura de um suporte de imprensa é o conjunto de traços do seu discurso, apreendido através da análise (i) da regularidade das propriedades do discurso descritas - relativamente estáveis e encontradas em diferentes temas; (ii) da diferença obtida pela comparação entre suportes - busca das semelhanças e diferenças a partir das características discursivas de cada suporte estudado e, por fim, (iii) da sistematização das propriedades contidas em cada suporte - configuração do conjunto das propriedades a fim de fazer emergir o contrato de leitura desses suportes estudados, identificando os pontos fortes e fracos, as “zonas de ambiguidades” e as supostas incoerências.

A imprensa recorre a estratégias discursivas para transmitir informações ao leitor regular assim como ao leitor eventual. Ao elaborar e divulgar textos jornalísticos, o enunciatário procura criar efeitos de sentido no seu enunciatário, escolhendo imagens, encenações que a cultura reconhece e, dessa forma, poder fazer crêr aos seus leitores.

O discurso, como prática social, é entendido originalmente na proposição de Greimas & Courtés (1979: 145) tanto como “manifestação linguística ou não linguística” que abarca as formas de produções simbólicas ou práticas sociais e ocupa uma posição central na estruturação do tecido social. Na concepção de Landowski (1995a: 14), por meio do discurso, “a realidade torna-se inteligível” e novos regimes de sociabilidade são fundados.

Essas ideias também ganham campo em Hall (1980: 388), ao defender que “a forma discursiva da mensagem tem uma posição privilegiada na troca comunicativa (do ponto de vista da circulação)”. Hall reconhece ainda que, embora os momentos de codificação e decodificação sejam determinados, e relativamente autónomos e interligados, o processo comunicativo, em termos de círculo, requer os instrumentos materiais (os meios) que constituem os discursos, sob a forma de veículos simbólicos, dentro das regras da linguagem e como seus próprios conjuntos de relações sociais de produção.

Parece ser nesse contexto que, para fazer crêr aos

seus eleitores, os actores políticos usaram a imprensa para que esta, por antecipação, desse visibilidade ao programa de combate à pobreza absoluta. Visibilidade é um fenómeno fundamental para a compreensão dos discursos mediáticos contemporâneos. A discussão aqui presente centra-se na análise da construção da visibilidade na *media* impressa, diária, à luz das abordagens teóricas de Rodrigues (1990) e Trivinho (2007).

Segundo Trivinho (2007), a “visibilidade mediática diz respeito a tudo o que é visível, que comparece na esfera pública, que é percebido pelo público e que produz sentido capaz de ser compartilhado entre os diversos interlocutores que têm acesso à mídia”. Mas é importante ressaltar que a visibilidade mediática não se reduz ao que é visível a olho nu, mas também ao que não é palpável, como o som e a fala, que são textos (no sentido semiótico do termo) perceptíveis que circulam nos meios de comunicação. Sabe-se que eles existem e produzem sentidos. Portanto, é a visibilidade mediática que possibilita a partilha de sentido no âmbito da experiência colectiva que produz um efeito de inclusão.

Ainda segundo o mesmo Trivinho, a visibilidade mediática é actualmente uma das estratégias fundamentais dos meios de comunicação de massas, porque através dela marca-se a presença ou ausência de certos acontecimentos, determinados produtos, mapas de consumo, personagens quer individuais quer colectivas, cuja presença ou ausência no espaço público, em um primeiro instante, fala por si mesma e gera repercussões na sociedade.

É nesse âmbito que, na construção dos textos jornalísticos sobre a pobreza absoluta, verificamos que uma das estratégias-chave adoptadas pela imprensa no quadro do combate à pobreza engloba mecanismos de persuasão e de sedução de cunho propagandístico, baseados no uso de uma linguagem simples, mas ao mesmo tempo eloquente, que se dirige simultaneamente ao indivíduo e às massas. Com essa estratégia, os objectivos da imprensa visam ajudar o governo a mobilizar os cidadãos a aderirem às suas propostas de governação.

Esse movimento pode ser compreendido à luz de Breton e Proçux (*apud* Rieffel, 2003: 64) que defendem que o “o objecto da propaganda é difundir informações de modo a que o seu receptor esteja de acordo com elas e, simultaneamente, seja incapaz de fazer outra escolha qualquer a seu respeito”. Com isso, é possível compreendermos as razões que levaram a maioria da população, independentemente das suas diferenças etárias, nível de formação, filiação partidária, a aceitar o programa proposto pelo governo de Guebuza.

A estratégia persuasiva emprestada da publicidade tem um carácter indutivo, tendo como objectivo primeiro convencer e mover o consumidor, estimulando-o a comprar e/ou a usar o produto. Na mesma linha de ideias, com base em aportes da semiótica discursiva, percebemos que o enunciatário dos textos mediáticos “manipula” a percepção dos enunciatários que são levados, através da linguagem, a se sentirem co-responsáveis na luta contra a pobreza absoluta.

Portanto, é a visibilidade mediática que possibilita a partilha de sentido no âmbito da experiência colectiva que produz um efeito de inclusão.



Matthew Kay

A outra estratégia de construção do discurso jornalístico da imprensa moçambicana é o enquadramento, ou seja, o direccionamento dado às notícias divulgadas. A tendência por opções de determinados tipos de enquadramento das notícias pode ser facultada pelas narrativas jornalísticas constituídas pelas escolhas textuais e discursivas de que os jornalistas se servem no desenvolvimento da sua missão. Tais escolhas são influenciadas tanto pela formação profissional dos jornalistas quanto pela cultura organizacional dos veículos de informação em que trabalham.

O enquadramento, ou *frame*, é uma das estratégias que conheceu o seu desenvolvimento nos trabalhos de Goffman (*apud* Wolf, 2003) que o definiu como “construções mentais que permitem aos seus utilizadores localizar, perceber, identificar e catalogar um número infinito de ocorrências concretas”.

Considera-se assim que a vida pública é organizada através de *frames* por via dos quais as pessoas percebem os eventos ao seu redor.

Já segundo Porto (2004: 78), enquadramentos “são marcos interpretativos mais gerais, construídos socialmente, que permitem às pessoas fazer sentido dos eventos e das situações sociais”. Na prática jornalística, um enquadramento é construído através de procedimentos como selecção, exclusão ou ênfase de determinados aspectos e informações, por forma a compôr perspectivas gerais através das quais os acontecimentos e situações do dia são dados a conhecer. Trata-se de uma ideia central que organiza a realidade dentro de determinados eixos de apreciação e entendimento, que envolvem inclusive o uso de expressões, estereótipos, sintagmas, entre outros recursos.

Com base nessa definição conceptual, podemos

visualizar os diversos tipos de enquadramentos na cobertura de temáticas sobre o combate à pobreza absoluta no país. Desde que o programa foi lançado pelo governo de Guebuza, a cobertura da imprensa foi contínua na tentativa de informar e actualizar o leitor, oferecendo-lhe diferentes pontos de vista e, muitos deles, favoráveis à iniciativa do governo face ao problema da pobreza e à necessidade de participação de cada cidadão no empenho ao trabalho.

Ao trazer notícias relativas à miséria, pobreza, desigualdades sociais, económicas e culturais, entre outros problemas do quotidiano social, a imprensa contribuiu na ampliação do espectro do debate sobre este universo. A actividade da mídia, de trazer diariamente notícias e informações para a sociedade, pode ser compreendida a partir da teoria do *agenda setting*, ou agendamento.

O conceito de agendamento foi avançado por Cohen, ao defender que a imprensa “pode, na maior parte das vezes, não conseguir dizer às pessoas como pensar, mas tem, no entanto, uma capacidade espantosa para dizer aos seus próprios leitores sobre o que pensar” (Traquina, 2003:18).

Pela experiência da imprensa moçambicana, no que tange à lógica do agendamento, encontramos algumas práticas profissionais adoptadas pelos definidores (seleccionadores) das agendas midiáticas, pois constatamos que, no caso do programa de combate à pobreza absoluta, o sector político é que pautou a agenda mediática. É uma relação que mostra que no primeiro momento o governo pautou a imprensa e no segundo a imprensa agendou os leitores.

Ainda na lógica do enquadramento, percebemos que na construção dos discursos mediáticos, as escolhas linguísticas e narrativas, entre outros dispositivos adoptados, não são ingénuas, pois têm sempre a intencionalidade de produzir efeitos de sentido nos enunciatários (receptores). Nesse âmbito, há muito que se pode analisar, por exemplo, sobre a titulação das notícias.

É possível perceber que, na formatação dos títulos, o enunciador do jornal *Notícias* usa recursos linguísticos, isto é, expressões e palavras cujo sentido visa provocar no leitor uma reacção. Apela à participação de todos os cidadãos, como aparece neste trecho: “todos devem participar na luta contra a pobreza”. Só que, algumas vezes, o mesmo enunciador usa um tom de obrigatoriedade para com os enunciatários, ao emitir uma ordem expressa que aparece no verbo “dever”, como mostra este destaque: “a luta contra a pobreza deve envolver cidades e vilas”. Aqui a ordem é feita de forma clara e sem rodeios. Essa estratégia pode criar efeitos de sentido de hostilidade, principalmente para os enunciatários, que por algum motivo, não concordem com as directrizes do programa arquitectado pelo governo e seu partido.

Ao trazer o seu ponto de vista em relação à atitude do presidente, o enunciador do jornal *Notícias* pretende convencer os leitores a verem aquele como um líder próximo aos cidadãos, um líder que se preocupa em procurar soluções para os reais problemas do país e que está disposto a ouvir a população, independentemente



da sua localização urbana ou rural.

Na análise da notícia, a sedução é usada também para destacar a presença do Presidente da República no meio rural e, dessa forma, de acordo com o enunciador, tornar possível o contacto directo entre aquele e a população rural, numa presença envolvente, uma manifestação directa.

No cenário geral, percebemos que a tendência dos políticos é de adequarem cada vez mais os seus discursos às estruturas internas dos órgãos de comunicação social e, dessa forma, solidificar o contrato de leitura entre o político e o eleitor. Isso mostra que o espaço da comunicação não é isolado do espaço quotidiano, onde se formalizam as práticas sociais.

Outro aspecto que se pode destacar no jornal *Notícias*, são as marcas de hegemonia respeitantes ao espaço e tempo ocupados com a cobertura de acções do governo, em detrimento de outros partidos políticos e de outras instituições que não tenham ligação com o partido no poder.

O jornal *Diário de Moçambique* traz enfoques sobre a ineficiência do programa do combate à pobreza absoluta. Por isso, é possível ver um tom de indignação nas suas reportagens, em relação ao discurso do combate à pobreza. Nesse sentido, pode-se ler ainda numa reportagem: “a nossa equipa de reportagem conversou com vários membros da sociedade civil que disseram que são obrigados a reduzir a sua dieta alimentar, isto é, se comprava 50 Kg de arroz para consumir com a sua família durante o mês, presentemente são forçados a consumir cerca de 35 kg porque a outra parte do rendimento mensal ou diário é aplicada na educação dos filhos”. Com este tipo de narrativas, o jornal frisa as discrepâncias entre o discurso governamental e a realidade vivida por muitas famílias moçambicanas.

Diferentemente do jornal *Notícias*, a temática da pobreza absoluta ocupa a editoria de política e, por vezes, a primeira página. Mas ambos os jornais são marcados pela parcialidade caracterizada pela ênfase do lugar de fala dos membros do governo em todos os níveis sem, porém, mostrar ou revelar as possíveis contradições com a realidade.

Apresentadas as análises, concluímos que a estratégia fundamental do governo era produzir e difundir um discurso convincente e, ao mesmo tempo, capaz de provocar adesão da maioria dos moçambicanos. Para isso, era necessário usar a imprensa, pois esta tem capacidade de agendar as pessoas e de influenciar o seu modo de pensar.

Ao analisarmos os textos jornalísticos sobre o combate à pobreza constatamos, de uma maneira geral, que a imprensa moçambicana não mostra os pontos fracos do projecto de combate à pobreza absoluta, nem nos títulos e muito menos nas notícias. O objectivo desse tipo de discurso tem a ver com o estabelecimento e a manutenção do *status quo* vigente, para além de investir no convencimento, de forma a envolver e mobilizar o cidadão comum, especialmente o eleitor, para que assuma o seu voto como acção compactuada.

A presença constante e crescente de mensagens informativas é também acompanhada de outras, cujo teor é publicitário, em benefício dos actores políticos. Sem dúvida, isso produz efeitos de sentido que valorizam a acção dos actores políticos, já que é frisado o seu esforço na luta contra a pobreza no país.

Isso pode ser percebido pelo facto de que, na ordem geral do discurso publicitário, os elementos persuasivos ganham peso em relação aos informativos, embora ambos se fundam. Essa fusão de linguagens é uma estratégia que os actores políticos e seus colaboradores da imprensa adoptam como forma de provar, demonstrar, justificar ou, simplesmente, levar os leitores e os eleitores a aceitarem e a valorizarem os ideais por eles propostos.

Com base na análise dos conteúdos jornalísticos sobre o combate à pobreza absoluta, podemos constatar também que o campo da política e o da imprensa se entrecruzam, no sentido de que a política se serve da imprensa para transformar o seu projecto político-administrativo em notícias e, o jornalismo, as acções da política-partidária na notícia de que se alimenta a

imprensa do país.

A partir do mapeamento das temáticas e dos enquadramentos escolhidos pela imprensa no tocante ao combate à pobreza, é possível observar que todos os segmentos sociais que compõem a sociedade moçambicana (político, económico, religioso, artístico) acatam o programa, embora alguns deles discordem das estratégias adoptadas pelo governo na sua implementação.

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# Last WORD

# Rewriting the African editorial narrative

Are news organisations reporting Africa accurately or falling back on cliché? Do African stories get a fair hearing in the international press, or even in the media inside Africa? Are Africans seeing a fair representation of themselves on screen?

By Peter Horrocks

**A**s Director of Global News for the BBC, an organisation whose largest single audience is on the African continent, these are crucial questions for me.

Earlier this year I joined African colleagues at a seminar co-hosted by the BBC and the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism in Johannesburg. Our brief was to explore the African editorial narrative and how it should be rewritten. I was keen to pick up input from colleagues in the media and academia on the BBC's reporting of Africa, both internationally and in Africa itself.

The starting point for the seminar was the claim that for too long international news about Africa has been dominated by images of famine, war and poverty.

One participant characterised the existing editorial narrative as “the man in camouflage with mirrored sunglasses and an AK47, the fat cat politician, and the woman, hungry from drought, with her dying children in her arms”.

Many Africans would simply not recognise their continent as it is portrayed on international television screens, but now a new and rival African narrative is emerging, that of booming Africa, a continent on the rise.

This is a story about a continent which is experiencing a period of sustained economic growth and which boasted six of the world's 10 fastest-growing countries in the last decade, a continent where foreign direct investment has rocketed. A continent whose growth regularly outstripped that of East Asia's in the first years of the new millennium.

The challenge for media now is to reflect these new realities and do justice to the continent; to show Africa in all its various aspects.

What stops media organisations from doing justice to Africa?

An obvious, but vital, point to make is that Africa is a vast, complicated place. With 54 countries extending over nearly 12 million square miles, this means a large-scale news operation. The BBC's operation in Africa reflects this, with 150 reporters and producers based in 46 African countries.

Our international news services have a weekly reach of 81 million people in sub-Saharan Africa. We broadcast in Arabic, English, French, Hausa, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Somali and Swahili. Listeners and viewers can access BBC news via TV, FM, shortwave, or satellite radio, and through partnerships with radio stations and mobile-phone operators. Our websites provide audiences with news, information and analysis in text, audio and video.

For smaller organisations, Africa's sheer scale can present some stark logistical challenges. An African newspaper colleague pointed out that when a plane ticket from South Africa to Rwanda is as expensive as one to London, the London assignment will be the winner every time. African coverage then means a reporter going from one crisis to another, with some African countries dropping off the news map altogether and never being reported from or upon.

Other participants talked of different geographical challenges, knowing just where “Africa” begins and ends. They spoke of not knowing whose beat North Africa was on, should it be covered by an Africa correspondent or a Middle East correspondent?

We all agreed that building up relationships with local correspondents, be they staff members or freelance stringers, is a vital part of the solution. The panel agreed that without local knowledge, contacts, and expertise, the African agenda is at risk of being dictated by an editor many miles away, covering an increasingly small range of stories. And even when there are “voices on the ground”, they are not always being heard.

This is the starting point for the BBC's Live the Story initiative, which demonstrates how our journalists are not just reporting on, but living in, the world they are describing.

Live the Story means Anne Soy, our bilingual reporter in Kenya who works for our English and Swahili programmes, knowing that backstreet abortions are one of the major issues facing Kenyan women, and using her local contacts to discover the scale of the illegal abortion trade.

It means we have Tomi Oladipo in Nigeria making films about how that country's new-found prosperity means more champagne is consumed there than in any other country outside France.

It's about Nomsa Maseko sharing her passion for street racing and car spinning which has become a major sport in the Johannesburg township where she lives.

And it's about Ghanaian Komla Dumor, the presenter of our TV “Focus on Africa” and one of the key faces of the re-launched BBC World News channel, sharing his passion and pride in Africa.

Live The Story is about our 150 African reporters and producers revealing to the world their continent, how they live and what it means to live in Africa in the 21st century, and the management of BBC Africa, by the renowned Kenyan journalist Solomon Mugeru. These are stories of Africa for Africans, told by Africans.

We want to bring this story to our audiences in Britain, too.

Earlier this year all of the BBC's news services moved into one new headquarters in central London, creating the World's Newsroom, a melting pot of international journalism. Journalists working on

We want to  
“live the story”  
and capture the  
human element  
of Africa’s  
economic rise,  
to report on the  
entrepreneurs  
and the  
innovators, and  
to picture the  
aspirations of  
Africa’s growing  
middle-class.  
And we need to  
listen to its young  
people.

UK news bulletins sit and work alongside colleagues from services around the world. We are making a concerted effort to bring these international voices to our domestic channels, giving them airtime for our British audiences.

During the London Conference on Somalia earlier this year, colleagues from the BBC’s Somali service not only produced programmes for their own service, but appeared on several other BBC outlets to share their knowledge and insight. BBC Somalia journalists produced a “Need-To-Know” guide for the BBC website and interviewed the UK’s Minister for Africa about his expectations for the conference and the future of Somalia.

This represents a truly different way of working for the BBC, with international and domestic services that have for too long been very separate entities.

For me, bringing more African voices into British news bulletins is another key part of rewriting the narrative. It is not just the story which is being told, but who is telling it, and to whom.

Of course, training new journalists is crucial. This is one of the functions of BBC Media Action, the BBC’s not-for-profit organisation which uses media and communication to help reduce poverty and support people to understand their rights. This work also includes supporting the development of African media, through work with African journalists, broadcasters, government agencies and non-governmental organisations. This can quite literally be life-saving work; for example providing vital information during emergencies or informing people about health issues.

It helps to encourage free and fair elections. Before the Johannesburg seminar I was in Nairobi where I visited the set of *Sema Kenya* (Kenya Speaks). *Sema Kenya* is an audience-led debate show broadcast in Kiswahili. In the run-up to the Kenyan elections, the programme had been touring the country, giving Kenyans the chance to engage with the issues in a safe, informed environment.

On programmes like this we work with local partner stations whose journalists get the chance to work on editions of the programme and receive mentoring from us, so we train the journalists of tomorrow.

It’s not just the narrative which is changing, but the way it is being communicated, and consumed. With Africa’s

economic growth has come a rapid increase in the use of mobile technology. Africa has three mobile phones for every four people and is the world’s fastest-growing mobile phone market. It is mobile technology which links Africa to the rest of the world.

While I was in Kenya I had the uplifting experience of visiting the iHub, an innovation centre for new technologies, where I watched a team of executives from Google being lectured on the latest apps by a young Kenyan woman. This was a stark reminder for me of how we need to stay relevant to our African audiences.

With this new technology comes greater audience engagement.

As well as our flagship global discussion programme *World Have Your Say*, and programmes such as *Sema Kenya*, there are more opportunities than ever before for audiences to interact with our news services.

All of our services have Facebook pages and Twitter feeds, meaning the audience can interact directly with programmes and presenters as never before. This day-to-day dialogue can help to provide us with stories or comments which help us do our journalism effectively, including feedback which tells us what people think we’re getting right or wrong.

Of course, there is a danger that the rush to focus on “rising Africa” simply replaces one set of clichés with another, ignoring the realities of everyday life for the overwhelming majority of people on the continent.

And that, as one panellist at our seminar warned, rural Africa is increasingly under-reported as the focus swings to the big cities.

The BBC will not neglect its responsibility to report to Africa and the world the more unpleasant aspects of life on the continent, especially when many media organisations in Africa lack the desire or willingness to face up to that side of life. After all, this is still a continent where the majority of people are living on less than two dollars a day. The problems of disease, poverty and violence still remain.

It isn’t the BBC’s job, or that of any other news organisation, to solve these problems, but it is our job to report on them accurately and fairly. For me, the most important thing to remember is that Africa is a subtle, vast, complicated place. We need to reflect the differences of its 54 countries.

The seminar left me optimistic, but threw down a challenge. For me, a few things about the new narrative are clear.

I don’t believe we can tell the African story without telling the business story. This is why the BBC has launched a new African business team in Johannesburg.

We want to “live the story” and capture the human element of Africa’s economic rise, to report on the entrepreneurs and the innovators, and to picture the aspirations of Africa’s growing middle-class. And we need to listen to its young people.

The night before the seminar in Johannesburg I hosted a dinner with 20 of Africa’s brightest young people from One Young World and Brightest Young Minds. Hearing the voice of this young generation is crucial to our understanding of Africa. The average age of an African is now just 18. And it’s estimated that in the next decade 40% of the world’s working population will be African.

Unless as media we record the lives, experiences and views of Africa young people then we risk losing our relevance. I believe the BBC is uniquely placed to tell this story, and I am determined we do it justice.



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AUGUST 2013

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