Critical Studies on African Media and Culture

Media, Democracy and Renewal in Southern Africa

Keyan Tomaselli & Hopeton Dunn (Eds)
MEDIA,
DEMOCRACY
AND
RENEWAL IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA
MEDIA,
DEMOCRACY
AND
RENEWAL IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA

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International Academic Publishers
www.iacademicbooks.com
The series Critical Studies on African Media and Culture is the result of partnership between International Academic Publishers and Critical Arts: A South-North Journal for Cultural and Media Studies published under the auspices of the Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, South Africa. The series incorporates studies previously published by Anthropos as part of a series called Studies on the South African Media. This series was initiated in 1987 in response to apartheid in South Africa. When apartheid ended, the series then focused on the development of democratic media policy in post-apartheid South Africa.

In 2001, it became evident that the series should broaden its scope to popularize and internationalize scholarship on Africa and to revitalize the often essentialist, mechanistic and moribund scholarship on media and culture relating to the continent. To this end, the Critical Studies on African Media and Culture series includes reprints of enduring studies on media and culture during apartheid in South Africa as these are critical to understanding post-apartheid media and culture trends in South Africa. It also introduces current studies on media and culture not only about South Africa but the whole continent.

The works to be included in this series will be primarily critical studies grounded in empirical research. However, the editors will also consider cutting edge works informed by other paradigms. In all cases, theoretical engagement and empirical sophistication of the studies submitted will guide the editors’ selection of works to be published as part of this series.

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PREFACE

The transnationalization of media industries in an era of convergence, the many mergers and counter-mergers, spectacular rates of attrition in the media business, the emergence of dominant players in every media sector in national, regional and global media contexts, including of late in e-commerce, are phenomena that no longer invite critical comment. It would seem that as long as there is a semblance of competition, the liberal economy is willing to mute its chorus. It is only when there is evidence of a complete monolith, as is the case of Bill Gates and Microsoft, that the powers that be are sufficiently ruffled to make a case for competition, even if that does not, in principle, lead to much. This sentiment seems to be borne out by the fact that in Finland for instance, where the telecommunications giant Nokia accounts for twenty per cent of Finland’s exports, a third of R&D, seventy per cent of the market value of the Helsinki Stock Exchange and has contributed to six per cent of economic growth in the year 2000 – the language of competition is making a comeback primarily as a consequence of the predicted decline of the cellular phone market in a saturated environment.¹

The political-economy of competition within new media environments was one aspect among many that were explored in a series of workshops on media ownership and control supported by the World Association for Christian Communication(WACC) between 1998 and 2000. WACC is an international NGO involved in facilitating projects and research linked to the democratization of communications. As part of its study program, it has facilitated eight workshops on issues related to media ownership and control. These workshops were held in Bangkok, Yaounde, Kathmandu, Kingston, Nadi, Slovenia, Durban and Mexico City. The objectives of these workshops were to 1) contribute to regional mappings of media ownership trends in the context of changed economic and political environments, 2) problematize media democratization in transitional contexts, and 3) account for emerging sources of cultural resistance to old and new media orders.

While this mapping of media ownership did confirm some general trends – for instance the globalization of media industries, the steady decline of public monopolies in broadcasting and telecommunications, increasing concentration of media ownership and the emergence of natural monopolies in every conceivable media sector, the de-regulation and re-regulation of media systems, the privatization and transnationalization of telecommunications, the ‘class’ dimension of consumer-led globalization, it also affirmed the reality of differentiation across regions. These include the following: the emergence of black ownership in South Africa, the growth of national, local media moguls such as Subhash Chandra of Zee TV in India, the vertical and horizontal integration of media within national borders, distinct localizations of media content, the increased power and reach of national media groups on the region and world stage – for instance Globo, Brazil, Grupo Clarín/Multi-Canal Argentina, and Televisa, Mexico, the persistence of state-run monopolies in many parts of West and Central Africa, close correspondences between media syndicates, military and family politics in South East Asia, and the beginnings of a resistance against the traditional monopoly enjoyed by groups such as Cable & Wireless in the Caribbean and the Pacific. These trends also point to the many ways in which some of the larger Southern economies together with their local partners have been able to negotiate and shape national communications environments conducive to national priorities. However, this, by no means, is an assured process and most, if not all countries in the South have had to reckon with the steady transnationalization of their media industries.

The results of these workshops have clearly indicated that while there is little to be gained from bemoaning the exit of government media monopolies that were, in the main, channels for government propaganda, neither is there much merit in the wholesale auction of media sectors to private industry. The corporatization of the media does not necessarily lead to substantive media freedoms. The digital divide is a fact of contemporary life and mirrors other substantive divides in society. Reformed public sector media establishments also seem, incapable of extending substantive media freedom. In fact, the lessons learned from the reform of the South African Broadcasting Corporation indicate the extent to which ‘residual’ practices and ways of functioning continue to inform contemporary, re-regulated media institutions. In this light, the prospects for greater democracy seem rather remote in the case of both Mahathir Mohammed’s Multimedia Super Corridor in Malaysia and the proposed wiring of parts of Africa, for the success of both projects is predicated on the existence of largely passive consumers.

And so it would seem that many of the critical questions regarding media democracy remain to be answered. While the corporate world would like us to pin our hopes on consumerism and the steady, gradual diffusion of democratization through the market, the fact that all things are not equal surely puts to rest the many wild and unsubstantiated predictions of the imminence of a
global knowledge-based order. And yet, the many case studies presented at these workshops suggest that in spite of real caveats and obstacles, there are distinct possibilities for media democratization.

The many reports on the seminar on Political Economy of the Southern African Media that was held in Durban between 25-29 April suggest that this event was a pivotal moment in the history of media research in Africa. The many papers that were presented contributed quite significantly to advancing understandings of the theory and practice of media democratization in the Southern African region in an era characterized by globalization and the free market economy. Each of the papers included in this volume remain a testimony to what was an important, ‘quality’ event. While we still await the last word on the exact nature and quality of the ingredients necessary for the making of democratic media markets and just media futures, the papers included in this volume, offer us multiple visions of democratic media futures in Southern Africa.

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Acknowledgements

This book is the result of an international research seminar on the Political Economy of the Media in Southern Africa, held at the University of Natal, Durban, South Africa in April 2000. Referees for the book were drawn from all participants in the Seminar, which was hosted by the Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies (CMS). Additional referees included Jerome Dube, James Zaffiro and Toks Oyedemi.

The seminar and follow-up project were funded by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) based in London, the National Research Foundation (NRF) based in Pretoria and Independent Newspapers KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. We are also greatly indebted to Telkom SA for funds which have made this book possible. The outcome, however, is entirely the responsibility of the book's editors and contributors.

Organizations which endorsed or otherwise supported the project were the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA - Windhoek), the Caribbean Institute for Media and Communication (CARIMAC - Jamaica), and the Mona Research Fellowship Scheme, both based at the University of West Indies, Mona Campus in Jamaica; the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (London), and the Bellagio Alliance on Media, Law and Policy.

Individuals whom we would like to thank for their support include Graeme King and Marlan Padayachee (Independent Newspapers), Ed Tillett and Hans vanden Groenendaal (Telkom), Bruno van Dyk of the Natal University Development Foundation, Professor Eleanor Preston-Whyte, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development), University of Natal; Professor Ruth Teer-Tomaselli (CMS), Dr. Pradip Thomas (WACC) and Professor Aggrey Brown, Director of CARIMAC. The seminar co-ordinators were Susan Govender and Sunita Kairnar (CMS), whose professional dedication ensured a most efficient and productive meeting. Additional support came from the Rev. Kerbede Feyissa (CMS), as well as from the enthusiastic cohort of CMS graduate students who were completing their studies at the time of the seminar. The editors thank all contributors, finding sources and seminar participants, without whom this publication would not be a reality.

Finally, thanks to Robert Kriger and Tselane Morolo of the NRF, who facilitated the establishment of the Southern African and South-South Working Group, which will continue the work begun, and develop the network inaugurated at the seminar.

KeyanTomaselli and Hopeton Dunn
Chapter 1

REFORM AND OUTREACH: RETHINKING POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN MEDIA

KEYAN TOMASELLI AND HOPETON S. DUNN

Information-based and communications industries are together the fastest growing sector of modern capitalist economies. The speed of their development requires a rapid adaptation, not only in the marketplace, but also in universities and other educational institutions. This explosion of communication technologies has enveloped many previously separate industries and has led to a pairing of activities and technologies. Journalism is now irrevocably linked with computer science (word processors), film and video with electronics as well as an integration of film with video, and now the Internet and World Wide Web. The use in motion pictures of technologies ranging from laser imagery and interactive computer graphics to conventional optical techniques provide other instances of this technological inter-linkage.

With the rise of the Information Age, studies of the political economy of the media have come into their own. Works published during the 1990s responded to the end of the Cold War, the rapidly growing influence of the Internet and World Wide Web, e-commerce, cellular telephones, international mergers of the huge telecommunication companies, and particularly the AOL-Time Warner linkup. The process underpinning all these movements is that of convergence.

The New Paradigm

Convergence is the current buzzword in telecommunication studies. This is so whether one is discussing film, video and TV, radio, desktop publishing (print) or electronic publishing (CD-ROM, Internet and the World Wide Web), or computer-based language learning.

Convergence is the term applied to the standardization of transmission systems. Digitalization is the common factor in transmission technologies. This occurs through computerization, which brings together both print and electronic media, channels previously separate in terms of production and distribution. This kind of information technology is changing the way that knowledge is stored and accessed in the period of late capitalism. This is the period during which productive forces have shifted from an industrial to an information-based economy. The potential reach of technology in this epoch is global and trans-disciplinary.

This new age also witnessed the demise of socialism and communism, and of historical materialism (Marxism) as a critical method. The solid and challenging
studies retaining a critical edge from Vincent Mosco (1997), Ed Herman and Robert McChesney (1997) and others were paralleled by an endless array of other opportunistic studies, some of which can only be described as “dot.com” analyses. This is fast and dirty, product-oriented, profit-making research, in which substantial social, class and cultural issues are erased from analyses which emphasize technology, efficiency and innovation above all else. Another effect of such “dot.com” analysis in the post-Cold war era has been the move to post-disciplinary teaching. The aim here is less to educate graduates with medium-to-long-term strategic thinking skills and expertise than it is to equip them with short-term problem-solving skills within opaque relations of production, accepted uncritically and without reservation. Paradigmatic histories are forgotten in these kinds of approaches.

The decade of the 1990s has seen significant shifts in the political economy of Southern African media. These have been led by dramatic changes in South Africa, following the demise of state-sponsored apartheid after 1990, and the restructuring of its supporting media apparatus throughout the region. More broadly, however, media in other member countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to which South Africa was admitted after 1994, have also been affected by political events and by global technology and policy changes. The ownership, content, delivery systems, professional staff, users and audiences for a range of media services have been also under review.

The requirement by business and state-owned companies in Southern Africa, the Caribbean and globally is to have access to educated media professionals who have strategic business skills, long-term conceptual vision, and who are able to guide media organisations in terms of:

- the intellectual and ethical demands of the post-industrial era;
- the integration of their countries and regions into the global information economy on equitable terms; and
- vigilance towards balancing bottom-line pressures with the needs of the public sphere.

New research methodologies and theories responding to these global shifts in professional demands as well as in media technology and markets are less visible in the curricula of many Southern African universities (cf. Masilela, 1997; Tomaselli, 1996). This book is designed to not only link such cutting edge international theory to local contexts, but also to reconstitute it in terms of the often different conditions found in Southern Africa.

The SADC area consists of Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The population of the region as a whole is over one hundred and ninety three million people (193 million). The languages of government and commerce are English, Portuguese, and French. South Africa operates as a regional center, hosting the continent’s most developed physical, financial and media infrastructures. Political, economic and cultural
changes, wars, natural disasters, the AIDS/HIV epidemic, and attempts at deepening democracy have all had their impact, to varying degrees, on media systems and practices in countries of the region. In these countries, and in South Africa especially, regulatory institutions, media companies and state-owned institutions have been struggling anew with ‘Visions’, ‘Missions’ and other declarations of intent since the democratic transition in Pretoria began in February 1990.

Transformation, however, is more than changing the discourse and demographics of an organization: it is more than simply substituting white with black personnel: it is about changing the structures and the ethos in the way people go about their business in the workplace. In particular, it is about employment practices in civil society, and the conduct of affairs of state and politics.

Communications Reform and Policy Trends

Traditionally, African broadcasting has been considered part of the civil service. As a result, its autonomy has been seriously proscribed by state and government interference, and mainly used as propaganda arms of ruling elites. However, since 1990, and in the wake of democratizing and privatizing impulses stemming from the post-apartheid transition, Southern African governments have begun to re-regulate the airwaves, permitting private satellite transmission via both encryption and free-to-air broadcasting, in addition to public service and commercial channels. However, the methods of implementing re-regulation and privatization have had a significant impact on developments. National states have all sorts of ways of ensuring compliance and control. These are ensured via a range of mechanisms, from privatizing to themselves via the ruling party, to influencing personnel appointments, through to outright censorship.

In print, state-owned newspapers are now in competition with commercial ventures, some of which are funded by global interests. In telecommunications, monopoly providers dominate the public switched telephone networks (PSTN) of the region. In South Africa, the state owned PSTN monopoly, Telkom, is playing a major role in upgrading and standardizing other sub-continental infrastructures, even as it takes on board private international investment partners. As in many other regions, trends towards privatization involve mobile service providers. Private cellular providers offer what is increasingly seen as parallel telephony services, often in partnership with the state-owned landline providers. Vodacom and the South African Broadcasting Corporation introduced a cellular phone service, Newsbreak, to South Africa in 1999, to Zimbabwe in late 2000, and to Nigeria in 2001 (Sandison, 2002).

Countries previously without television, such as Malawi and Botswana (Fako and Nyamnjoh, 2000), introduced fledgling services after 2000. A UNESCO project introduced over 50 community radio stations to Mozambique between 1998 and 2002 (Jallov, nd.). DStv broadcasts via satellite to most Anglophone countries in Africa (cf. Banda, 2001). Within all SADC countries, issues of freedom of the press have been hotly re-ignited by de-regulation and re-
regulation policies, as well as by liberalization of national economies. The 1991 Windhoek Declaration set the scene, but on the 2001 anniversary month marking a decade of its instatement, there were to be ironic developments. Among these was the resignation of the new Botswana TV head over a government instruction not to screen a documentary on capital punishment, still legal in that country. There were also continued state-sponsored attacks on the independent press in Zimbabwe, and the Namibian government's denigration of the Declaration by applying stringent restrictions on delegates and on what they could report, at the Windhoek Declaration celebrations (Freepress, May 2001). On the eve of the 10th anniversary, the Namibian government also imposed a ban on state advertising in, and purchases of, that country's largest selling newspaper because of "its critical coverage of government policies and actions". Swaziland banned a newspaper and a magazine (cf. Mogekwe, 2002), and Malawi arrested newspaper vendors selling newspapers which published columnists critical of the president's desire for a third term. These restrictions all occurred within a few weeks of the Windhoek Declaration celebrations in May 2001. The South African government and a group of eleven black professionals accused the media of conducting a malicious campaign of hatred against that country's President. The growing tendency on the part of some Southern African governments to visibly flout press freedom and other human rights is now coming into collision with a belated realization that, under globalization, power and policy-making are becoming less confined to the national domain. A vigorously independent media is an intrinsic part of the public sphere, one which all governments need to get used to. In general terms, the following processes have been emerging after the demise of apartheid and the Cold War from 1990 onwards:

- globalization of ownership and control, with foreign interests purchasing shares in local media, and local media in some countries acquiring international interests;
- black empowerment, especially in South Africa, where union-dominated capital now owns shares in a variety of major media industries;
- State-controlled media coming into conflict with new privately run media, which are often more critical of government;
- privatization, by which governments have sold off blocs of shares in publicly owned media entities to commercial investors - local and international.

In debates around freedom of expression, some countries have managed to preserve a reputation for being progressive beacons when compared to regressive processes occurring in other countries. In addition, with increasing global pressures for human rights come increased demands for accountability. At the same time media are coming under severe domestic pressure to work within 'nation-building' and developmental media discourses, which sometimes mask the political imperatives of ruling parties.
The contributions in this book emanated originally from an international research seminar on Political Economy of the Southern African Media held at the University of Natal, Durban, South Africa in April 2000. The Seminar was co-sponsored by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) as part of its series of regional symposia on media ownership. WACC’s counterparts in hosting the event were University of Natal’s Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies (CMS), which served as the lead organiser, and the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa. These and other partners are seeking to build a more active working relationship among Southern African universities and academics, media firms and practitioners, and to link with counterparts in other regions of the world.

The April 2000 Seminar was preceded by an earlier conference on “Identities, Democracy, Culture and Communication in Southern Africa” held in January 1996, sponsored by the University of Oslo, the journal Media, Culture and Society, and CMS. It too brought together media studies scholars from South Africa, Zimbabwe, the UK and Norway and established a research network linking scholars from these countries (Teer-Tomaselli, 1997; Waldahl, 1998).

The more recent engagements were therefore building on this foundation, expressing a similar recognition of the need for parallel interventions drawn from other regions or written from a more global perspective. Accordingly, what has become a seminar series has already incorporated other valuable inputs from researchers and academic institutions in the Caribbean, Europe and the United States. These efforts to facilitate capacity building and networking in global level media research will doubtless help to secure the wider dissemination of African research and publications within global contexts.

This book, as the seminars before it, is dedicated to advancing this dialogue towards a wider regional and global analysis and understanding of the economic, social and political factors affecting media in Southern Africa and other countries of the global south. The on-going discussion has already been documented in many forms. Apart from this book, a special edition of Media Development (2/2001) presented some of the papers from the 2000 seminar, and numerous other related articles were published in other journals (cf. Rama, 2000; Forbes, 2002), with some still to come.

The Media Development special issue offers articles of a mainly descriptive nature, providing detailed information on current developments in media ownership and control, issues of press freedom and specific national case studies. They should be read in their own right for their high degree of contextual empirical information, but can also be read in relation to the more theoretical interventions and historical perspectives presented here.

Among seminar participants, there was widespread recognition of the need for more regionally focused analyses and publications. One participant, Jackson Banda, had earlier (1998) compiled one of the few books dealing with Southern Africa as a whole. Titled Up in the Air? The State of Broadcasting in Southern Africa, it gives a variety of data and brief overviews relating to population, area,
GNP, literacy, media pluralism, newspaper distribution, legal and regulatory frameworks and language policies in six SADC countries. This useful compilation followed Francis Kasoma's (1992) *Communication Policies in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland*. These two multi-country studies are supplemented by a variety of national evaluations published by the Universities of Oslo/Zimbabwe and University of Natal/Anthropos. Other publications include books by Francis Kasoma (1984) on the press in Zambia (see also Phiri, 1999), James Zaffiro on broadcasting in Zimbabwe (2001) and Botswana (1991), and research theses by Sandile Similane (1995) on Swaziland, Lebogang Lejekane (1997), Patrick Bereng (2001) and Thato Foko (2001) on Lesotho, and Bright Phiri (2001) on community radio in Zambia. William Heuva's (2001) study of the alternative press in Namibia continues a tradition of research into oppositional media movements (cf. Switzer, 1979, Switzer et al 1997, 2000; Tomaselli and Louw, 1991; Louw, 1993). These and others form a growing corpus of important indigenous research work and publications produced in cooperation with international scholars and publishers. The studies examine both historical and contemporary processes relating to media and democracy, ownership and control, and issues of regulation and freedom of expression.

Despite the considerable work being conducted in and on each of the SADC countries, however, little African scholarship evidences a transnational, regional emphasis, where interrelations are examined. The majority of existing research tends to be nation-specific, and therefore lacking in consideration of the broader regional and global processes now having their impact in the SADC area.

*Media Democracy and Renewal in Southern Africa* thus aims to contribute to the application, re-constitution and development of theories of political economy and related discourses on regulation and policy in the wider Southern African and global contexts. The theory building is offered in relation to much broader issues and emerging trends, including globalization and localization of media and indigenous cultural practices. The chapters by Hopeton Dunn and Clive Barnett respectively on global issues, and by John Barker on the SADC region provide useful analytical frameworks for consideration of pan-regional and global policy trends, with particular reference to the imperatives of the Global South.

Contributors from Europe, [Scannell (2001), Ronning (2000), and Grøtan and Svendsen (2001)] also responded to this need; their papers complement the many indigenous ones discussing national, sectoral or institutional developments in Southern Africa. While received Western theories of political economy tend to over-emphasize structure at the expense of human agency and experience, the book's authors examine how people, communities and cultures negotiate global processes and structures in pre-modern, modern and post-modern contexts. Even the remotest African community evidences aspects of all three periodizations. This comes through loudly and clearly in the chapters authored by David Kerr and by Gibson Boloka. Deriving from the dialogical organization of the 2000
Seminar, the engagements of Kerr and Boloka by Diedre Donnelly and Anthea Simoes, dramatically open up the previously unelaborated analytical spaces which account for the nature of social and cultural action between the global and the local. They provide ways of understanding local negotiations of global processes, and also suggest strategies for continuing this interstitial research in which ordinary, often marginalized people and communities in remote areas can actively contribute to discourses and explanations provided by the political economy paradigm. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli’s chapter defining ‘the community’ in community radio in Durban makes a valuable further contribution to this discourse. Where is the ‘community’ in community radio, she asks.

**Culture, Context and Globalization**

All the publications arising out of the April 2000 Seminar have been thematically structured to reflect the relations between core and periphery, the global and the local, and to encourage trans-national and global-level research. They are intended as an active intervention in revitalizing media research in Southern Africa and other parts of the underdeveloped world. By critically engaging and incorporating Western concepts, theories and methods within African and Caribbean contexts, these publications will hopefully be of benefit to academic research, public policy analysis and planning within the wider industry.

While the contributions often challenge and interrogate received paradigms - whether American, European, Russian or others, this book and the other publications associated with the 2000 Seminar do not seek to inculcate essentialist or narrow Afro-centric approaches. Instead, they seek to encourage the development of interventions which are sensitive to context, history, geography and national development periodizations. These social elements are not the same in any locus - in the West, the East or the North. Neither are they the same even within the same regions, within continents or within countries. The authoritative chapter by Teer-Tomaselli and Keyan Tomaselli exemplifies this approach by etching the post-apartheid South African media landscape within its historical and political contexts. A more detailed texture of this media landscape is then offered by Guy Berger.

If the emerging field of cultural studies examines agency and resistance in relation to imperialism and imposition, then the prime object of study must be the nature of the engagement. It needs also to assess the outcomes of such encounters, and the ways in which the local is reconstituted in relation to the global, and *vice versa*. Hegemony is always negotiated, it is never complete. Culture is always appropriated, dis-articulated and re-articulated into new and different contexts, ways of making sense, and forms of expression. It is never monolithic or total. Ideology is always subject to contradictions, disembodiment and re-incorporation. Its work is never done, no matter the class, constituency or group in power.

The analyses of the Zimbabwean situation by Susan Manhando-Makore (2001, and Tim Nyahunzvi (2001) are clear testimony to the nature and vicissitudes of the relations between domination and resistance.
Within the South African context, Farhana Goga’s revealing research on gender and race in media institutions (see also Goga, 2000) and Berger’s extensive analysis of “De-racialization, Democracy and Development” address issues of transformation and prevailing social inequalities in the post-apartheid era. These issues are given an even sharper edge by Jane Duncan’s penetrating analysis, intriguingly entitled ‘Talk Left, Act Right’. Together these contributions question what really constitutes ‘transformation’ or ‘renewal’ in South African media.

Applying similar notions to the print media, Sonja Laden explores the concept of a cultural economy by examining both the text and subtext in Consumer Magazines for Black South Africans (see also Laden, 1997). The book ends with Andy Mason's poetic engagement of Kaitira Kandjii's article on Namibia. His response re-engages the broader trans-national issues raised by both Barnett and Barker, in the context of a single country.

ENDNOTES
1 These are contained in two book series: a) Studies on the South African Media published by Anthropos in association with James Currey (and later, Intervention Press). The early titles of this series were partly subsidized by WACC. They are now being reprinted for the US market by International Academic Publishers; and b) The University of Oslo's series, on Zimbabwean media published in association with the University of Zimbabwe Media Studies Programme.

REFERENCES


Part I

ISSUES OF POLICY AND LEGISLATION
Chapter 2

IS NO POLICY A POLICY GOAL?

JOHN M BARKER

The Windhoek Declaration on ‘Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press’ has often been cited as the raison d’être of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). The Declaration speaks of a proliferation of non-governmental and community based media. However, MISA and its founding members primarily focused on the establishment of a sustainable commercial press, independent from government ownership and control, as the means to achieving pluralism. Little of a practical nature was undertaken to promote the community, rural or indigenous language media that would form the pluralistic and diverse media landscape envisioned in the Windhoek Declaration.

In a commercial media landscape, pluralism and independence are not necessarily mutually inclusive. The economics of media enterprises often dictate ‘corporatization’ and/or the establishment of monopolistic practices. This is particularly true of the struggling economies of southern Africa characterized by their small advertising markets. These challenges to pluralism are more noticeable when applied to a liberalized broadcasting sector. As primarily an entertainment medium, commercial broadcasting can proliferate without any necessity for the inclusion of news, current affairs and with the total absence of local information.

The region lacks policies for the promotion of comprehensive, in-depth and impartial news and information coverage – particularly at the local level. What is required is a media environment that ensures access to minorities and provides culturally relevant information in local languages. This is true of both governments and non-governmental organizations such as MISA. Governments are nervous about losing their influence over the news agenda, and non-governmental organizations are slow in opening up debate on the effects of private ownership and control. Thus, the outcome of liberalization in southern Africa has been an opening up of markets to private enterprise, often in a complete policy vacuum, with no regard for the promotion of diversity of ownership and information pluralism. In some countries, information pluralism has been further eroded by an accompanying removal of subsidies, particularly from public broadcasters, forcing them to become more or less commercially orientated.

Background

Recent trends in media and communication have included a growing concentration of media ownership, including technological convergence between telecommunications and broadcasting and the elevation of information as a fundamental constituent of economic development. Governments have placed the future of their communication and information industries at the top of their
political agendas and in the formation of economic and industrial policy (Garnham, 1990). The ‘Telecommunications Policy and Regulatory Framework for Namibia’, passed in late 1999 states:

Telecommunications is one element in the development of a nation’s information and communications infrastructure and must be put into the perspective of the overall information technology strategy. There are changes occurring in technology which are causing a convergence among computing, telecommunications, media and broadcasting to form the information infrastructure as well as the globalization of telecommunications. These are bringing enormous changes to how economies and societies are organized across the world. Namibia must meet this challenge by adapting the telecommunications policy and regulation to make sure it makes use of the possibilities in time to become a successful nation in the global environment.

It is for this reason that we find governments in southern Africa engaged, in varying degrees, in the liberalization of their telecommunications and broadcasting industries. The trend follows an earlier move towards the establishment of market economies and multi-party democracies, which came after the demise of the Soviet Union. This earlier ‘liberalization’ concentrated on the establishment of a free and independent print media: many donor countries and multilateral agencies insisted that development assistance to governments in the region be tied to progress in establishing a free press and other signs of good governance.

The issues of deregulation, privatization and liberalization and the subsequent decline in the public sector have been in the foreground of recent writings on the political economy of the media. Many see this as part of the general move towards globalization and an inevitable result of the expansion of capitalism. Essential propositions of this viewpoint are:

- Economic control and logic is dominant.
- Media structures tend towards concentration.
- Global integration of media developing.
- Content and audiences are commodified.
- Diversity decreases.
- Opposition and alternative voices are marginalized.
- Public interest in communication is subordinated to private interests. (McQuail, 1994)

Hamelink (1994) has confirmed these propositions by identifying four key trends in world communications: digitalization, consolidation, deregulation and globalization. Digitalization is also an important factor in the “restructuring of the corporate playing field.” (Murdock, 1990). However, Murdock warns that we must not “overstress” the importance of technological innovation, as
technology is only an element of the overall trend towards deregulation and privatization.

Recently there has been a re-evaluation of the developmentalist agenda, especially by academics and democratic media practitioners from South America. They argue that underdevelopment is a process that involves, among others, “dependent industrialization”, “imported consumption patterns” and “income concentration.” These patterns may be familiar to those living in southern African countries. Based on his research in Brazil, Oliveira concluded that national media systems are controlled by national elites with close ties to international capital. These elites depend on northern countries for technology and support international capital through programming that largely promotes consumerist values for items and lifestyles. This involves surveying of commodities that the overwhelming majority of the population cannot afford to obtain. Media are important in promoting this consumerist environment and the media itself has become part of the overall process, through the extension of dependency on northern countries, for new information and communications technologies. This is particularly true of telecommunications, the Internet and digital technology, which in addition to nurturing technological dependency, can strengthen dependency on the media itself. Defenders of the developmentalist view have therefore revised their perspective to better respond to their recognition that the outcome of years of promoting development has resulted in little success. Specifically, this revisionist version of the developmentalist view shifts enthusiastic support from mass media to new communication and information technologies... arguing that development actually requires the construction of telecommunications and computer communication infrastructure (Mosco, 1996). This view is supported by recent shifts in southern Africa, by donor initiatives, away from supporting the development of newspapers and media infrastructure, to projects such as the promotion of telecenters or the support of liberalization initiatives in general.

**Windhoek Declaration**

The first stage of media liberalization in the region was marked by a gathering of African journalists and representatives of the world’s leading press freedom organizations in Windhoek, Namibia who on May 3, 1991, declared:

1. Consistent with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development.
2. By an independent press, we mean a press independent from governmental, political or economic control, or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.
3. By a pluralistic press, we mean the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community.

The Windhoek Declaration on “Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press” is a historical document. It arguably contains the most precise and simply formulated definitions on media freedom and pluralism to be found among the plethora of international press freedom declarations.

The Declaration contains many more clauses, but the first three provide the principles for free, independent and pluralistic media in both the public and private sectors. It was quickly recognized as groundbreaking stuff, and sincere supporters of press freedom, as well as those seeking to capitalize for political gain fell over each other with endorsements. The scramble included UNESCO, the member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and many more governments in Africa. The enthusiasm did not stop there. The Declaration spawned many copies adapted to the needs of journalists in other regions of the world. In December 1993 the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 48/432 that proclaimed May 3 as World Press Freedom Day.

MISA, the flag bearer of the Windhoek Declaration in the SADC region, was established in 1992 and became a true regional organization in 1994. The institution drew up its first plan of action and developed activities based on the practical recommendations of the Windhoek Declaration. Many of these activities concentrated on the economic viability and sustainability of media and were influenced by a dominant liberal pluralist assumption on the role of the press. It was assumed that the establishment of a commercial press, independent of government ownership and control, was the solution to gaining media diversity and pluralism in a fast changing region. MISA adopted several resolutions to promote community, rural or indigenous language media. But in practice, it did very little to promote this as a prerequisite for the diverse media landscape envisioned in the Windhoek Declaration.

Ownership and Control

It is only recently that media freedom activists in the region have questioned the ability and willingness of an unregulated and privately owned press to deliver diversity of ownership and pluralism of views.

Internationally, some academics have pointed out, that with the transformation of media organizations into large scale commercial organizations, freedom of expression has been confronted by a new threat, a threat stemming not from excessive use of State power, but rather from the unhindered growth of media organizations as commercial concerns. This view does not presuppose that the free market approach to economic activity is the best guarantor of freedom of expression, since an unregulated market may develop in a way which effectively reduces diversity and limits the capacity of most individuals to make their views heard (Thompson, 1995).
Training and nurturing of media managers in the region has been so successful that a few media enterprises (admittedly only a handful) are fast approaching the status of monopolies or strong conglomerates in their respective countries. These groups are now in the process of becoming cross media corporations with several newspapers, radio stations and even television stations as part of their stables. Should some of these media groups continue their dramatic increase in fortune, they will no doubt be in violation of the second and third clauses of the Windhoek Declaration.

However, the overwhelming majority of the media in southern Africa consists of newspapers and journalists who survive from week to week. They scarcely generate enough income to keep their heads above water. They frequently operate in marginal economies where much of the private sector (not only the public sector) is controlled by the state through ownership of parastatal companies or companies owned by government ministers, their wives or relatives and high-ranking civil servants. It is arguably the case that some MISA members also fit this definition of ‘private,’ or at the very least, self-censor themselves so as not to face the threat of advertising being withdrawn from or not extended to them from both the private and public sectors.

It is time that media freedom activists in southern Africa begin to consider the media in terms of its economic determination. They should recognize that the content of their media is primarily determined by the economic base of the organizations in which they are produced (Gurevitch et. al., 1982). We should not only concern ourselves with ownership (political party, politicians or government), but also recognize that commercial media organizations essentially cater for the needs of advertisers and produce audience-maximizing products. In countries where the market is strongly controlled by government interests, the tendency will be for both private and public media to gravitate towards a careful and safe middle ground from a content point of view. As the private media become strong enterprises, we must recognize that they tend to reward market position with a privileged status within the social hierarchy. Media enterprises may then wish to use their newly found power to preserve their privileged status against challengers (Mosco, 1996).

The emphasis on financial sustainability has recently led to some contradictions within the media freedom environment in the region. For instance, funding of re-broadcast transmitters for commercial stations, and in some cases commercial stations themselves, by the Southern African Media Development Fund (SAMDEF) has put under threat the establishment and further development of a more local and community led broadcasting environment. MISA’s Legal Defense Fund has also funded the MISA Tanzania Chapter to challenge the Tanzanian Broadcasting Commission’s policy of not issuing national private broadcasting licenses. The Chapter is using freedom of expression clauses in the Tanzanian constitution to challenge among others Section 11 (3) (d) of the Broadcasting Services Act of 1993, which provides that:
Where the Commission decides to grant an application, it may attach conditions to the license in relation to the location of a transmitter station, where applicable and the specific geographical area to which the broadcast may be made.

Those advocating the introduction of ‘regulated pluralism’ in the broadcasting sector view the use of the same powers as a way to ensure the development of true local and community led broadcasting services. The only people benefiting from such a removal of power from the regulator would be those commercial broadcasters who wish to reap profit from reaching a national advertising base.

**Liberalization and Commercialization**

Currently the governments of southern Africa are engaged in a new process of liberalization and privatization. This time, it is taking place in the area of broadcasting and telecommunications, due to a perceived need to expand their communications industries. International players are also active in persuading governments of the ‘advantages’ of privatization, such as the ability to reduce government subsidies, increased tax and license revenue and the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture. This view is well expressed in a recent draft of Botswana’s ‘National Broadcasting Policy’:

The formulation of national broadcasting policy for Botswana takes place against the continuing cultural and economic development of the country. The development of the economy is crucial to the success of a young and growing broadcasting market. New market opportunities promote and contribute to economic development (1999).

Privatized broadcasting media typically reduce the proportion of time devoted to news and public affairs. They may also appear less challenging and more politically compliant (Boyd-Barrett, 1995). Is it for this reason that most governments in the region are happy to allow a free-market development of broadcasting and have not developed any policy or regulatory instruments to specifically encourage pluralism and diversity? The “sluggish approach to instituting appropriate regulatory mechanisms for the broadcasting sector” suggests a lack of political will to hand over power to an independent body that can “sharpen and shape the broadcasting landscape to become representative of wider society” (Opoku-Mensah, 1996). Recent trends in Namibia appear to support this view. The ‘Telecommunications Policy and Regulatory Framework for Namibia,’ recognizes the need for an independent regulator for telecommunications (and by implication, for broadcasting) and calls for the review of all telecommunications and broadcasting legislation. The review for telecommunications legislation has involved a number of stakeholder consultations. There has been no similar stakeholder consultation in the process for legislative reform in broadcasting. The Namibian Ministry of Information
and Broadcasting has also rejected calls from the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) for the establishment of an independent board.

Liberalization is intended to introduce competition into markets that were previously only served by the state or public sector. This has happened, to varying degrees, to the broadcasting sector in southern Africa and we have seen an opening up to competition from new private commercial broadcasters. It has been argued that the liberalization of broadcasting in Europe has led to a sharp rise in imported content (Murdock, 1990). This is due, both to the economics of local production and to the fact that new distribution systems outstrip the supply of local programming. When the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) began what has been dubbed its ‘pseudo-liberalization’ by leasing out its second television station to private operators, Joy TV bought up virtually all-available independent southern African production, only to run out of material in a matter of days. So, with the introduction of pay-television services and commercial music radio stations, and the absence of any local programming quotas or incentives, liberalization in the southern African region has indeed given rise to an increase in imported programming.

The commercialization of the public sector has been the typical response to the crisis of introducing competition into markets that previously enjoyed a monopoly position. Faced with rising costs and decreasing government subsidies, or the stopping of subsidies altogether, the intensification of commercialization has become an imperative for public broadcasters throughout the region. As public broadcasters develop increasing commercial imperatives, information and educational programming decreases.

A recent study of the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) radio service has indicated that an increased commercial imperative and reliance on sponsored programs has led to a reduction of programming orientated towards the poor and rural dwellers. In the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, as is now the case with many national broadcasters in the region, the lines separating programs from product or corporate promotion have become increasingly blurred. It is possible in countries such as Malawi and Zambia to buy prime-time programming slots on the public broadcaster in which to broadcast private productions. In some cases, these private initiatives have been able to sell their own advertising spots and keep the income. A few years ago the MISA Malawi Chapter paid the MBC to record and broadcast a round table discussion with MBC executives over the future editorial independence of the corporation. This trend does give much encouragement to those who are working to introduce editorial independence and integrity into national broadcasting systems throughout the region.

The move towards commercialization is part of a much wider re-gearing of the regulatory environment known as re-regulation. Re-regulation often referred to as deregulation is a ‘misnomer’. What is at stake is not so much the number of rules but the shift in their overall rationale away from a defense of the public interest (however that was conceived) and towards the promotion of corporate interests (Murdock, 1990). Again to quote the draft Botswana ‘National Broadcasting Policy’:
The authority acknowledges that in granting commercial licenses, it took account of market conditions that did not allow for advertising revenue to be siphoned off to other broadcasters, including state-funded broadcasters...Within this context, the Authority cannot permit other categories of broadcasters, like television, to diminish the available advertising revenue. Until the advertising is significantly expanded in the broadcasting arena, the authority will need to ensure that commercial licensees enjoy a measure of protection insofar as the advertising and sponsorship revenue streams are concerned (1999).

Ironically, to achieve this aim, the draft policy suggests a prohibition on advertising on the public broadcaster, and the establishment of a fund to assist community stations so that they do not have to rely on advertising income. However, the fact remains that communications enterprises can benefit considerably from the absence of rules designed to prevent undue concentration in the market place, promote editorial integrity and to ensure diversity of expression. They are also gaining through the tendency of countries such as Namibia and Zambia to grant re-broadcast licenses to capital city based stations, by being able to increase their potential listenership base without the costs of setting up new studios or producing locally relevant programming.

**Public vs. Private Broadcasting**

Public broadcasting has often come under criticism due to direct links to the state or the endless opportunities for direct or indirect state intervention in its content. Nonetheless, the erosion of the public service principles of the public broadcaster is of considerable concern. The undermining of public broadcasting by the process of commercialization has major implications for the quality of public debate (Boyd-Barrett, 1995). It is difficult to see how a system dominated by private ownership can guarantee the diversity of information and argument required for the proper functioning of democracy. According to Neuman (1992), “the economics of mass communications do not promote diversity.” He argues that the structure of media institutions will always lead to uniformity in content and worldview.

This is not a view that all may agree with. Many will say that the problem with state-owned broadcasters in our region has been their control, the broadcaster being predominantly used as the voice of government and/or the ruling party. They have also been suppressing pluralism in political and development debate, and even denying cultural pluralism by refusing access to different ethnic groups or those groups who do not traditionally vote for the ruling party. Therefore, those supporting an increased role for public broadcasting may be seen as promoting a view based on the first world, mainly Western European context, where public broadcasters are largely doing the right thing in terms of cultural pluralism. In the European context, the commercialization of public broadcasters can be seen as a threat to pluralism. Is this true of southern Africa? The current
focus of advocacy efforts in the region is for the independence of public broadcasters (to erode the influence of government) so that they can freely practise pluralism and do their overall democratic public duty free from political interference. These efforts are also seeking to introduce a regulatory environment that will protect such public broadcasters. But if state control cannot be removed from public broadcasters, is privatization a better option? Many see it that way.

Still, the regional realities do seem to bear out that introducing competition into the sector does not in itself promote pluralism. This does not mean different, it means the same basic commodity appearing in different markets and in a variety of packages (Murdock, 1990). In an examination of media ownership, Murdock concludes that by eroding the power of 'public cultural institutions', privatization has led to a widening of the gap between the number of voices in society and the number heard in the media. He points out that direct and indirect intervention by owners to influence media can 'undermine the press's role as a fourth estate. So simple privatization of broadcasting is not enough. Nor is the decision to commercialize public broadcasting on its own enough to ensure that all citizens have a diversity of information sources to draw on. We may simply see an increase in imported programming and still have governmental interference in news and current affairs reporting.

Outreach would also be affected, as the market will tend to concentrate resources in the richest, urban areas. Only regulation and/or government subsidy will ensure universal access. In a commercialized environment, advertisers (many being 'governmental' in one way or the other) may wish to control the content of programs, and because advertising financed broadcasting delivers audiences to advertisers, rather than programs to audiences, regulation is needed. If we do take the road to an increase in the commercialization of public broadcasting, more, not less regulation will be needed. However, if we cannot successfully advocate for independent regulation and editorial independence, will we be successful in advocating for true public service obligations on commercial broadcasters? In a total free market environment, we may see less rather than more diversity and pluralism of views.

How can this contradiction between the move towards consolidation of private ownership and pluralism be approached? To ensure that minority audiences are served by the commercial sector will require incentives from foundations, government institutions and other sources (Neuman, 1992). Some forms of “cultural processes will have to continue to be undertaken by the direct transfer of resources” (Garnham, 1990). The public broadcasting entities will need to be sustained by individuals or groups, perhaps by tax concessions or by support channeled through charitable foundations or by state subsidy. With many in the southern African region believing in the old adage, ‘he who pays the piper calls the tune’, it is hard for people to imagine that government can pay for something without controlling it. Nevertheless, others consider government subsidies as the only way in which local and community led broadcasting can be developed. The Botswana draft National Broadcasting Policy states:
The public interest is served when the market is able to bear the cost of [local] productions and provide reasonable return rates on production for the producers and broadcasters (1999).

However, the policy does not leave this role to market forces alone. It suggests that any surpluses made by the public broadcaster should be used for the development of the local production industry. It gives options for the introduction of ‘quality programming’ requirements and quotas for “categories of information, local music or local programming.” It also talks of the possibility of broadcasters contributing towards a fund for local productions. In the area of community media, the draft framework suggests state assistance for signal distribution and the establishment of a development trust to “provide financial assistance for infrastructure, set-up costs, training and running expenses”. It even proposes that the trust be independent and that it seeks to obtain funds from “a variety of sources including government, business and donor agencies.”

If government subsidy is needed, it is the establishment of independent mechanisms that will make it possible for governments to provide funds without directly controlling the media. South Africa is a good example with its Independent Communications Authority, Independent Regulatory Authority and Media Development Agency. The added safeguard comes from the public nominating the Board (in a transparent process) and the Parliament appointing the Board from these nominations. These institutions are also required to make policy which involves extensive and transparent public consultation (public and open hearings). Therefore, it is possible that the ‘piper’ will not be the only one to call the tune.

But, what is the reality? In Namibia the current Act governing the granting of private broadcasting licenses gives preference to the licensing of community broadcasters, yet the regulator does not even have a working definition for community broadcasting, let alone a regulatory framework for its work. In the year 2000, five community radio licenses were in force: three to capital citywide broadcasters controlled by a not-for-profit NGO, the University and the Catholic Church respectively; a community license and several re-broadcast licenses to a Christian station run by Media for Christ and one to a station in the north of the country established by the Ministry of Information, and managed by staff seconded from the ministry. One community television license was granted to a station in Rehoboth but the station defaulted on an annual license fee, as the price was restrictive. The Namibian government did pass a Film Commission Act in early 2000 that sets up a local production fund, but the fund is not independent of government and it is not yet clear how the fund will source appropriate funding. Even the draft Botswana framework for all its positive and forward looking objectives and definitions, does not tackle a fundamental flaw in the Botswana broadcasting system, the fact that the public broadcaster is a department of the government and enjoys no independence.
There are now calls for a ‘regulated pluralism’ as an alternative approach. This view considers that in order to stimulate media that are neither part of the state nor dependent on the market, it is necessary to regulate market processes in such a way that diversity and pluralism are not undermined by the concentration of economic and symbolic power. This regulation would include restrictive legislation to limit mergers, take-overs and cross ownership (Thompson, 1995). “In order to fight the negative effects of monopolization” the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has continuously called on the political bodies to propose legislation curbing the concentration of media ownership. They propose a number of controls, together with enabling legislation, to create an environment in which smaller independent media organizations can thrive.

This is in some part the process in which proponents of press freedom in southern Africa are engaged. Whilst realizing that resistance to the process of liberalization is pointless, and that state control of the media is unacceptable, activists are beginning to engage in lobbying for a policy and legislative framework that would protect the public interest, ensure pluralism and promote a diverse media. This includes the development of community-based media and viable, editorially independent and preferably decentralized public media.

Without this engagement, the current policy of “no policy” can only play into the hands of those governments that do not wish to see an expansion and strengthening of a pluralistic and diverse media. We will have a proliferation of commercial capital city based radio stations, with governments still influencing the news and current affairs agenda through control of the national broadcasters. If these governments are finally coerced into transforming the state controlled broadcasters into true public service entities, the “no policy” card will still pay off. We may well experience commercial national broadcasters introduced on to the scene. It is likely that these broadcasters will be controlled by wealthy party functionaries or even in some countries the ruling party itself. The newly created public broadcasters will be left to compete against these entertainment based commercial stations, lacking any government support or subsidy to meet their public service mandates. All this hailed in the name of ‘free market’ economics.

ENDNOTES
1 Reference to the work of Omar Oliviera from Brazil is from Mosco, 1996.

REFERENCES


Chapter 3

TALK LEFT, ACT RIGHT: WHAT CONSTITUTES TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN MEDIA?

JANE DUNCAN

Media and Unemployment

Since 1994 South Africa has witnessed the most remarkable changes in the media and in society generally. In broadcasting especially, there has been an efflorescence of new stations, and changes in ownership of existing stations. A completely new layer of community media has taken root in an extremely short space of time. The South African Broadcasting Corporation has made great strides in transforming itself from a state to a public broadcaster, and in the process it has implemented one of the most aggressive affirmative action programmes yet seen in a public entity. Important changes have taken place to print ownership as well, with foreign ownership taking root and black empowerment consortia having taken over significant sections of the media. Yet at the same time, racism and sexism persist in the media, as they continue to exist in society generally; in fact, allegations that the media are not keeping up with the general transformation of society persist. How can things be so different from the past, yet so much the same?

Possibly the most significant challenge facing South Africa is unemployment. Very little has been said though, about the impact of unemployment on media transformation, and specifically on media access. South Africa is not unique in experiencing this problem; globally unemployment levels are rising. The problem is especially acute in the region and on the continent. In April 2000, the unemployment figure in South Africa stood at approximately 37% (in terms of the Statistics South Africa’s expanded definition), and rising. In fact, unemployment was at its highest level in sixteen years. The private sector had spearheaded the employment cuts. However, mass unemployment did not begin in 1994. Between 1990 and 1993, over 400,000 jobs were lost. Since 1994, though, over 492,000 jobs were shed in every sector of the economy (Ray, 19/12/1999:5). Job losses were especially acute among women. Also, many more people were experiencing underemployment, casual and seasonal employment, again especially women. The result is that formal full time jobs are becoming more and more scarce.

Why is unemployment rising so rapidly? The official reason is that globalisation requires the South African economy to integrate with the rest of the world economy. In the process it needs to adjust itself to operating on a global scale. The government is supposedly withdrawing from the economy through cutting spending, commercializing and privatizing public services, and encouraging the establishment of private competitors through liberalizing and de-regulating the
economy. They argue that industries will not survive simply by attempting to produce for domestic markets, and that they need to be restructured to make them internationally competitive: those industries that cannot make the grade should be allowed to wither away, with resources being redirected to those that can. The government projects this as a painful but necessary process of structural adjustment to ensure growth and employment in the future: in short, we need to tighten our belts before we loosen them. The liberalization of exchange controls at breakneck speed also led to substantial job losses in the clothing, textile and footwear industries, which employ mainly women: in fact, these industries could all but disappear.

What do these shocking unemployment levels mean for the South African media? One effect that it may have is to shrink the advertising market. In 1999, national adspend grew by just over 10%, which was the worst performance by the industry since 1985 (the year that unemployment peaked). Nine of the top 30 advertising agencies experienced negative growth (Koenderman, 2000:80). As a result, commercial media - which survive mainly off advertising revenue - will have to compete more fiercely for advertising, which means investing more heavily in sales and marketing. In effect, the cost of media rises, leading to an inflationary spiral. The cost of advertising becomes transferred onto consumers in the form of price increases for consumer goods: a burden which will be borne disproportionately by the poor.

In any event, increasing unemployment reduces peoples’ access to markets, as their spending power contracts. This is especially so with respect to women, who are simply not going to attract the kind of ad-spend necessary to make commercial services take their needs seriously. In fact, it seems that in our current situation, the more the media become driven by commercial considerations, the more women will be marginalized (see Goga in this volume).

Given the rise in unemployment levels, non-commercial forms of media like the public service stations of the SABC and community radio stations should assume particular importance, as they are not driven primarily by the need to deliver audiences to advertisers. According to research commissioned by the SABC in 1995, SABC radio stations were the most heavily used media of all by women [CASE, 1995]. Hence, it seems to be especially important to protect and promote these tiers of broadcasting, especially from a gender equity point of view. These challenges also imply the need for a strong regulator, which is able to ensure the promotion of these services.

**The SABC and Commercialization**

The SABC has undergone remarkable changes in recent years. It instituted the most aggressive affirmative action programme yet seen. It developed and proceeded to implement transformation strategies in key areas such as programming, news and current affairs, in terms of its newly-adopted public service mandate. It set about significantly upgrading its public service stations. These changes marked a radical
break with the ethos of the old apartheid-era state broadcaster (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998).

Less well acknowledged are the continuities between the old and the new order, involving an eerie convergence of interests around the commercialization of the SABC. The Corporation has always been inordinately dependent on advertising, relative to other public (and even state) broadcasters in other countries. This reality has and still does severely curtail the Corporation’s ability to become a bona fide public broadcaster. As far back as the 1980s, the Corporation’s management recognized that this revenue stream would come under increasing pressure, as the winds of liberalization sweeping other parts of the world would inevitably reach South Africa. Once this happened, the Corporation would face competition: a possibility that it was ill-equipped to face. As a result, restructuring ensued in the 1980s when the-then management divided the Corporation into business units, and introducing managerialist techniques to manage the Corporation. In effecting these changes, the SABC’s management borrowed ideas from Margaret Thatcher in her commercialization of the national health service: in the words of the Chief Executive Officer, Wynand Harmse, the intention was to “shift the emphasis from a bureaucratic corporation to an effective, commercialised, market-orientated entity” (SABC Annual Report, 1991/2:10). Already, at that stage, the possibility of privatizing a number of its services was floated, which should not be surprising as the internal logic of commercialization propels a public service towards privatization.

The SABC was one of the first institutions to experience privatization under the new democratically-elected government. The sale of the six public commercial radio stations may have increased diversity by adding to the growing number of private radio stations involving black ownership, but it had a disastrous effect on the Corporation’s finances. The retention by the government of the proceeds from the sales, coupled with the loss of income from the stations, fuelled a financial crisis that led to the employment of the slash-and-burn international change management consultants, McKinsey and Associates. Notorious in other parts of the world for slashing and burning public service mandates, it helped to turn the Corporation’s finances around by decreasing the level of local content, and increasing the use of English to maximise advertising revenue. Around this time, the SABC also redefined its own core business, downsizing it from full spectrum programming to news and current affairs: everything else was defined as a ‘non-core’ function that could be outsourced.

The SABC in 2000 underwent another round of restructuring, to bring the Corporation in line with the recently-adopted Broadcasting Act. Government’s intention in promulgating this Act was clearly to set the SABC on the road to self-sufficiency, as it is not willing to foot the R2 billion bill through an ongoing government grant. In terms of the Act, the SABC was being corporatized and divided into commercial and non-commercial arms. The commercial arm will cross-subsidise the public service functions of the non-commercial arm. This arrangement is being set in place to ensure a transparent process of cross-
subsidisation, and to ensure that the public commercial services operate on the basis of competitive neutrality with private competitors. Corporatization will in effect turn the SABC into a dividend-paying, (probably) income-tax paying organization in a circumstance where its major sources of income are in decline. While the Corporation may have commanded the lion’s share of advertising, it will decline in the medium to long term as competition increases. Also, given that unemployment is increasing, it looks highly unlikely that income will increase through the collection of licence fees.

What is really worrying, though, is that the corporatization plan may well fail by virtue of its own internal logic. Even by early 2000 there were indications that the South African government intended partially or completely privatizing the SABC’s commercial arm, with the result that the cross-subsidization arrangement will fall flat on its face. The privatization option is more than likely given the former Minister of Public Enterprises statement - quoting Margaret Thatcher - that business is not the business of government, and that privatization was the preferred option for public businesses. So the government turns state-owned enterprises into public businesses, and then argues that it has no business running them. In the light of this statement, it should not take a rocket scientist to see where the SABC is heading. If privatization ensues, the SABC may be forced to increase its licence fee - and risk even more defaulters - or underfund the public service arm. Given that this arm will consist mainly of the loss-making radio stations that broadcast in the 11 official languages, we should be worried about their future. In fact, we should be especially worried given that these stations are so heavily used by women.

Commercialization will force the Corporation to reposition continually to increase competitiveness, entrenching instability as part of the corporate culture, in turn leading to wave after wave of conflict-ridden restructuring. Surely, such a judgement is both premature and harsh, it might be argued. However, corporatization has barely begun, the SABC already having taken a decision to close its offices in Thohayandou, Giyani and Umtata for cost/benefit reasons, and to relocate the staff to Pietersburg and Port Elizabeth. These reasons are shaky to put it mildly, as apparently, the offices’ running costs are negligible and they also benefit from an integration budget funded by government. These offices provide over 80% of the content for public service radio stations like Phalaphala and Munghana Lonene, which is as it should be according to the Independent Broadcasting Authority: stations should be located where the majority of the target audience is. It is not difficult to imagine what the implications of these closures will be for the stations concerned: namely, the loss of direct contact with the majority of XiTsonga and Tshivenda-speakers and many XiXhosa-speakers, impacting in turn on local content. Potential interviewees will have to travel hundreds of kilometers further to reach the stations, which may not even be possible in many instances. As part of their public service obligations, these stations announce death notices over the air, brought in to the stations by relatives of the deceased: how effective will this service continue to be if relatives now have to travel to Pietersburg, especially for women who are generally less mobile? Given the fact that XiTsonga and
Tshivenda barely feature on television, this move on the part of the SABC could be seen as an attempt to disinvest further in already marginalized language groups. At the same time that the SABC is opening offices in other African countries, it is closing them in its own backyard. This is what commercialization means in practice.

Some time ago, the SABC announced that it was going to reposition another of its public service radio stations, Ikwekwezi, to attract more advertising revenue. Its plan was to target IsiNdebele-speaking youth in Gauteng, in the process shifting towards a youth-orientated music format. This shift has implications for older isiNdebele speakers, and for women, given that the bulk of isiNdebele speakers are based in the rural areas of Mpumalanga and are women. We have not even begun to explore what these shifts mean from an access to information perspective, and in terms of gender equality.

Commercialization disables access in other ways as well. The SABC’s increasing use of lines charged at cellphone rates, for its phone-in programmes and for its news service, Newsbreak, discriminates against low-income earners and unemployed people, who are overwhelmingly black and female (see Sandison, 2001; Rama, 2000). A channel focussing specifically on Africa was been launched by the SABC in [1998] as part of its commitment to the African Renaissance. That this channel is accessed on the DSTv bouquet - which is accessible only to a small minority of mainly white viewers - again raised serious questions about access.

The IBA and Downsizing

Commercialization of public services, and the threat to access that it poses, implies the need for a strong regulator to ensure diversity and universal service objectives in broadcasting. Is our regulator up to the challenge? Not if current trends continue. Ongoing cutbacks occurred to the IBA’s government grant, in line with general government cutbacks. At the same time, a recent amendment to the IBA Act will ensure that the Authority will no longer be able to retain proceeds from licence fees, but will have to pay them back to government. This amendment has been made to bring the IBA in line with the new Public Finances Management Act. The net effect of these developments is that the IBA was increasingly unable to fulfil even the core functions of its mandate. There may not be much public sympathy for this dilemma, given the IBA’s financial excesses of the past, but we should not lose sight of the fact that in the end, it is the users of the broadcasting system that will suffer the most, and I would once again argue that women and black people will be especially affected. In the words of Tuoane Manana, “There is no such thing as cutting expenditures” in this Ministry or that. What happens is a shifting of the burden intentionally or unintentionally to certain groups in that society. The burden of these shifts is also borne unproportionally between genders {Manana. Date unknown. 12-155).

To elaborate, one consequence of the cutbacks is that the IBA had to close its provincial offices, which were heavily used by community radio. Applicants in
outlying areas who require assistance in languages other than English may really battle. Downsizing also affected the IBA’s monitoring and complaints functions. The IBA estimates that about 10 - 15% of the complaints brought to it are about community radio: the majority concern blasphemy on SABC services. The IBA clearly did not have the resources to popularize the activities of this department, which after all is a key accountability mechanism - with the result that it seems to have been under-utilized by listeners of community radio, and in fact they have received virtually no gender-based complaints recently. The Department also expressed a keen interest in deploying monitors to the annual general meetings of community radio stations, to ensure that this other key accountability feature is functioning effectively, but is unable to do so for financial reasons. Instead they have to rely on accounts of the AGM’s sent to them by the radio stations. Also in 1997, the Department produced an extremely informative industry review for community radio for 1995/6, where issues such as gender representation were tracked, and conclusions were drawn. According to the Department, they have not had the resources to produce more recent ones. This is a great pity as it is extremely difficult to map trends in the sector in the absence of such a review. It seems that if we are serious about sustainability and community participation in community radio, then this key function of the IBA should have been capacitated sufficiently to operate well, at least in the first few years of its existence when communities are still grappling with how to achieve these objectives.

The IBA also noted that it was unable to fulfil its mandate to monitor the implementation of the SABC’s public service charter. This is extremely worrying given the extremity of the restructuring it was undergoing. A complaint lodged with the IBA by the Friends of Public Broadcasting in March 1999, concerning the use of cellphone lines on SABC services, was not taken forward by the Authority. The merger of the Authority with the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, which was effected to cut regulatory costs and to promote convergence, was already having an effect on the work of the IBA. A number of councillors’ terms of office expired towards the end of 1999. As a result, only four councillors were left in office. Given that one of these councillors was on maternity leave, which meant that the Council was now unable to reach a quorum, the work of the Authority was effectively paralyzed until the new merged council was appointed. These realities flowing from the merger meant that the work of licensing community radio with four-year licences, which has already been extremely slow, will be delayed even further. Given that licence applications for these licences closed in 1997, and applications still have to be heard in a number of provinces, it is possible that new applications could be sought only in 2001 or 2002. Already, aspirant community radio groups establish themselves, and collapse, as they do not have the resources to sustain themselves for years on end without licences. The frustration in communities is growing, and must not be ignored.

A case in point is Kathorus community radio, which was established in 1994 as part of efforts to rebuild the area after the violence. The station had the express mission of working to unite a fractured community. The station received a grant in
1997 from the President's Fund, and used it to buy their own equipment. The station even has its own transmitter, and applied for a four-year community radio licence in 1997. By April 2000, the station, along with many others, was still waiting for hearings to take place in Gauteng. Since it lodged its application, Kathorus has survived by applying for special event licences: it has had nine since 1998. The station is unable to attract ongoing funding or advertising revenue, as it does not have a licence, and lives from hand to mouth. In fact, the station is staffed by volunteers who fund the station mainly from their own pockets. In spite of the fact that it is fully equipped, the station is sinking further into debt as it is unable to raise money to cover its running costs, such as rent. The staff have expressed fears that they may not survive long enough to make it to the hearings. These are the realities on the ground.

Even with a Council of 11 people, the IBA found it extremely difficult to cope with the workload. The problem was compounded by insufficient budgets, which made it difficult to delegate tasks to standing committees as the specialist staff to support these committees simply was not available. Imagine the difficulties the merged Authority may face with under half the number of councillors, twice the workload and an insufficient budget. Fears have already been expressed that the merger may result in the marginalization of broadcasting, in favor of the more lucrative telecommunications industry; it is not difficult to imagine this happening, and needless to say, the less lucrative aspects of broadcasting may suffer the most. In the light of these realities, how many more Kathorus community radios will there be?

Access, Restructuring and the Print Media

The print media have undergone highly significant changes on the level of ownership, yet they face an ever-increasing problem of access. Access to, and consumption of, radio and television has grown, while - reflecting international trends - newspaper circulation has shrunk from 19% to 17% between 1990 and 1996 (Audit Bureau of Circulation of Southern Africa, 1996), although it picked up somewhat in 1996/1997. South Africa now has the second lowest number of titles in the world in relation to population size (Indonesia has the lowest). The circulation of newspapers in relation to population size is the fifth lowest in the world (after Thailand, Pakistan, Indonesia and Mongolia) (World Press Trends, 1998). It seems like the decline in readership is linked in a very intimate but ill-understood way with the unemployment crisis - the more unemployment increases, the more the circulation of print media decreases, and the more the media will be characterized by concentration of ownership as they seek to maximise advantages to attract a portion of the shrinking advertising cake. In the process, it will become increasingly difficult to start up new titles, as the barriers to entry rise.

In the SABC, many media companies are seeking to become competitive, and may even expand internationally should circumstances permit. As a result, media are following the trend of many other companies and restructuring on an ongoing
basis; downsizing and refocussing on core business have become the order of the
day (Private restructuring outruns state sector, Financial Mail, 7 April, 2000).Flexible specialization is the new buzz-phrase. In a number of instances, and as
with the SABC, restructuring and transformation have become rolled up into one
ball, to the point where they have become virtually interchangeable terms.

The effects of commercial restructuring can be seen clearly in newsrooms, as
evidence mounts of more and more centralization to ensure editorial and economic
efficiency gains. So for example, Independent Newspapers has centralized political
copy in its Parliamentary Bureau, which syndicates copy to the rest of the group.
What are the implications of such syndication for editorial diversity in these
newspapers? Is it healthy for one political opinion alone to circulate in all
Independent titles? What does this say about who qualifies to be the main reference
point for political news? What scope is there for regionally sensitive political copy?
This reduction in diversity in the name of the bottom line is also to be found at the
SABC, which has merged its radio and television news departments into one bi-
media or cross-media operation. In the process, one editorial outlet has been created
for news. What are the implications of this centralization for the quality of news?
The existence of one outlet implies that consensus positions will need to be taken
on the presentation of stories, especially controversial ones; as we know, consensus
positions in any operation are generally safe, middle of the road, and unadventurous.

Centralization is also leading to the multi-tasking of journalists, where they are
being made to do more with less. So yesterday’s radio journalist becomes today’s
radio and television journalist, and yesterday’s print media journalist doubles up as
a layout and design artist. The result? A slow but inexorable dumbing down of
work. Radio becomes television’s soundtrack, with no consideration for what
actually works for radio. Sound clips and copy are repeated ad nauseam across all
services. Faced with increasing workloads, they may find it tempting to marginalize
investigative reporting, and to compose stories using the most accessible, reliable
sources of news, namely government and the corporates. The news of ordinary
people takes a back seat, which in turn decreases access to the media. Multi-skilling
becomes deskilling.

Arguments about transformation of ownership, and whether this has trickled
down to the operational level of newspapers, rage (Tomaselli, 1997; Berger, 1999,
2002; Boloka and Krabill, 2000; Goga, 2002; Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 2002).
Transforming newsrooms should in turn lead to newspapers being able to attract
new audiences. This is undoubtedly the case, and this process must be speeded up.
However, it is doubtful that centralization and commercialization of news will help
this process: how are media supposed to reflect a diversity of opinion if their
newsgathering and production structures disable expressions of diverse points of
view in their own newsrooms? Thoroughgoing transformation of newsrooms will
probably not solve the structural barriers to media access though, especially in the
print media. These involve expanding distribution, which in turn rides on reducing
unemployment so more people will be brought into the productive economy, and
adspend will expand; also the barriers to entry for new media, and new owners of existing media need to be brought down. These challenges are bigger than the media: overcoming them rides on the success of government’s economic growth plans.

Restructuring and Transformation: will government’s economic policies work?

The government’s current approach to tackling these challenges should give us a clue as to why commercial restructuring and transformation are repeatedly confused, in spite of mounting evidence that restructuring often disables transformation. Governments generally have become convinced that there is no alternative but to join the competitiveness race; that any attempt to depart from the economic fundamentals of globalization will be met with capital flight, and eventually full economic isolation. Progressive ones, such as South Africa’s, argue that we cannot live in a fools paradise. Developmental states do not operate in an environment entirely of their own making, and we need to engage with the global economy to extract as many benefits as possible from it, while attempting to ameliorate the worst effects of globalization (African National Congress, 1998. 15(3), pp.10-11). So they pursue progressive, developmental aims using methods that are so avowedly neo-liberal that many would probably make even Thatcher blush with embarrassment; in short, they ‘talk left’, but ‘act right’.

At the heart of the ‘talk left, act right’ philosophy is monetary policy. It is believed that certain economic fundamentals must be followed in order increase investor confidence, such as the maintenance of low inflation. High inflation would also make South African goods and services less competitive on global markets. Recently, the Minister of Finance announced that they would adopt the approach of inflation targeting, where the Reserve Bank will aim for a certain inflation rate over a set period. The goal is then compared with the actual forecast, and monetary policy is then adjusted accordingly. While this approach certainly increases transparency with respect to monetary policy, it makes the Reserve Bank adopt the targeting of inflation over all other objectives (Katzenellenbogen, 4/02/2000a:13). As is well known, the main method of containing inflation is to raise interest rates in response to an increase in the repo rate (the rate at which the Reserve Bank lends to commercial banks).

High interest rates have a devastating effect on individuals and businesses who rely on debt to finance their activities, including the media. Last year, the number of liquidations went up 6.5% and insolvencies rose 24.5%. (Katzenellenbogen and Maphologela, 2000c:). In January 1991, Naspers announced that it had repurchased the stake in City Press that it had sold to empowerment groups Dynamo and New Seasons in mid-1997. According to the Star, this move “...marked the first major black empowerment deal to be unwound following the sharp deterioration in trading conditions over the past few years”. These conditions had led businesses relying on borrowed funds to struggle as the cost of these funds increased sharply, at a time
when profits in the newspaper industry had been squeezed (Crotty, 1999). Minority black empowerment shareholders are especially vulnerable to collapse, which can result in bigger empowerment groups budding for their stakes: the recent shakeups in the shareholding structures of eTV and Kaya FM are a case in point (Suzaki, 2000). Some commentators have spoken of a re-concentration of media ownership taking place, following the golden season of diversification in the past few years.

Why is this so? Larger corporations - including black empowerment corporations - tend to finance their expansion through equity rather than debt, whereas smaller groups are heavily reliant on commercial borrowing. Therefore the larger groups are not directly affected by high interest rates, but the smaller ones are. The government’s quasi religious adherence to the containment of inflation, to the exclusion of all other considerations (like job creation) has other effects as well: it inflates the public debt even further, leading to ever-tighter austerity measures. Elderly apartheid beneficiaries benefit yet again, as those elderly people who depend more on investment income gain hugely from high interest rates. Conversely, younger people who rely more on their productive capacity form the bulk of the unemployed: the policy of high interest rates literally shuts them out of the economy. So, are we really surprised that newspaper usage among youth is shrinking? What makes the government’s approach towards inflation so remarkable is that South Africa does not have a significant inflation problem, and probably never will have in spite of current inflationary tendencies in the economy at the moment. While there is clear evidence that the reduction of inflation from say, 100% to 12% will have a significant impact on growth, there is no evidence that a reduction from 8% to 4% will make any difference; in fact it will probably have the opposite effect, since high interest rates make the poor poorer and the rich richer (Bernardt, 2000:15).

The heart of all the problems I have raised for consideration is the government’s controversial Growth, Employment and Redistribution plan. Will all the pain of structural adjustment really be worth it? Will it really bring the intended benefits, namely long term sustainable growth in the economy that in turn will solve our gross unemployment and inequality problems? Let us consider some of the facts.

The Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy has noted that a growth rate of at least 6% is necessary to create jobs to any significant degree. Yet, since the adoption of GEAR, the economy has shrunk: in 1996, it achieved a growth rate of 3.2%, in 1997 1.7%, and in 1998 0.1%. (ESSET and fair share, 2000). In the first quarter of 1999, the GDP grew by 0.6%, and improved slightly in the second quarter to 1.7%. (Statistics South Africa, 1995-1999). In effect, the economy has grown by only 1.8% since 1996, well below the rate of population growth (Adelzadeh, 1999:2) With respect to manufacturing outputs, the sector experienced a negative growth rate of -1.7% in 1998. The most significant outputs took place in highly capital-intensive industries like chemicals and basic metals (Osborn, 1997:28). Non-agricultural GDP has also shrunk. A growth level of approximately 3% is expected for this year, which analysts are describing as a ‘good sign’: the fact
that this is approximately half the growth level that should have been reached by this stage is conveniently forgotten.

Unemployment reached its highest level for sixteen years in 1999. Private sector investment fell sharply in the three prior years, achieving a negative rate of -0.7% in 1998. The sector’s share of total fixed investment fell from 73% to 68% since 1996. What is also disconcerting is that the adoption of GEAR has led to a worsening of non-gold export growth. After enjoying a rise of 14.5% in 1996, the growth rate dropped by 5.3% in 1997 and 2.1% in 1998. Also, the rate of non-gold imports has grown over exports, implying that domestic demand is being satisfied increasingly through imported goods; as a result, the balance of payments is being destabilized. In fact, the current account deficit deteriorated by 83% between 1997 and 2000 (Adelzadeh, 1999:1-3).

The problem with the South African economy is that capital intensive industries are proving to be the most globally competitive. This is hardly surprising given that many countries in Latin America and Asia have virtually cornered the market in super-exploitation of labor-intensive industries. Since 1993, manufacturing production as a whole grew by 14.4%, but employment in manufacturing shrank by 6%. South Africa’s manufacturing for exports is especially capital-intensive, so it should not be surprising that the country’s drive to international competitiveness is shrinking rather than growing the domestic job market. We are experiencing not ‘jobless growth’, but ‘jobless growth’, as export-led growth is premised on the loss of more and more jobs.

Also, economic growth has been premised to a large extent on the advancement of the service industries, and specifically ‘new’ economy sectors like media and information technology. Developing country governments are being told to promote these sectors, as they provide them with the possibility of ‘leapfrogging’ over the ‘old economy’. However, it should be noted that at the moment, 79% of formal non-agricultural labor contributes 53% towards output, whereas trade and private services use only 21% of labor to contribute to 44% of total output. Private services contribute as much to the GDP as manufacturing, yet they use approximately a quarter of the labor; or to put it another way, for every four jobs that are created in manufacturing, one is created in services (Loots, 1998: 327-8). In the light of these trends, we should not be surprised if unemployment continues to grow. The ‘new economy’ argument also needs reviewing in the light of the recent stock market crash in the United States, which spread to other markets reliant on the media and information-technology heavy Nasdaq index for their economic growth. In fact, it is expected that money may even move back into ‘old economy’ stocks (Bonorchis, 2000).

The one area where GEAR has been successful is increasing the rate of foreign direct investment: In fact since 1996, the amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) flowing into the country has more than doubled as a result of privatization and unbundling exercises. However, outward bound investments by South African countries nearly quadrupled, with the financial loss involved being nearly twice the value of incoming FDI. Following world trends, much FDI has gone into mergers
and acquisitions, which could hardly be considered to be productive investment as it has fuelled even more job losses.

GEAR states that portfolio investment should be encouraged, as these short term capital flows should give way in time to FDI; so tracking what is happening to this form of investment should give us a good indication of how successful we should be in attracting FDI. In the same month that a leading international investor gave South Africa the thumbs up as an extremely attractive emerging market for foreign investment, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) suffered its worst sell-off in South African equities by foreigners since 1996 (the year that the Rand crashed 17%). Between March 1 and March 26, 2000, foreigners dumped R1.3 billion in local equities. In the same time period, foreigners dumped close to R5 billion in bonds (Kobokoane, 2000). From the facts, it should be clear that something is going horribly, horribly wrong. Yet we continue to re-shape all aspects of our productive life - including the media - in a desperate attempt to attain the unattainable.

Why are the government’s export-led growth targets unattainable? The harsh reality is that - for African countries - the barriers to the achievement of international competitiveness are structural. Even for the continent’s ‘strongest’ economy - South Africa - the barriers to improving competitiveness are virtually insurmountable. Although the country has been making some progress in this respect, as acknowledged by the latest World Competitiveness report, it is hitting a level where it cannot proceed without drastic improvements in some of its weakest areas. These include a drastic reduction in the unemployment rate from its current level to 8%, which would require a growth level of over 6%. We are barely able to achieve even 3% at the moment. Apparently, South Africa would also have to halve pupil-teacher ratios at primary school level, and reduce adult illiteracy by over 300%. Working days lost through industrial action per 1,000 head of population would have to come down from 100 to 27 days. What is telling is that South Africa is the only African country to be listed in the World Competitiveness Yearbook (which compares the competitiveness of 47 countries). If South Africa faces such incredible hurdles, then heaven help other Southern African countries! (Katzenellenbogen, 2000b). South Africa is especially fortunate as it does not carry a significant external debt; therefore its space for manoeuvre is greater than many other African countries. It could lead the way to an alternative growth path for the continent. Yet it doesn’t. In the process, it betrays not only itself and its rich history of struggle, but also the region and the continent as a whole.

A number of critics of globalization have argued that neo-liberal policies fuel the development of what they call a 30%/70% society, where productive activity is undertaken by a minority of increasingly multi-skilled ‘insiders’; however, the majority of underemployed, semi-employed and unemployed are locked out of the economy, and consequently out of society as their labor power is simply not needed. They become ‘outsiders’ in their own country. Greater insertion into the global economy deepens these divisions. We are seeing these trends establishing themselves in South Africa, including in the media. A debate has surfaced between Guy Berger (1999) and Keyan Tomaselli (1997) about the extent of the significance
of changes in the media since 1994: Tomaselli argues that the changes mean little since class continuity coupled with racial substitution ensure that media still continue to serve middle class audiences. Berger has refuted this argument, stating that it glosses over important changes in media ownership, including class changes where trade unions representing working class interests have bought into the media (see also Boloka and Krabill, 2000). Both arguments miss the point that labor itself is being restructured and stratified; so workers inside the productive economy probably will be able to, in time, make the media serve their interests more faithfully, a process that will be enabled by recent ownership changes. Changes will probably trickle down to management and editorial levels, as they must. However, the structural barriers that frustrate greater media access may well remain. A concrete expression of this sort of division is to be found in recent ownership changes to eTV, where the IBA allowed the influence of minority shareholders to be reduced, as they had failed to bring sufficient funds to the table. Although black empowerment groups are still represented in the new ownership structure, the IBA expressed regret that - to use Berger’s phrase - the ‘beneficiary base’ would be narrowed as previous shareholders representing the disabled, civic groups and youth would be the ones marginalized. As it is in the media, so it is in society: 30/70 media for a 30/70 society (Berger, 1999).

But is there really an alternative? There are many things that can be done on a short-to-medium term basis to ameliorate these deepening divisions. The government is in the process of establishing a statutory Media Development and Diversity Agency to foster media diversity in the country. One of the most important tasks of the Agency, once it is set up, should be to establish a common carrier for print media, as distribution is possibly the most difficult obstacle for new media to overcome. We should consider establishing this carrier on a regional, rather than a national basis. The MDDA should also offer low interest, or interest-free loans to emerging commercial media, as well as grants to community media. A tax on advertising could help to cross-subsidise these activities. Local print and broadcasting organisations could take advantage of the mutual intelligibility of a number of Southern African languages to create greater economies of scale by sharing content. Recently, a number of us established a group called Friends of Public Broadcasting, which will eventually become a user group of viewers and listeners of SABC services to promote and defend the principles of public broadcasting. A network of such groups could be established on a SADC-wide basis. There are many, many practical things that can be done now.

But unless these developments are informed by a perspective that promotes economic justice, they will become band-aids stuck over an ever-growing sore; we will continue to treat the symptoms of racial and gender inequality in the media, but not the causes. We need to discount the argument that there is no alternative but to join the competitiveness race: the scale of human suffering that this argument is causing is simply too great. In the words of Canadian trade unionist Sam Gindin: “the overwhelming power of competitiveness as an ideology means that we do not just need an alternative, but a truly independent alternative. Trying to modify or
qualify competitiveness (progressive competitiveness, competitiveness-with-a-human-face) will inevitably fail and fail dangerously. We must base any challenge to competitiveness on a clearly different set of assumptions and principles” (Gindicin, 1995:41). Or to use a more succinct, saying from our own continent, “...the master’s tools will never be used to destroy the master’s house”.

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Chapter 4

MEDIA, SCALE, AND DEMOCRATIZATION

CLIVE BARNETT

Discourses of Globalization and Conceptualizations of Scale

This chapter explores some conceptual issues concerning the restructuring of media and communications and its implications for our understandings of democratization. Using the example of South African broadcasting reform during the 1990s, I will argue that it is imperative to address the conceptualization of the spatial scales over which media and communications systems are organized and governed. Post-apartheid South Africa provides one example of an attempt to shape collective stability, political order, and national identity through the use of public communication systems.¹ Such policies presuppose congruence between the scales at which economy, polity and culture are organised (Collins, 1990). This congruence has come under increasing strain due to a combination of technological change, shifts in regulatory policies, corporate restructuring, and the globalization of cultural identities. The globalization of markets for cultural commodities is associated with fundamental transformations in the spatialities of subject-formation in the contemporary world. Processes of economic production and distribution, political participation and representation, social integration and identity-formation are all now stretched out across a variety of non-congruent spatial scales (Appadurai, 1990). As media systems are further opened to commercial imperatives, extending the spatial scale and variety of sites over which mediated communication practices take place, the ability of national policy-makers to regulate the forms of culture and information disseminated through broadcasting systems is only likely to be further diminished. Some argue that the processes of concentration, convergence, commercialization, and deregulation which underlie the globalization of media economics have negative implications for pluralism of access and the diversity of representations in the media. It is probably more appropriate to identify various possible consequences of economic and cultural globalization. Globalization might lead to the erosion of national identities; it might strengthen defensive national or exclusionist local or regional identities; or it might facilitate the development of new forms of syncretic, hybridized, and less territorialized identities (Hall, 1992; Dunn, 1995). In short, the cultural and political outcomes of global restructuring of media and communications sectors are likely to be uneven and contradictory.

My starting point is the suggestion that ‘globalization’ should be understood as both a discourse, circulated by policy-makers, politicians, think-tanks, corporations, and academics, and a project, a neo-liberal strategy pursued by particular interests to restructure the relationships between state, economy, and society (Low and Barnett, 2000). It is essential that the discourse of neo-liberal
globalization be subjected to critique if the project is going to be effectively contested. The need to think conceptually about issues of scale follows from the tendency in most discussions of globalization to construct political possibilities in particular ways: the sorts of questions addressed by media and communications activists and scholars in Southern Africa (Is de-regulation consistent with nation building? Is regulatory convergence at a regional level consistent with democratization at the national level?)⁶, are all too easily posed according to a set of binary oppositions, between local and global, in which the latter term is always set up as the inevitable end-point of contemporary restructuring. The optimism of corporate globalization-talk pre-constructs the pessimism of progressive activists and scholars, for whom current restructuring processes are too often presented as both inevitable and as necessarily disempowering. It might, then, be worthwhile to ask questions about scale in different ways. Two propositions underwrite the discussion here: firstly, spatial scales of social practices are not naturally given, but they are the products of complex processes of state policy, economic practices, and social action (Smith, 1992). The scales at which relationships between media and regulation, media and identity, and media and accumulation are stabilized at any given point in time are the contingent outcomes of both technologies and political processes.

Secondly, rather than thinking of the scales of social activity in terms of a hierarchy of territorial containers (the local, the national, the global, etc.), it might be more fruitful to think in terms of the variable spatial extent and temporal durability of networks of interaction (Thrift, 1996). Territorial notions of scale are central to modern conceptualization of political sovereignty, and therefore of democracy, which is understood to be naturally contained within the boundaries of nation-states (Low, 1997). But increasingly power flows through, around, and above the nation-state. Conceptualizing scale in terms of a set of containers locks us into a political imaginary in which contemporary processes of re-scaling above the level of nation-states necessarily undermines the possibilities of effective political action in support of progressive causes (Garnham, 1993). In turn, we are left with only the flickering image of a re-constituted global public sphere to hope for.

Standard accounts of globalization suggest that all boundaries have now collapsed and that distance has been finally abolished as a constraint on economic activity and social interaction. Bill Gates’s dream of ‘friction-free’ capitalism enabled by new technology reveals the extent to which globalization-talk conceptualizes space and time in terms of the friction of distance progressively overcome by innovations in communication (Robins, 1995). It might be more useful to think of ‘globalization’ as just the latest round in a process of ‘creative destruction’ of the spatial and temporal configurations of capitalism (Harvey, 1982). According to this understanding, to enable certain patterns of mobility (whether the circulation of commodities or the movement of people), it is necessary to embed certain technologies and labor processes in fixed, material spatial configurations. This is as true of communications media as it is of the construction of urban-built environments and transport systems
This understanding implies that communications revolutions are a perpetual, repeated feature of capitalist restructuring. The friction of distance is overcome only by laying in place a material infrastructure of roads, railways, transmitters, and cables that, in a subsequent round of restructuring, will themselves come to serve as impediments to continued accumulation. The maxim that 'the ability to overcome space is predicated upon the production of space' is therefore central to the understanding of contemporary restructuring of media and communications infrastructures (Kirsch, 1995, Leyshon, 1995). The development of telecommunications and media is itself driven by this dynamic of facilitating the speedier circulation of capital over extended spatial scales (Mosco, 1996). And, in turn, media and communications restructuring is likely to be characterized by a contested politics over which actors and what imperatives should guide the production of new spaces of communication (Gillespie and Robins, 1989). The rest of this chapter traces how this contested politics of the production of communications and media spaces has been played out in South Africa in the 1990s. The South African case illustrates the broader point that the politics of media reform in Southern Africa is enacted simultaneously at multiple scales. And this politics of scale needs to be understood not in terms of a hierarchy of power-containers, but rather as a process involving the construction of spatially extensive networks of alliance.

Re-Scaling Communications ‘Upwards’: Regional Telecommunications Integration and Independent Media Regulation

Like ‘globalization’, narratives of technological convergence present a scenario in which national sovereignty over communications regulation is being progressively undermined by the development of supra-national agencies and agreements. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have been increasingly assertive in setting the terms for the development of communications infrastructures in the last decade (Dunn, 2001). In Southern Africa, primarily through the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and led by an assertive post-1994 South African government, this neo-liberal agenda of liberalization and privatization has been embedded in a range of regional regulatory and policy frameworks for telecommunications development. The general theme of these agreements is the need to share scarce managerial, professional, scientific and technical expertise; to promote privatization and liberalization; and to establish independent regulators to license new service providers. Taken together, these regional initiatives indicate the tentative emergence of a coherent region-wide regulatory regime for telecommunications development in the SADC region. This process coincides with the increasing integration of regional and continental telecommunications infrastructures, a process in which the presence of South African capital has been a notable feature. The South African experience illustrates that any future harmonization of regulatory regimes across the SADC region is contingent upon nationally specific politics of institution building in the course of democratic transition in different countries.
Few African countries have independent regulators, or have only very recently established them, often in an institutional and conceptual vacuum (Barker, 2001). The liberalization of communications markets in Southern Africa is a highly uneven process, dependent on the contested politics of independent regulation and the deployment of different models of regulation, communications, and democracy (Barnett, 1999c). In South Africa, the reform and restructuring of the broadcasting and telecommunications sectors, previously tightly controlled by the apartheid state, has involved an increased role for private capital and the market. The central policy issue has been whether and how this liberalization can be regulated and made consistent with the aims of nation building, development, democratization, and cultural diversity. During the political negotiations of 1993, plans for an integrated Independent Telecommunications Authority were put aside, when it became clear that impending elections urgently required that broadcasting legislation be passed separately from telecommunications. This pragmatic decision did not preclude the merging of broadcasting and telecommunications regulatory structures at a future date. As a consequence, a separate Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act was passed in October 1993. The IBA was the product of a political bargain over the need to ensure that broadcasting be taken out of the control of cabinet ministers, and made independent of direct government interference (Currie and Markovitz, 1993). The degree of independence of the IBA has been central to the politics of broadcasting reform throughout the 1990s (Barnett, 1999b). In practice, the IBA’s ability to re-regulate the broadcasting system was constrained by the entrenchment of existing broadcasting interests, such as those of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and the privately-owned terrestrial subscription television service M-Net. Nonetheless, from 1994 the IBA oversaw the transformation of South African broadcasting, licensing new private radio and television stations, new community radio stations, and the privatization of some SABC-owned radio stations. At the same time, the SABC has been transformed into an independent public service broadcaster (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998b). In terms of ownership and control as well as programming, this amounts to a fundamental diversification in what was previously a tightly controlled state-run broadcasting system (Berger, 1999, Teer-Tomaselli, 1998a).

Since 1996, the agenda of media democratisation and cultural diversification which shaped policy-making from 1990 to 1995 has been replaced by an agenda that subordinates broadcasting to the broader imperatives of economic policy. In line with the ANC-led government’s embrace of a neo-liberal economic agenda (see Bond, 2000), broadcasting is now treated as a cluster of industrial policy aimed at making the South African economy globally competitive (Duncan, 2002). The justification for the regulation of broadcasting and telecommunications has been altered in the process. In place of a political and cultural justification based on a definition of ‘national interest’ that prioritises democratic pluralism, the ‘national interest’ in the communications sector has been redefined primarily in terms of economic development and growth (Barnett, 1999a). At the same time, the government has continued to express interest in
improving the flow of information to its core constituencies in terms that raise questions about its commitment to democratic pluralism. In this dual context, the discourse of ‘African Renaissance’ is deployed in broadcasting debates in South Africa as one means by which media and communications policies are increasingly being used to gain entry into international markets. ‘Local content’ policies for broadcasters are increasingly defined as providing programming content relevant not just to South Africa but to the continent as a whole.

Between 1996 and 2000, legislation was passed that significantly re-ordered the regulatory landscape. The most important effect of the subordination of broadcasting reform to an economic agenda of international competitiveness has been the circumvention of processes of consultation and participation, a process already visible in the telecommunications sector (Horwitz, 1997). In this political context, the process of creating a single, integrated regulatory body for telecommunications and broadcasting has been far from a merely technical issue. While justified by government in the name of the inevitable convergence of previously distinct technologies, the move was opposed by independent media organizations. For them, the strong definition of independence in the IBA Act enshrines a commitment to both transparent and participatory policy-making, a model of democratic communication at odds with the economistic model that equates quantitative diversification of ownership with democratization (Tomaselli, 1997). The eventual merging of broadcasting and telecommunications into a single Independent Communications Authority (ICASA) in 2000 is one move in this ongoing conflict over whether communications regulation is institutionalized as a narrowly legal and technical process, or whether it remains open to broader forms of public participation.

The South African experience therefore illustrates the extent to which national governments continue to exercise a critical influence over the liberalization of media and communications sectors. They do so for both political reasons (given the importance of media as channels of political communication), and for economic reasons (shaping telecommunications policies as part of broader export-oriented economic growth policies). In the context of democratic transition in Southern Africa, the deployment of an international discourse of inevitable technological convergence and globalization is a politically charged intervention in on-going debates about the proper role of media in democratic consolidation. A neo-liberal internationalizing economic agenda has dictated the subordination of explicit concerns with the relationships between media, participation, and representation to an economistic model of market-liberalization and administrative governance in order to attract foreign investment.

Given a long history of state monopoly over telecommunications and broadcasting, it should be acknowledged that a shift from state to market-based provision of communications can help to undermine the interests of over-mighty ruling political parties, and leverage some space for alternative and independent sources of news and information (Tettey, 2001). However, it is necessary to actively contest the dualism of state-control versus free-market liberalization that underwrites the mainstream paradigm of media and communications reform
propagated by organizations such as the WTO, IMF, and World Bank. The market-liberal model of communications regulation prioritizes transparency and non-discrimination as conditions for attracting inward foreign investment and reducing regulatory risk for private capital. Independence here translates as the need to shield communications policy and regulation from the ‘arbitrary’ whims of political interference. Transparency in regulatory decision-making is conceptualized as a signaling device for corporations in the market place, facilitating the presumed coincidence of the interests of privately owned capital with the general public good, rather than in a stronger sense as a principle of publicity sustaining broadly participatory debates over policy in public forums. An alternative model, developed by civil society organizations in South Africa in the early 1990s and since developed by organizations such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), presumes a different understanding of the role of independent regulation (Berger, 1998; Teer-Tomaselli, 1991). The challenge of media reform in Southern Africa in neo-liberal times is understood from this perspective as institutionalizing media that is independent of both state intervention and the dictates of private-capital, while ensuring effective and accountable regulation in the public interest. The path of media reform in the 1990s in South Africa indicates how difficult it is to realize these objectives in the context of a negotiated and compromised political transition to democracy. It suggests that moves towards the regional integration and liberalization of telecommunications markets and regulatory regimes in Southern Africa also have potentially negative implications for media democratization. This is the case insofar as they tend to forestall attempts to subject broadcasting to participatory forms of policy and regulatory oversight at the national-scale, at which processes of democratic representation and accountability have in many cases only recently begun to be consolidated. Independence from the immediate dictates of both the state and private capital is difficult to achieve when the imperatives of international competitiveness are prioritized in media policy.

**Re-scaling Communications ‘Downwards’: Decentralization, Participation, and Cultural Value**

The transition to democracy in South Africa has involved the institutionalization of a new relationship between identity and difference, according to which the extension of common civil and political rights of citizenship serve as the condition for the cultivation and promotion of cultural pluralism. The promotion of the equitable treatment of diverse cultural identities involves a politically contested process over the redistribution of resources between different communities and interests. Broadcasting institutions have been deeply implicated in the regulation of social divisions and economic inequalities which continue to persist after the negotiated end of apartheid. Issues of ethnic identity, language, and regionalism have been central to debates over media restructuring in the ‘new’ South Africa (Barnett, 2000a, Barnett, 2000b). In the light of a history of ethnic and racial division, initiatives for diversifying and de-centralizing the broadcasting system inevitably raise issues related to the broader politics of
regionalism and federalism in post-apartheid South Africa. Broadcasting reform in South Africa illustrates a central tension in democratic theory between two views of regional decentralization: in one, it is understood as a positive move which brings power closer to local communities; in the other, regional decentralization is seen as a negative stimulus to the formation of regional oligarchies, encouraging political dis-integration. Debates about broadcasting in South Africa during the 1990s therefore also draw attention to a set of contested understandings of the practices through which ordinary people can be empowered through communications media: as national citizens, as members of distinctive regionalized ethnic communities, or as consumers.

Throughout the 1990s there have been campaigns for the establishment of regionally based commercial television services. The model of broadcasting reform that emerged from civil society organizations in the early 1990s and drove much of the policy agenda through 1993-1995 saw broadcasting as a crucial medium for cultural exchange between diverse identities. It recognized the multiplicity of identities and interests in South Africa in a three-tier model of public, private, and community broadcasting allied to a strong and effective independent regulator. From this perspective, constitutional commitments to media pluralism were interpreted as implying a decentralization of broadcasting, in order to secure local content programming, extended transmitter coverage, and guard against the monopolization of power over broadcasting institutions (Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 1996). However, initiatives for regional and provincial broadcasting raised long-standing tensions regarding politically contested issues of federalism, and generated conflicts over the appropriate scales at which political authority over the mass media should be exercised. The political limitation of decentralization proposals for broadcasting was that they carried too many echoes of old-style apartheid broadcasting, as well as running counter to the deep suspicion within the ANC of federalist proposals for a restructured South African polity. The restructured and newly independent SABC has consistently favored a majoritarian conceptualization of broadcasting which prioritized the need to constitute diverse publics into a single national audience. In its *Triple Inquiry Report* of 1995, the IBA decided that the advantages of provincial broadcasting had to be “balanced against possible fragmentation of the nation and development of separatist or exclusionist tendencies. The imperatives of nation-building and reconciliation therefore require that broadcasting policy and practice ensures that the provinces are also revealed to each other and bought together at a national level” (IBA 1995, 44). The view that has gained ascendancy over policy making in the second half of the 1990s holds that the licensing of new services and development of provincial services should not threaten the consolidation of the transformed SABC as an economically viable national public broadcaster with national broadcasting coverage.

The deferral of the development of provincial television services illustrates a more fundamental shift in patterns of decision-making in the broadcasting sector, shifts that in turn illustrate significant developments in the politics of participation in a democratic South Africa (see Lodge, 1999). The transition to
democracy in South Africa in the 1990s has been characterized by a commitment to negotiation and compromise, exemplified by the extensive use of inclusive policy forums. The ambivalent outcomes of these institutionalized forms of conflict management reveal the limits of purely procedural models of democratization. The social relations of ownership, production, distribution, and consumption developed during apartheid remained largely intact after the politically brokered transition to formal democracy. While characterized by a degree of unprecedented openness, and involving a significant degree of consultation, participation in broadcasting policy formation processes has still been largely restricted to established broadcasting institutions and powerful apparatuses of the national and provincial government (Martinis, 1996). Recent shifts in political opportunity-structures for social movements indicate that the actors included in ‘stakeholder’ negotiations and forums tend to be those whose interests can be managed by the state (MacDonald, 1996). The preference for negotiated forms of conflict resolution in the broadcasting sector has meant that institutional change has often preceded formal legislation in the broadcasting sector. Rather than making for smooth transition, however, this has provided the opportunity for recalcitrant interests to resist agreed change, while market-based solutions to broadcasting reform have tended to facilitate the reproduction of patterns of inequality.

The corporatist style of stakeholder negotiation characteristic of decision-making in broadcasting since 1995 has meant that the pace of transformation has depended on the co-operation of all parties to agreement. The example of Bophuthatswana Broadcasting (BopBC) illustrates this feature of the politics of brokered compromise. For most of the second half of the 1990s, the broadcasting corporation of the now defunct Bophuthatswana homeland exploited the absence of legislation in the broadcasting sector to pursue various scenarios for continuing to operate independently of the SABC, in the name of being a champion of provincial public service broadcasting. It was able to do so because not only was the ownership of BopBC unclear, but also the IBA Act of 1993 did not technically provide the IBA with legal jurisdiction in the former Transkei-Bophuthatswana-Venda-Ciskei (TBVC) states, and these no-longer-existing states did not have the competency to extend the IBA’s jurisdiction. The formal extension of its authority only came in 1996 with the passing of an Amendment to the IBA Act. Only in 1997 did the Former States Broadcasting Act provide the legal framework for the abolition of broadcasting services in the former TBVC’s and the transfer of their facilities to the SABC and Sentech. Thus, BopBC was able to maintain itself, financially supported by the NorthWest provincial government, as an independent operation throughout this period because of the legislative vacuum characteristic of the broadcasting sector.

The continuing force of embedded interests inherited from apartheid in shaping the outcome of formally democratic and accountable policy processes is illustrated by the increasing commercialization of broadcasting since 1995. The opening up of media markets to new entrants has seen the consolidation of patterns of economic influence that continue to register the legacies of past
policies. M-Net, set up with government collusion in the 1980s, remains the dominant private commercial television service in South Africa. Broadcasters which gained a foothold in the former homelands have been able to take advantage of privatization of media and entertainment services to consolidate their position. Black economic empowerment in the media sectors has been dominated by trade unions, the only segment of the black community able to accumulate significant amounts of capital during apartheid, in the form of their members’ pension funds. However, given the highly uneven distribution of both material and symbolic resources for cultural consumption in South Africa, a greater diversity of media outlets does not necessarily translate into either greater pluralism of information or entertainment. The relationship between patterns of ownership and highly unequal market structures indicates the need to broaden the focus of a political-economic analysis of Southern African media to include consideration of the social relations of cultural consumption. Changing patterns of ownership and control, developing new regulatory bodies, and institutionalizing new procedures for policy, are all initiatives which need to be placed within the broader contexts of socio-economic restructuring and its impacts upon the cultural practices of ordinary people (Gunner et al 2000).

With the end of apartheid and the financial restructuring of the broadcasting industry and markets, South African media institutions have been drawn more tightly into the international market for English-language television programming. South African broadcasting’s insertion into international television programming markets underscores the extent to which control over mass-mediated culture is increasingly beyond the scope of action of decision-makers in national broadcasting institutions. The implications of this process are rather ambiguous. On the one hand, with the further development of these sorts of services aimed at affluent viewers, the South African broadcasting environment is becoming increasingly dichotomized. A public service broadcasting system has been developed in accordance with inclusive nation-building imperatives, but is competing for revenue with a set of private subscription ‘narrowcasting’ services which effectively offer an opportunity for their affluent, predominantly white viewers to opt-out of the shared cultural space of national public broadcasting.

However, one characteristic of South African television culture is the popularity of particular genres of American-produced soap operas amongst black and white South Africans alike. Critical academic analysis of this feature of South African popular culture indicates the difficulty of counter-posing local to imported programming in a simple normative opposition of good and bad (Tager, 1997; Roome, 1999). The popularity of both imported and domestically produced ‘soapies’ is one manifestation of a significant democratization of taste in South African culture, a subterranean process of cultural change with an entirely different rhythm to that of formal democratization (Krabil, 2000). Issues of ‘local content’ regulation, which continue to be a focus of attention in South African broadcasting debates, therefore open up a whole set of questions about the cultural values underwriting public policy. It is incumbent on critical scholars and media activists engaged in debates about the cultural and political
consequences of the new political economy of Southern African media systems to be self-reflexive concerning the assumptions often built into ‘political economy’ perspectives concerning cultural value, gender, ‘quality’, and meanings of the popular (McLaughlin, 1999).

The Politics of Scale in Southern African Media Reform

The primary point I want to emphasize from the preceding two sections is that the ‘upwards’ and ‘downwards’ re-scaling of communications in South Africa has not involved a simple hollowing out of the nation-state by a dialectic of simultaneous globalization and localization. Re-scaling and re-structuring has been a highly uneven process: there has been a strong impulse towards the consolidation of a centralized national communications infrastructure, in line with an economic agenda aimed at internationalizing the South African economy. The South African case stands as an example of the difficulties of transforming media in a context that combines formal democratization with the adoption of a neo-liberal economic agenda.

The argument of this chapter has been that the spatial restructuring of media markets, communications infrastructures, and regulatory regimes presents an opportunity to re-conceptualize the imperative of developing trans-national networks of co-operation to pursue progressive agendas for media democratization (Ó Siochrú, 1999). It is important not to counter-pose a utopia of global civil society to the apparently defunct nation-state. The nation-state apparatus of citizenship, participation, and representation is likely to remain the primary medium for democratic agency for ordinary people in Southern Africa. It is more appropriate to think in terms of the complementary strategies of social movements, activists, academics and NGO’s operating at a number of scales simultaneously (see Keane, 1995). Different networks of communication constitute different spaces of representation through which different actors can connect up with one another to build common understandings and generate concerted movements for democratic change (Frederick, 1993). Recent moves towards regional co-operation in harmonizing the de-regulation and liberalization of communications indicate that the success of campaigns for the democratization of mass media in Southern Africa will depend on the ability of national-level actors to draw upon networks of support and resources which stretch beyond the confines of individual nation-states. The work of an organization such as MISA is a prime example of this sort of multi-scale form of political action: providing information and expertise to national campaigns for broadcasting and press freedom through a trans-national network of co-operation which utilizes the latest new technologies. To understand this form of political action, it is necessary to move beyond a priori concepts of spatial scale which assume a static hierarchy of the local, the national, and the global. It is better to pragmatically analyze the different opportunities which exist for local actors whose interests and conflicts are embedded at one scale to draw upon support, knowledge, and resources from networks which extend beyond that particular scale (Cox, 1998). It is important to insist that democratization is not scale-
dependent. It belongs neither to the national level nor to the small-scale and localized. Democratization is a process that depends for its vitality on the effectiveness of links between local actors and spatially extended networks (Dunn, 2001). By asking the question of how the scales of social action are produced and articulated together, it is possible to keep open a space for imagining political possibilities that are otherwise foreclosed by the simple imaginary geographies of globalization discourse.

ENDNOTES
1 See Hallin (1998) and Samarajiva and Shields (1990) for critical discussions of the conceptual assumptions of the broadcasting and national development paradigm in political economy traditions and mass communications research.

2 These are the questions articulated by Jackson Banda in response to the earlier version of this paper presented at the Seminar on Political Economy of Southern Africa, Durban, April 2000.

3 A fourth free-to-air terrestrial service, e-TV, was licensed by the IBA in 1998.

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Chapter 5

FACING THE DIGITAL MILLENNIUM: CULTURE, COMMUNICATION AND GLOBALIZATION IN JAMAICA AND SOUTH AFRICA

HOPETON S. DUNN

Taking as a point of departure the demands being made by the industrialized countries within the World Trade Organization (WTO), this chapter examines the flow of media technologies, information and other cultural products to the countries of the global South. It evaluates the implications of these flows for cultural disinherition on the one hand and the promise of economic empowerment on the other. With Jamaica and South Africa as case studies, the analysis explores common issues of cultural survival, co-operation and globalization as they relate to media, communication and the cultural industries in the two regions.

The Contexts

Though located in the Western and Eastern hemispheres respectively, the Anglophone Caribbean and Southern Africa share a common place in the global south. The two regions also share common cultural roots. Each is endowed with a rich heritage and an ethnic mix of majority African populations, with other important racial, cultural and media influences on lifestyle. Although the Caribbean population and land area form only a tiny proportion of the demographic and physical size of South Africa, many of the social, economic, cultural and communication issues are similar. According to a former Secretary General of the Commonwealth and also of the Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM):

maximize the benefits of working together, in an environment in which several parts of the region pull in different directions, defying the compulsions of the 21st century – heeding instead, the siren songs of a history of separateness bequeathed by colonialism. You cannot pursue the search for excellence in the media in such areas as improving the quality of professional services through training, or enlarging employment opportunities, or capturing the gains of technology; you cannot bring telecommunications within the reach of ordinary people, unless at another level, the regional level, the search for excellence upgrades the quality of our human resources and allows regional standards to lift the level that the regional parts must strive to attain.” [Ramphal, 1994:1]
While these concerns were addressed to a Caribbean audience, they have clear implications for other similar parts of the world. Ramphal identifies the critical importance of carefully designed and effectively implemented communications, media and technology policies as key strategic variables in altering common patterns of inequality and dependency. In an era described as the Age of Information, the main global imbalance in information flows is also replicated in unacceptable internal inequalities within our countries and regions. These will also need to be addressed if the negative consequences of globalization are to be mitigated and the fruits of Caribbean cultural empowerment and the African cultural renaissance are to be enjoyed early, within this new century of this third millennium. In striving for closer cultural and media collaboration, the two regions must engage in new thinking and bold and creative experimentation in preparing for the challenges of what I here call the Digital Millennium. We argue here that policy planners in Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere must create the contexts for such measures as Internet based-programming, as well as traditional media content exchanges, academic and training interchanges, ethnic language studies and the use of cultural diplomacy as key activities towards the common strategic goals of sustainable development and empowerment.

Definitions and Focus

In many parts of the world, the term Caribbean connotes sun-drenched islands, which are the playgrounds of European and North American tourists. Through other perspectives, the Caribbean is also identified with the music and culture of Reggae and Rastafari, with the Soca and Calypso Carnival and with a history of spectacular sporting achievements. And indeed, the Caribbean is all of the above. We celebrate the breath-taking beauty of our physical environment as we take pride in the universally acclaimed cultural heritage of icons such as Marcus Garvey, Bob Marley, Garfield Sobers, Jimmy Cliff, Louise Bennett, David Rudder, the Mighty Sparrow, the Reggae Boyz and many others. But the Caribbean is also much more. The wider Caribbean encompasses the diverse mix of peoples, cultures and activities emanating from the many countries washed by, or bordering on, the Caribbean Sea. This includes territories with an Anglophone, Francophone, Spanish, Dutch or Amerindian colonial heritage. The wider region is home to a combined population of over 35 million people, including the people of Cuba (11 million), the Dominican Republic (8 million), Haiti (7 million), Puerto Rico (3.8 million), Jamaica (2.5 million), Trinidad and Tobago (1.4 million), Guyana (800,000), Barbados (300,000), Belize (250,000), and the rest of the Eastern Caribbean (less than 500,000). It is this historical and cultural mix that accords to the Caribbean its uniqueness and global outlook.

While understanding the term Caribbean in this wider context, the analysis in this paper will focus mainly on the Anglophone territories, with Jamaica as a case study, but highlighting many of the trends evident in the wider region. Jamaica has a predominantly African population (97.8%) with a small minority of East Indians (1.3%) whites (0.2%), Chinese (0.2%) and other ethnic groups (0.5%) (Census 1991). It is the largest of the English-speaking territories and the first to
attain political independence from Britain in August 1962. In common with most other countries in the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) area, Jamaica is a constitutional monarchy within the Commonwealth, although this status is under review as part of a process of constitutional reform. The economy relies primarily on tourism, bauxite mining and traditional export agricultural crops such as sugarcane, bananas and citrus. The illiteracy rate exceeds 15%, with a substantial additional group of semi-literate. According to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica, unemployment in 1997 stood at 15.7 %, with the highest levels being among women and youths. These demographic trends within Jamaica reflect the pattern in the majority of other countries in the region.

The English-speaking Caribbean by itself consists of over 5 million people living in a range of islands and mainland territories formerly colonized by Britain. While some countries (Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana) reflect a strong presence of East Indians in their population, the majority of people in the region trace their ancestral home to West Africa. The European traffic in slaves re-created in the Caribbean area, population centers of transported Africans, who were to become the dominant ethnic and cultural group in a majority of these countries. For Jamaica alone, inward movement of African slaves, which started in the mid 17th Century (1650s), reached a total of 747,500 by the first decade of the 19th Century (1810). Among the African points of origin for the trade to Jamaica were Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward and Gold Coasts (Ghana), the Bight of Benin, the Bight of Biafra and Central Africa (Alleyne,1998:40).

Despite the passage of up to five hundred years since the start of this process, there is substantial cultural and linguistic retentions from Africa within Caribbean cultural life. Even in circumstances of displacement, the African diaspora in the region maintain important linkages with their ancestral homeland. “(D)istance did not affect the invisible links, and singing helped re-inforce old beliefs brought from the Motherland, to maintain spiritual loyalties and fulfill obligations to ancestors…” (Lewin, 1998:8). In the early decades of the 20th century, one hundred years after the abolition of slavery, these links with Africa were still being nurtured in the campaigns of Marcus Garvey for black empowerment in what he envisaged as a future united and wealthy African homeland. Garvey’s organizational and ideological influences were evident throughout many parts of East, West and Southern Africa in the 1920s and 30s, and even today, his ideas and his organization remain influential in aspects of African thought and society. “Garvey’s life mission could only be achieved through the liberation of Africa from European rule and the creation in that continent of an economically advanced, politically powerful and militarily impregnable national homeland for all Black peoples…” (Hughes in Lewis and Warner Lewis, 1994: 101).

Other visions of the linkage between Africa, the Caribbean and the black diaspora have emerged more recently on either sides of the once dreaded ‘middle passage’. These included the active support provided by Caribbean peoples for the anti-apartheid liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Caribbean voices such
as those of Michael Manley, Angela King, Shridath Ramphal, Lucille Mar,"nMaurice Bishop and Fidel Castro and of artistes and writers such as Bob Marley,"nPeter Tosh, Derek Walcott, Stuart Hall and CLR James have resonated globally"n in the cause of decolonization, self-determination and liberation from oppression."nDespite an absence of direct people-to-people contact, there is an enduring"nrelationship between the two regions. Popular Caribbean adulation of African"nleaders such as Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and the South African patriarch Nelson"nMandela, expressed overwhelmingly during their visits to Jamaica and the"nCaribbean in 1966 and 1991 respectively, suggests a sustained linkage and"naffinity. The recent establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Jamaica"nand South Africa (April 2000) formalizes a linkage, built both on historical ties"nand on the prospect of economic co-operation and mutual trade.

**Seeking Renewal**

In population as well as geographical terms, South Africa is much larger than the"nwidener Caribbean and vastly more so than the English speaking Caribbean region."nAccording to figures from the latest available census (1996), South Africa is"nhome to 40.6 million people, of which 34.7 million are black or of partial African"nancestry. The white population is 4.4 million, Indians 1 million and unspecified"nothers 0.4 million. Of the country’s 9 provinces, KwaZulu-Natal is the largest at"n8.4 million people, while Northern Cape (0.8 m) is the smallest. Eleven main"nlanguages are spoken across the country, with isiZulu (9.2), isiXhosa (7.2) and"nAfrikaans (5.8) being the most widely used.

South Africa recently emerging from decades of international isolation aided"nby popular political struggles leading to democratic elections in 1994 and 1999."nIt is now engaged in a process of internal re-construction and re-integration into"nthe global economy. Although it remains the largest and most prosperous"neconomy in Southern Africa, there are many structural weaknesses and social"nconcerns. As a legacy of apartheid, 19% of the population is illiterate and another"n24% is barely able to read and write. This means that close to half the population"nis functionally illiterate in Western definition of the term. While 34% of the"npopulation have some secondary education, only 6% have been exposed to higher"neducation. Despite a wealth of precious metals, other minerals, agricultural and"nmanufacturing resources, the gross national product (GNP) per capita in 1997"nwas US$3,400. Unemployment at 1997 rose to an estimated 22%, with a"ndisproportionately high rate of 29.3 % among blacks compared to 4.4% among"nthe white population (Roux, 1999: 50). These factors have an important bearing"non the capacity of South Africa to re-gear itself in the emerging era of globaliza"ntion.

Political and social leaders have identified the need for a reawakening of"nAfrican consciousness and self-confidence as a precondition for what has been"ndescribed as a cultural, economic and political renaissance. Reuq Khoza"ndescribes the process of renewal in terms of being masters of one’s own destiny."nHe argues that at the core of the African renaissance vision is, or should be, the"nacceptance that Africa’s people and their institutions have a capacity and the
responsibility to create, foster and maintain economic, political, social and moral processes and practices that define Africans as competent, proud citizens of the world, on a par with the best in the world. The African renaissance is a concept that insists that technical and economic efficiency and processes are not ends in themselves, but are only important for the goals they seek to achieve. According to Khoza, this objective is “the development and prosperity of Africa as a geo-economic space, and of its people, defined not by race, but by psychic identity...It is to create an African, in his individual and institutional manifestations, as not merely a product of his environment but one who creates the environment and shapes the events.” (Khoza, 1999:279-280).

Among the leading exponent of such a process of renewal in Africa, is South African President Thabo Mbeki, who places the challenge in political terms:

The new African world which the African renaissance seeks to build is one of democracy, peace and stability, sustainable development and a better life for the people, nonracism and nonsexism, equality among the nations, and a just and democratic system of international governance. None of this will come about of its own. Inasmuch as we liberated ourselves from colonialism through struggle, so will it be that the African renaissance will be victorious only as a result of protracted struggle that we ourselves must wage (Mbeki, 1999: xviii).

Such a reaffirmation of the positive values in African life is not necessarily in contradiction to the emerging innovations in communication and information technology. In a 1998 address, Jay Naidoo, Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting in South Africa, suggested that the society will need to grapple with both issues of cultural re-awakening as well as other “practical effort towards the realization of an African Renaissance”. Naidoo observed that “the modern information/communication sector holds out the hope of generating better and more highly paid jobs for the peoples of Africa”. With a large rural population, an economy based in part on traditional agriculture and mining, rising unemployment and with high levels of illiteracy, the challenge is to confront the seeming tension in the interface between traditional lifestyles and emerging technologies for productivity. According to Naidoo: “Over the past few years, digital technologies have demonstrated efficiency, flexibility and effectiveness in the production of goods and the delivery of services, as well as enhancing the capacity for innovation and creativity”. He also pointed out, however, that “without a carefully defined strategy, they may also perpetuate and exacerbate the development gap. Therefore we need an integrated, comprehensive and strategic approach to the challenges of information and communication technology and the telecommunications sector, by government, the private sector, international and regional organizations” (Naidoo, 1998).

Many of these developmental issues and concerns are shared by policy planners and development specialists in the Caribbean region and elsewhere in
the global south. Jamaica’s Minister of Information, Maxine Henry-Wilson, noted that countries such as her own were “receivers rather than drivers of technology”, a situation which she sees as a major disadvantage in the appropriate application of the innovations to the development needs of the country (Gleaner, 14-4-2000: 3). At the heart of these comments are the issues of definition, of access to and use of technology, and the corresponding implications for identities, cultures and human development.

Technology and Culture

Definition of the term technology is not a settled issue. McOmber (1999:137-153) delineates three meanings of technology assumed in popular discussion: technology as instrumentality, technology as industrialization and technology as novelty. He questions the accuracy of each, in a search for a more appropriate and precise and comprehensive referent. He argues that the notions of technology as instrumentality describes all the objects and practices deployed in any culture to manage its existence. While McOmber sees merit in this usage, he notes disapprovingly that this approach could lead to the idea that technology is neutral, simply performing the role of amoral tools.

The idea of technology as industrialization treats with the concept as interchangeable with modernity. He challenges this approach, as used for example by Postman (1993), charging that technology is being equated with an era (e.g. the technological age, the stone age), which undermines the existence of other and earlier forms of technological innovation. This is closely related to the concept of technology as novelty, used as a code for whatever is new. McOmber (1999) regards this usage as ahistorical. In this scenario, “new technologies forever replace old ones, continually compelling reorganization of social structures, values and priorities. According to this definition, what was once a (new) technology has been displaced, and what is technologically new will be displaced by later developments. He identified Negroponte (1994) as a prime user of this notion of technology and argues that there is a failure to acknowledge that inherent in each ‘new technology’ are the seeds of the previous innovations.

A definition of technology as cultural practice is recommended by McComber (1999:137). He supports the usage employed by Bush (1981), who regards technology as “a form of human cultural activity that applies the principles of science and mechanics to the solution of problems”. McOmber maintains that this approach emphasizes the ways in which all technologies arise, in the interests of solving problems for some person or group. There is merit in his argument in favor of maintaining a relationship between culture and technology and to avoid a unilateral view of this relationship. “From such a perspective, every dimension of the Internet, from its very existence to its overall purposes as an educational or entertainment medium, to the contents of specific web pages, is an outcome of human choices, regardless of whether choices are intentionally made” (McOmber, 1999: 137-153). The technologies we use are, thus, not neutral or value free applications, but ones consciously or unconsciously designed in a specific cultural context, to address a societal need or want.
In this conception it is clear that societies and individuals should carefully select, adapt and apply the technologies in a manner that is relevant to each societal or to each personal need. That which may be regarded as low technology in one part of the world may be seen as relatively high-tech in another. The evaluation should not just be confined to the tools but also to the range of available content and messages to determine if they are appropriate to deal successfully with specific human and social needs, taking into account the cultural traditions of the intended users. It is within this context that we examine some key developments within the media landscape in South Africa and Jamaica.

South Africa: Industry Overview

Television broadcasting in South Africa is dominated by the state-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Although the Corporation was established by Act of Parliament in 1936, it functioned as a radio service until 1976, when television was established in South Africa. After a history dominated by service to successive apartheid regimes, SABC television was re-structured in the post-apartheid 1990s. In 1996, its television service was re-organized to create three free-to-air channels: SABC1 (music and entertainment, largest coverage), SABC 2 (diverse cultural and ethnic output) SABC 3, (English-language broadcaster with educational and public service focus). Each channel attempts to reach a different audience and to reflect in both presenters and programming, the racial mix within the population. The SABC also operates a satellite television service beamed to neighboring territories (see Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 2001; Teer-Tomaselli, 1998, 1998/9, 2002).

The SABC is funded by a combination of license fee revenue (diminishing), commercial advertising and by the leasing of its facilities and services (see Barnett 1999a). In advancing a more aggressively income-generating mandate, the Corporation, for example, authorized in 1999 an innovative joint venture with Vodacom, one of the mobile telephone providers, to establish a commercial “Newsbreak” subscriber service via cellphones (Sandison, 2000). However, the Corporation continues to regard itself as a Public Service Broadcaster, engaging in commercial ventures to better finance its public service mandate. An average of 63% imported content was presented across SABC channels in 1997. SABC 1 and SABC 3 imported most content, estimated at an average of 71%, with SABC 2 importing an estimated 46% of its broadcast minutes in the month reviewed. (Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 2002).

The television broadcasting monopoly of the SABC was broken in 1986 with the introduction of the Electronic Media Network (M-Net) as a subscriber television service (Collins 1993). Part of the global Nethold subscriber television group, MNet operates as a predominantly commercial operation, without the public service mandate carried by the SABC. It is owned mainly by a consortium of newspaper firms. The company’s subscriber base is managed by Multi-Choice, whose own subscriber management service spans a large number of other African as well as European countries.
SABC's main competitor at the level of free to air broadcasting is e-TV, which won its licence and began operation in 1998. The company is majority owned by a consortium of black businesses, with a 20% equity partnership by Time-Warner. e-TV employs digital technology throughout its broadcast operation, which is conducted mainly in English. It has a high (98%) non-South African programme content, relying on imported content for its mainly urban audience [Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 1999].

The SABC also dominates in the provision of radio services. It operates over twenty national and regional radio stations, many directed at special language groups and cultural communities. The radio sector was also rationalized in the 1996 media re-structuring, with several stations being divested to private communities of interest or regional operators.

The newspaper sector is dominated by major business groups, including Times Media Limited, Argus Holding Limited, Johannesburg Consolidated Investments and the National Empowerment Consortium, involving new players from the emerging black business interests. There is also a dynamic community media sector, including community radio stations, newspapers and an active market in news and feature magazines, with an emphasis on cultural activities and art forms. (see Laden, 2002; Louw 1993 and Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 1999).

**Jamaica: Industry Overview**

The commercial electronic media environment in Jamaica consists of eight commercial radio stations operated by a total of six media houses. The leading radio station, Irie FM, presents a music-based format dominated by reggae music, with a strong sports content. This station, by creatively promoting itself as the music station of the masses now overshadows the once dominant RJR Supreme Sound, whose parent company, Radio Jamaica owns two other radio stations, Fame FM and Radio 2, as well as one terrestrial TV service, Television Jamaica (TVJ). Of the two other terrestrial television services, CVM is run by a group of businessmen and private film and video producers, and LOVE TV is a religious station owned by an association of Church grouping. The other radio stations include LOVE FM (counterpart to LOVE TV), KLAS FM, Hot 102 and Power 106 (part-owned by the leading newspaper publisher, the Gleaner Company).

An increasingly dynamic area of the electronic media landscape is the community and educational media sector. The leading community station, Roots FM, covers a large section of inner city Kingston, while the religious community radio, The Breadth of Chance (TBC), addresses local social and religious issues. The sole educational radio service in Jamaica, Radio Mona, has been operating on the main campus on the University of the West Indies for a decade. Under a development program funded by the University, its reach will be extended to most of the country and its programming linked to commercial advertising. These community/educational radio stations recently established a collaborative network for programming and personnel exchanges. A fourth station, Bluefields radio, operated in rural Jamaica by a community association for less than a year before collapsing under the weight of internal conflicts and financial pressures.
At the start of 2001, a total of thirty-seven licensed subscriber television (STV) providers operated cable delivery systems in Jamaica, supplying an average of 60 channels to close to a million household subscribers. Most of the programming consisted of a relay of US and European cable channels. As the great majority of traditional television programming is also imported mainly from the United States, TV viewing in Jamaica is a high volume exposure to foreign programming, mixed with aggressive advertising on the terrestrial broadcast stations. In this commercially driven environment, stations devote little time and space to the needs of important segments of the local audience or to deal adequately with certain important national, regional or global issues. There is a growing demand for good quality local television content. Educational broadcasting has been a casualty of this emphasis on commercial financing, regardless of the nature of ownership. There is a dearth of programming catering to youth, ethnic minorities and the elderly, and where these exist, they are provided mainly as fillers between sponsored programming. This lack of public interest programming became more acute when government withdrew from ownership of broadcast media, divesting its radio and television service, the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (JBC) to the private sector market leader, Radio Jamaica Limited, in June 1997.

In response to this situation, alternative outlets and public service programming have just begun to emerge, in the form of new cable television channels presenting local programs and community events. Using the community channel which is required under the ‘must carry clause’ of every cable license, both citizens and cable companies have started to create their own local programming from community events, local stage productions and community bulletin boards. Some of the content for these channels is created from crude and sometimes unauthorized recordings of local theatre productions and stage shows, produced with low quality equipment and skills. However, since the latter part of the year 2000, additional local cable channels have emerged, including Creative Television (CTV) offering a more diverse fare of high quality local productions. CTV is presented by the Creative Production and Training Center (CPTC), a government-run multimedia production agency. There is also a small but growing and active audience for internet-based content, serviced by the twelve Internet Service Providers (ISPs), led by the dominant telecommunications company Cable and Wireless Jamaica Limited.

The print market, which competes with the electronic media for both advertising and audience/readership, is dominated by the Gleaner Company publications, with the tabloid Observer providing the growing source of competition in that sub-sector. The major newspapers as well as the national radio stations are actively promoting their websites as alternative advertising and information media. A small collection of weekly publications, led by the Herald, and a number of regional, community and special interest publications, complete the active print media landscape.

All these existing media organizations rely on an advertising market, which is currently contracting in line with trends in the wider economy. Even so, the print
media sector has been capturing a greater share of the available advertising dollar, placing even greater pressure on the increased number of broadcast media outlets. These trends have led to instability, particularly within the radio sector, as stations compete for advertising, re-cycle staff and re-fashion programming to attract both audiences and advertisers. The segmentation of the audience into niches for specialized media servicing is among the measures being used by the broadcasting houses to cope with the competition.

Notwithstanding these pressures, the commercial broadcast sector faces even greater competition from imminent new entrants and arising from emerging technological innovations. The emerging television and local cable television services are already challenging the traditional TV providers for audience and are pressing for access to advertising. In Jamaica, Cable TV operators are barred from advertising and rely on subscription as their main revenue source. However, this policy is under review, following representations from the STV and advertising sectors. Both these groups and others in the society support the call for more local and community-based television, funded by local and national advertising. Eventually a nationwide network of competing wireless subscriber TV providers will join the landscape, with possibilities of more competitive delivery of a wider range of other telecommunications services, including voice telephony services.

Regulation

The principal regulatory body for electronic media operation in Jamaica is the Broadcasting Commission, established in 1985 under the Radio Broadcasting and Re-Diffusion Act. Nine commissioners are appointed by the Head of State, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The Commission’s work is supported by an Office, headed by an Executive Director, and staffed with legal, technical, policy and financial specialists and other support staff. Commissioners serve five-year terms, and can only be removed by resignation, death or an affirmative resolution debated in Parliament. These provisions offer some protection from partisan political pressures, and contribute to greater continuity and stability in the leadership of the agency. However, the Commission’s scope of responsibilities, administrative structure and method of operation are under review, to strengthen its regulatory authority and create greater autonomy from direct government control.

Common Issues

Both Jamaica and South Africa share many common policy issues and development challenges. While each policy environment will doubtless require some area-specific solutions, both regions are directly affected by internal and wider global factors amenable to common approaches. Among the important common policy issues arising within both environments are:

- Technology: Origins and Uses
- Imbalances in the Global Information Flow
- The Impact of Convergence
- The Role of Multi-lateral Institutions such as the WTO
- Regulation and Policy-making, and
- Information Deficits and Divergence

These issues are further explored in the following sections.  

**Technology Origins**

As is widely known, most communications and information technologies emerge from the global North and are transferred, usually through commercial arrangements, to the South. In the case of the Caribbean and to a lesser extent South Africa, the consumer appliances as well as the studio and transmission equipment are sourced mainly from manufacturers outside the respective regions. It is still true that telecommunications and broadcasting equipment or components used in the global South are imported mainly from the United States, Canada, Japan, and United Kingdom, and to a lesser degree from France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Italy. Canada’s Northern Telecom is the dominant supplier of telecommunications hardware to the Caribbean region. Most of the consumer appliances currently in Jamaica come from the United States and Japan. These include the estimated 2,019,000 radio sets, the 849,000 television sets, the 320,000 VCRs, the 21,000 Satellite Receivers (TVROs) and all equipment for subscriber television connections within Jamaica. Similarly, the great majority of media content, particularly television, is imported into the region. Brown quantified this external television programming import into the Caribbean in the mid 1980s at 87%. The level of penetration in the region is likely to have increased since then, with the spread of cable television with dominant foreign content. However, it is not just content that is imported. Significantly, the key strategic policy decisions about the design and use of the delivery technologies and appliances are also made externally.
This is reflected in Figure 1 highlighting the hierarchy of local versus foreign technology decision making in countries of the underdeveloped world. While the major strategic decisions (top of diagram) are taken by the industrialized global powers, it is the minor or operational decisions, (reflected in the lower part of the diagram) which are being made by the recipient societies of the global South. An example of this dynamic of globalization from above, is the software in the computers we use on a regular basis. Strategic decisions about the main operating system, and in some cases other specific applications are already made when the system is bought and imported into our societies. We may be able to choose between one imported operating system and another, but in either case, crucial decisions have already been made and embedded in the software, directing how we will use this tool. Some more advanced users may be able to address certain secondary issues by using programming skills to embed additional, but compatible, computer programs. But the great majority of end-users will be deciding on operational issues of file management, data retrieval, security measures and choosing from a pre-selected bank of type styles or fonts.

Wherever these technologies are in use, it is an inescapable reality that most of these tools were created initially to address the military and other strategic needs in the United States and Europe. This is consistent with McOmber’s (1999:137) approach of seeing technology as linked to the culture out of which it emerges. While some imported technologies can be of immense professional and societal value outside of their culture of origin, they have to be systematically adapted to the circumstances of their new use in order to gain maximum social advantage. This approach avoids the elevation of any type of technology to trans-cultural status, to be used only according to the manufacturer’s prescriptions. The clear
implication of the strategic, critical approach being advocated here is that
developing countries such as Jamaica and South Africa should seek to adapt
imported technologies to their local contexts, even as they seek to also innovate
within their own cultural space.

The technology policies of the industrialized countries and the prevailing
practices by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the IMF and the World Bank
often militate against such strategic uses of the technologies. Patent
arrangements, intellectual property agreements and loan conditionalities can
significantly reduce the level of local control and creativity in the use of imported
innovations. Many innovations developed in, or originating from the global
South, are preempted, registered and exploited by some transnational
corporations, while technical assistance and loan agreements often privilege
foreign consultants if not specifically prescribing the employment of nationals of
the specific donor country. It is clear that the imported technology is not only the
hardware but also the software in the form of operating systems, the expertise for
installation, servicing and control as well as the capacity for negotiation.
Equipment and software for media and information technology applications often
arrive under proprietary arrangements with the manufacturers, and in many cases
there are specifications for remote diagnostic use of exclusive tools and the
requirement for repair overseas.

Such problems cannot be effectively tackled without a concerted effort, as
discussed earlier, at mastering the adaptation, use and management of the
emerging technologies, including systems of design, patenting, marketing and
operation. We have to learn the ropes, so to speak, with the ultimate objective of
originating a significant proportion of our own software and hardware needs.
Where our innovations in the cultural sphere of art, music, cuisine and ethnic
design should be marketed internationally, due care needs to be observed to
secure the intellectual property rights and related economic returns. This applies
to individuals as it does to leaders of community groups, non-governmental
organizations (NGOs) and government agencies.

With such an approach, the present dominance in the form of a rampant
globalization from above via conglomerates, multi-lateral agencies and wealthy
states, can be mitigated by the creative adaptation of appropriate tools, media and
content, deployed by ordinary citizens and their local organizations for their own
use and for global inter-linkage (Brecher, Childs & Cutler, 1993: xi). In this
way, we are already creating a potent counter-process of globalization from
below. The South needs to adopt the mental attitude and practical approaches
which emphasize up-loading our own content under controlled conditions to
national, regional and global data-bases, and not just down-loading information
from global networks such as the Internet. Both in the areas of audio-visual
media and in text-based content services, developing countries must seek to
create and sustain a counter-flow of information, as an alternative to the vast
volumes of information flooding in from the North. The process should also
involve enhancing existing levels of information exchange, in an effort to foster
more education and development using the accumulated knowledge and appropriate technologies of the historically oppressed societies.

**Imbalances in Global Information Flows**

At the macro-global level, technologies of media and telecommunications together constitute the largest industry and by far the most extensive interconnected global system in the history of humanity. Their many tentacles include a vast network of landlines, submarine cables, satellites in orbit, earth stations, other terrestrial receiving and switching stations, cell sites, Internet-linked computer networks, cable television, broadcasting systems and an immense array of support systems, all connected and mostly interactive. As an example of the continuous workings of this telecommunication process, we may identify, at the start of the 21st century, the world’s over 700-million telephone lines carrying over 50-billion minutes of international telecommunications traffic. These are the infrastructure of globalization, shown in Figure 2 below.

The technologies may be operating at the level of a global area network (GAN), regionally, or in a wide area network (WAN), within urban boundaries or metropolitan area networks (MAN), or simply at the local, community or corporate plant area level (LAN). Nowadays, all these linked networks end up on the desktop, laptop or increasingly on palm-top. This chain of usage is dominated by global elite groups, reflecting mainly that section of the population with the means of buying into or gaining access to these services. Regardless of their content, powerful in its own right, the existence of this level of interconnectivity has radically reshaped the societies both in the Caribbean and in Southern Africa.

Florida International University (1996), Telecoms Development Program Guide

![Diagram of the Information Sector](image)

**Figure 2. Anatomy of the Information Sector**
It is this interconnected network that represents the anatomy of the global information society.

**Convergence and Globalization**

The mega-merger between on-line giant, America Online (AOL) and media conglomerate Time-Warner in January 2000, provides a graphic example of the process of convergence in the United States, the world’s major supplier of media products. A section of the cultural industry providing news, cable television programming, music, movies and books has been brought together with another industry segment specializing in internet browsers and multimedia on-line services. The synergies involved have also led to convergence by other players at the level of the industry. The inter-working of the many technologies involved represents a preliminary stage of technological convergence; a concept that is itself embodied in the operation of the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW).

**Technology Convergence**

![Diagram of Technology Convergence]

Source: *Intermedia*, 27(2), 1999:1

**Figure 3. Convergence of Information and Communication Technologies**
This convergence of technologies, as shown in Figure 3, promises greater efficiency by combining the use of traditional media and new media technologies.

Telecommunications, computing, satellite technology, optics and lasers are the building blocks of the new on-line alternative media. But they also facilitate new ways of operating the traditional media, as newspapers are available on-screen and electronic media may be printed out and circulated at will. Radio and video images may be interchanged with web-site options using WEBTV technology and hundreds of new satellite channels are now available in place of the limited range of terrestrial television services. As a result the lines, which previously separated sectors, are becoming increasingly blurred as industries merge and new ones emerge, as in Figure 4 below.

Source: Intermedia

**Figure 4. Industry Convergence**

Such technology and industry convergence have led to convergence within the market and occupational areas. Entertainment, education and information - the traditional ruling triumvirate in traditional doctrines of media functions (to inform, educate and entertain) have become conjoined to create such hybrid

**WTO, Telecommunications and New Media**

The World Trade Organization (WTO), as the international body overseeing the rules of trade between countries, assumed most of the functions of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1995. GATT trade figures show that the service sector in developed economies grew from 55% to 63% of the Gross Domestic product (GDP), and in developing economies like South Africa and Jamaica from 45% to 49% between 1970 and 1987, with a similar growth pattern in the decade following.

In the light of the increasing growth of global trade in services, of which telecommunications was a significant contributor, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), was one of the principal outcomes of the Uruguay Round. An important and explicit reason for including telecom services in multilateral trade negotiations is the special relationship between telecom services and trade in other areas.

In contrast to the intense pressure by the WTO towards more rapid deregulation of telecoms, there has been an uneven pace of market liberalization for the telecommunications services (see Barnett 1999b). Over the last decade, several countries have liberalized their domestic telecom markets, during the Uruguay Round of the trade negotiations. By 1999, seventy-two countries agreed to open their markets to foreign competition. However, some 116 member countries of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) had not yet agreed to this process at the start of the year 2000. According to the Director General of the ITU, Yoshio Utsumi, while these countries represented a relatively small proportion of the current global telecoms market, they contained 45% of the world’s population. In his terms, “they therefore represent a very important market for the future, particularly for technologies such as third generation wireless”. This is part of the unfinished business of the Uruguay Round.

It is acknowledged in the GATS Agreement that in some cases the pace of liberalization has to be phased, particularly in developing countries. It is also accepted that political action will be required in instances where there is a dominant or monopoly provider. In both Jamaica and South Africa, a monopoly provider of mainline telecommunications services effectively controls the national networks, with newly licensed cellular providers offering a limited level of competition. The dominant positions of both Cable and Wireless Jamaica Limited and South Africa’s Telecommunications Corporation (Telkom) are already being affected by the commitments of each country made to the WTO: “South Africa is a signatory to the WTO and has indicated its intention to liberalize trade in basic telecommunications services” (SA’s Draft Telecoms Policy: 2000). “The regulatory commitments made by Jamaica to the WTO will be fulfilled.” [Jamaica’s Telecoms Policy: 1998) The common WTO commitments by both countries include:
- The creation of an independent regulator
- The public availability of licensing criteria
- Universal service undertakings –
- Guarantees for interconnection of competitors into the network
- Overall safeguards for competition

Similar commitments apply to other countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and to members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. These commitments oblige governments to review their existing telecommunications policies with a view to immediate or eventual conformity to the terms of the WTO Agreement. In particular, they will be required to timetable the end of the monopoly arrangements, which some have, and to introduce some degree of competition in the provision of telecommunication services within defined timelines.

Where countries have irrevocable contractual commitments for monopoly control of the wired network or basic services, they will need to look within the area of value-added services to initiate competition. In cases, such as Jamaica, where there are no contractual arrangements for cellular and mobile communication services, these have become the first targets for the introduction of competition, as they have been in South Africa for some time.

In any event, the monopoly carriers within the regions were served notice by the WTO agreements and by pressure from such other agencies as the US FCC and the ITU. The likelihood of renewal of inequitable exclusive agreements in the telecom and information technology sectors is significantly reduced. The major concern, however, is that many countries are locked into these arrangements for decades to come. Jamaica’s earlier contractual commitments for C&W monopoly control of the basic wired network for example, would have expired in the year 2013. However, recent policy changes in Jamaica’s telecommunications sector arising from strong public advocacy for competition, as well as from World Trade Organization (WTO) pressures for conformity to Uruguay Round commitments and bilateral negotiations, have led to changes in these contractual arrangements. Negotiations with Cable and Wireless towards restructuring the industry have led to new legislation, paving the way for limited immediate competition, and after 2003, an opening up of the sector for competition in basic services. Reference to basic telecommunications services under WTO negotiations covers both private and public services that involve end-to-end transmission of customer-supplied information. This includes the relay of voice or data from sender to receiver.

Under the Uruguay round, it was also agreed that basic telecoms services provided over network infrastructure as well as those provided through resale would be part of the commitments. Market access commitments would apply to cross border supply of telecoms, those provided through foreign firms or commercial presence, and would include the ability to own and operate independent telecom network infrastructure. Among the kinds of services subject
to negotiation were: voice telephony, data transmission, telex, telegraph, facsimile, private leased circuit services, fixed and mobile satellite systems and services, cellular telephony, mobile data services, paging and personal communication systems.

Value-added services, which were not part of the extended negotiations, came in for later consideration when some countries made commitments for liberalization of access to these. Examples include on-line data processing, on-line database storage and retrieval, electronic and data interchange, e-mail and voice-mail.

The WTO provision relating to excluding monopolies contains the most relevant basis for reforming and modernizing the telecoms regimes in the Caribbean and South African. In requiring an end to exclusive privileges and agreements, the WTO demands that its members ensure that all competing service suppliers, seeking to take advantage of the commitments, are able to get access to and use of the basic public telecommunications infrastructure. This applies to both networks and services, on reasonable and non-discriminatory bases. This provision strengthens the hands of weak governments negotiating new competitive environments with incumbent transnational corporations. At the same time, it is in this area of connecting and inter-working of competing providers that a major challenge exists, especially in countries with weak or non-existent regulatory institutions.

Apart from the elimination of monopolies and exclusive service providers (Article VIII), the more important general obligations under GATS and the WTO include discontinuation of the concept of Most Favored Nation (MFN) in international trade in services, and the conduct of trade with special regard for transparency. Under the agreed MFN rules, governments must not discriminate between members or other non-member countries of the WTO. The principle applies to all services and all measures covered by the GATS agreement. The provision for transparency seeks to bring the services sector in line with trade rules in the wider arena, and includes transparent licensing agreements.

While the competitive regime advocated by the WTO is likely to be beneficial to some developing countries dominated by monopoly providers, one should not lose sight of the overall perception of the WTO as an organization representing mainly the interests of international capital and the industrialized countries. Following settlement of the 1997 telecoms trade agreement, a New York Times lead writer, David Sanger, triumphantly declared, for example that: “The agreement, for the first time, empowers the WTO to go inside the borders of the seventy countries that signed it to review how quickly and effectively they are deregulating a key part of their economies... And if the WTO finds evidence of foot-dragging it can, in theory at least, authorize penalties” (NY Times February 17, 1997:1). The subsequent mass demonstrations in Seattle in the United States and at numerous other WTO negotiating venues also dramatized the negative public perception of the multilateral trade body (Klee, 1999). Further, the WTO is regarded by many, not only as a tool to facilitate more aggressive competition among the industrialized countries, but also as means to
re-colonize the key services sector in poorer countries and regions of the world. In this regard, Dan Schiller notes:

In the post-WTO liberalized environment, the transnational orientation of national telecommunications systems was dramatically strengthened, even as their characteristically limited social-welfare features were targeted for attack. Strong pressure was exerted on system operators ‘to police and protect the newly established market freedoms’. The ‘market discipline’ that was so loudly heralded, however, actually comprised a form of preferment that discriminated systematically in favor of the rate policies and service offerings demanded by transnational business users (Schiller, 1999: 49).

So while major transformation is taking place in the global IT and telecom sector affecting the Caribbean region and Southern Africa, existing monopoly arrangements have to be systematically dismantled in order for the societies to realize the full benefits. While the short-term advantages conveyed by WTO protocols have to be embraced, a vision of the long-term strategic interests of the countries of the region global south has to be developed and maintained. While it is possible the monopoly arrangements may be overtaken or circumvented by global market conditions and technological innovations, trade agreements such as those with the WTO will consistently seek to empower the large trading blocs of the north and so undermine any benefits gained under liberalization policies.

**Regulation and Policymaking**

Central to the issue of regulation is the nature of the regulatory institutions operating within the countries under study. In an era of convergence and rapid technological transformation, the issue of what to regulate is becoming as important as how to regulate.

In Jamaica, the Broadcasting Commission was established under the Broadcasting and Radio Rediffusion Act. Up to nine Commissioners may be appointed by the Governor General, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Commissioners may be removed only through a majority decision in Parliament. Its principal functions are to advise the Minister responsible for broadcasting, to monitor the fulfillment of the law and regulations and to conduct relevant research. It has regulatory oversight for radio, television and subscriber television, with an ongoing debate over whether it should also assume responsibility for film screenings in cinemas, now the responsibility of the Cinema Authority.

While the Commission does enjoy the freedom independently to advise the government, its role should be more than advisory. The Broadcasting Commission should be empowered to receive, consider and independently grant or refuse licenses in the electronic media sector. It should also be able to implement a sanctions regime approved by government. The existing Commission, as well as policy observers, had been advocating institutional
reform along the lines suggested. As a consequence, government embarked on a review of the institution, with the prospect of creating a new Electronic Media Authority. In addition, whereas in Jamaica telecommunications institutions are regulated as part of a wider Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR), it appears inescapable that in the foreseeable future, these operators could also be regulated by an expanded regulatory agency on the model of the Canadian CRTC or the US FCC.

In South Africa, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), after 2000 known as the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA), is regarded as an independent statutory body responsible for regulation of all radio and television broadcasts in the country. Its mandate includes issues of policy formulation, and oversight of anti-trust and predatory behavior by companies within the sector. As in Jamaica, there is a separation between the regulation of broadcasting and of telecommunications, a situation that may be regarded as interim.

Such questions of the scope of regulatory agencies are among a large number of questions, which will continue to challenge policy-makers into the new century: What should fall within the regulatory remit of a single regulator? Should broadcasting, cinema and telecommunications be regulated under a single agency? How are our countries to enforce regulatory policy in an increasingly globalizing world, with many of the service providers operating from outside of the regulatory jurisdiction? Are countries managing to keep regulatory rules up-to-date in the face of changing technologies and the inexorable process of convergence? Are principles of ‘universal service’ and ‘public service broadcasting’ still relevant, in a predominantly neo-liberal, market-driven global and domestic environment? How can we fund and empower community media and keep their focus of community and grassroots issues? How should we tackle issues of ownership, including definitions on local ownership, cross ownership and majority ownership in an increasingly complex corporate system? How do we define and regulate advertising, sponsorship, and advertorial and other hybrid forms of current media output? Should we regulate the Internet at all, and if so how? Should media houses be just self-regulating, or else who should create and oversee codes of practice and standards for content? Or should we just leave all of these troubling issues to the ‘wisdom’ of the market? The urgent need for answers to each of these related questions is a measure of the need for further work in defining our agenda and in the conduct of on-going research and policy studies within our respective societies. These and many other issues will not go away, but will have to be negotiated, as we confront the complexity of media and communication policy-making in the Caribbean, Southern Africa and elsewhere, in this the digital era.

Information Deficits and Divergence
According to Nicholas Negroponte (1994), Director of MIT’s Media Lab, “in the not too distant future, only face-to-face conversations and artistic performances would exist in analog format.” Clearly he envisages a global future led by digital
technology, with limited forms of traditional interaction. This notion, however, is far from the reality of the majority of peoples of this planet and is likely to be so for much of the new century. By comparison with his optimism, we may note that after over 120 years of the telephone, more than half the world's population has still not yet encountered that innovation. And closer to home, according to World Bank statistics, more than 18,000 people in Jamaica, for example, were on the waiting list for a plain old telephone (POT) in 1997. At that time, the average wait for a telephone line was 3.8 years and the tele-density just under 18 phones per hundred of the population. Even with modest increases in penetration since then, access is still a far way off for the majority of Jamaicans. This may also be true for many other Caribbean populations and Southern African communities. For the foreseeable future, the majority of the world's peoples are likely to remain with traditional analog methods of communication. This will be the case despite the growth of a mainly urban elite using high-tech digital technologies in mainly urban and corporate interactions.

This projected scenario is reflective of the well-documented and still increasing economic disparity among global population groups and the expanding gap between the information rich and the information poor (see: McBride et al., 1980; Hills, 1992; Hamelink, 1994; Lee, 1995; Stephenson, 1999). Contemporarily, less than three in every ten radio or television sets are to be found in the Global South, while the United States and Europe together have close to 70% of the world stock of these electronic media. The world's stock of installed telephone lines is similarly skewed. Underdeveloped countries with close to 60% of the global population, share less than 5% of the world's telephone lines.

This disparity is further reflected in global tele-density ratios. While the five main industrialized countries average over 50 telephone lines per hundred of population, the equivalent figure for the 60 poorest countries was less than two lines per 100 of population in 1995. The average for the Anglophone Caribbean region is about 15 phones per hundred of population, with the equivalent figures for some other selected territories being: Haiti 0.66, Cuba 3.2, the Dominican Republic 8 and Puerto Rico 36 telephone lines per hundred of population.

South Africa's low telephone density, reported as 10 telephone lines per hundred of population in 1998, is well above the average in sub-Saharan Africa. However, even in South Africa, it falls to less than 1% per 100 households in historically black townships and rural parts of the country. Such internal disparity makes a mockery of even our methods of measurement, using teledensity ratios, which may conceal more than they reveal.

In nine of the world's most densely populated countries, it is estimated that 70% of the adult population is unable to read and write and more than half of the school-age population is out of school. (Lee 1995: 4) While a small segment of computer equipped and Internet capable professionals can gain immediate access to virtually any global data-base required, there are large population groups, which still cannot acquire basic information for economic and social survival.
In Sweden, over 30% of school age children have access to internet-linked media technologies in their homes (Intermedia, Vol. 27 (2), May, 1999), while such net-based connections in the entire African continent are being used by less than a quarter of one per cent (0.14%) of the entire population. (Article 19, London 1999). Low rates of literacy and relatively high publication prices render access to newspapers, books, magazines and newsletters remote or virtually meaningless to some sections of the population. This creates heavy and sometimes uncritical reliance on second-hand reports and on radio sets, where electricity or batteries are available.

We are observing a rapid growth in the disparity between the so-called 'information-rich' and the 'information-poor'. This process is taking place between the large group of underdeveloped and the elite industrialized countries. But divergence in access to and use of information is also taking place within these countries, reflected in the rural-urban divide, in race and gender disparities and in social class differentiation in the availability and use of new media and information technologies (Dunn, 1995). The emerging communications technologies are not global but, in reality, constitute a patchwork across the globe with a high degree of disparity in access geographically and socially.

**Center-Periphery Model**

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 6. Flows of Technology**
This perspective is consistent with the power-flows described in the early-center/periphery analysis of Johan Galtung (1981), and adapted in Figure 6 to demonstrate the modern political economy of globalization in information services. It points to the fact that although in many instances, the communication technologies are potentially global, they are not ACCESSIBLE to a large segment of social and geographical groups within the global population.

The center of the diagram represents the high-tech industrialized North, with the outer borders of the center representing the marginalized, often neglected areas of the developed countries, such as some rural communities, certain minority areas and services available to some ethnic minorities. The outer satellite circles reflect the under-developed satellite economies. The urban areas in the periphery, with their wealthy elites, are again represented by the smaller inner circles, which are drawn towards the global center. The outer rims reflect the majority of the poor and those without access to the technologies. While the arrows radiate outwards, reflecting the dominant existing flows of media content and consumer technologies, the challenge is to create arrows from the periphery to the center in significant counter-flows and a more diversified process of globalization.

**Conclusion**

Despite differences in size, countries of the Caribbean and those in Southern Africa face similar issues in the management of culture and technology, as they enter the Digital Millennium. As we have attempted to show, their common cultural, historical and economic backgrounds have created an ideal opportunity for more systematic and increased co-operation on issues of technology management, cultural interchange and international negotiations with transnational corporations and multi-lateral agencies. These conglomerates and global regulators, already highly networked from their bases in the North, exercise effective control over both technology and policy in the areas of media and information. Communities of the South must increase their own networking, deploy their own innovations and adapt existing technologies towards achieving a form of *Globalization from below*. Given existing gross disparities in people’s access to the emerging technologies, the largely recipient societies in the South will also need to create the institutions to teach the relevant skills and to re-purpose all aspects of the available technologies to suit their own needs.

Internal disparities cannot be tinkered with or ignored, but should be actively redressed by policies of universal access to media and to affordable telecom services. New approaches to public service broadcasting and the widespread use of community media have also started to prove beneficial to people’s development. Despite problems of financing and management, these channels and approaches must be used to lay the basis for originating more of our own content, creating better networks and building improved infrastructure for information dissemination and popular education. Increased institutional cooperation among regulatory and policy planning entities in both regions as well as with other countries from both North and South will become inescapable as
common needs and solutions are pursued. These and other measures are likely to help in laying a stronger foundation for shared learning, if our societies are to cope with and benefit from the innovations that will predominate in this, the Digital Millennium.

ENDNOTES
1 The chapter builds on the initial draft presented at the April 2000 International Seminar on the Political Economy of Southern Africa. The data and interview sources on Southern Africa were consulted during a series of working visits to South Africa during 1999 and 2000, based at to the University of Natal’s Graduate Program in Cultural and Media Studies (CMS). During close to a year of residency and active contact, the author was able to study many of the communication and media policy reforms being undertaken in South Africa, as the country continued to engage in post apartheid re-construction. The equivalent or contrasting policy approaches being adopted in the Caribbean provide the basis for this international and ‘inter-cultural’ analysis.

2 See also Makgoba (1999) and Tomasselli and Shepperson (2001)

3 Each of these six issues illustrates the complex practical and conceptual dilemmas facing policy-makers, activists, and academics in the light of the uneven spatial restructuring of the scales of media and communications practices discussed in detail in Barnett. In this volume).

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Chapter 6

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC MEDIA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE NAMIBIAN EXAMPLE

ANDY MASON

The Namibian Metaphor
A photographic essay on the Namib Desert by Swiss photographer Hansruedi Buchi, exhibited [April 2000] at the Durban Art Gallery, gives expression to the metaphorical and symbolic dimensions of Namibia’s vast landscapes. The absence of visual clutter allows the broader forms of the topography to settle upon the imagination. It is a landscape upon which the action of elemental forces and processes is clearly visible, and provides an apt metaphor for the Namibian media environment, where the apparent lack of confusing diversity and pluralism offers an uncluttered view of the challenges facing the development of democratic media in the Southern African region as a whole. The vast problems that exist are clearly exposed to view, as are the ‘elemental’ trans-national and historical forces that have given shape to the media environment.¹

Media, Scale and Democratisation in South Africa

*Media, Scale and Democratisation* by Clive Barnett (2000)² characterizes the process of global economic restructuring during the 1980s and 1990s as a “widespread shift from state regulation to market regulation”. The media and telecommunications industries have played a central role in this process by reshaping corporate organization and patterns of accumulation (Barker, 2000: 2).

This process has been examined in great detail by Vincent Mosco (1996), Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky (1994), Robert McChesney (1996) and Herman and McChesney (1997), amongst others. Mosco identifies ‘commodification’, ‘spatialization’ and ‘structuration’ as key entry points for the discussion of the interface between political economy and the study of the global media. ‘Spatialization’ refers to the annihilation of spatial boundaries by media technologies, a process which has been speeded up by the increasing digitization of information over the last two decades. According to McChesney, the rescripting of all forms of information into common digital codes “encourages conglomeration and vertical integration because as all forms of communication turn to digital format, media products become more easily transferable between genres” (McChesney, 1996: 4). The convergence of technologies allows both the vertical integration of media organizations now capable of controlling all aspects of production, marketing and distribution, and horizontal integration across media categories. The result has been “a significant extension of the geographical scale upon which the activities of these industries is organized” (Barnett, 2000).
Through his collaborations with McChesney and Chomsky, Edward Herman has done much to bring to the attention of media scholars and the general public the extent to which “a genuinely global commercial media market” is now dominated “by three or four dozen large transnational corporations (TNCs), with fewer than ten mostly U.S.-based media conglomerates towering over the global market” (Herman and McChesney, 1997: 1).

There is a strong sense pervading the work of these authors that the concentration of global media power in so few hands is inimical to the notion of democracy. As McChesney asserts: “The implications for political democracy, by any rudimentary standard, are troubling” (1996: 4). Barnett, however, is more cautious, arguing that “[i]n such accounts, both globalization and democracy are considered in narrowly economic terms” (2000). He strives for a more balanced way of ‘rethinking’ the relationships between communications infrastructures and the maintenance of democratic institutions. Key to his analysis is how political agendas and hegemonizing forces within the scale of the nation-state interact with the broader forces of corporate restructuring on a global scale, against the backdrop of regionally-specific social and historical factors.

The ‘nation-building project’ of the South African post-apartheid state (aimed at “promoting an inclusivist model of political integration which combines diversity within overall norms of national unity”), interfaces with “a steady drift towards neo-liberal economic policy which prioritizes integration into international networks of commodity production and distribution” (Barnett, 2000). This interface and the contradictions it reveals constitute a set of forces which have swept across the media environment with the landscape-reshaping power of a Namibian windstorm.

Two sets of forces are identified by Barnett (2000): one operating above the level of the nation state, the other below it. At the trans-national level are the forces that drive national media systems into economic relationships with global media conglomerates, leading to increasing commercialization and placing great strain on public service broadcasters. Below the national level are “sub-national, regionalized patterns of cultural identification” in which are embedded historically constituted ethnic and political rivalries. The need to incorporate these into a hegemonic whole lies at the heart of the new South African government’s nation-building project.

In Barnett’s view, it would be naive to discount the power of sub-national forces to influence the shaping of the media landscape: “The contexts of national policies and politics remain critical in shaping the forms and outcomes of ‘globalisation’ and ‘convergence’” (Barnett, 2000: 8). Reductive dualisms that pit state control against free-market liberalization are inadequate, and disallow an alternative model of “regulated pluralism” which suggests the existence or potentiality of ‘spaces of representation’ where the historically strong discourse of civil society in South Africa can play an integrative and synthesizing role.

Before embarking on a discussion of the notion of ‘civil society’, it is worth noting that the phrase ‘regulated pluralism’ employed by Barnett is reminiscent of the work of John B. Thompson (1990, 1995), and thus reveals something
about the tradition in which Barnett’s discourse is located. In his two major studies, Thompson pursues a line of argument drawing upon classical sociological and Marxist accounts of the development of the media in Britain and Europe, and dwells at some length on Habermas’s (1989) notion of the ‘public sphere’. The central argument of Thompson’s 1990 work, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, is that the ‘mediazation’ of modern society is absolutely integral to the development of advanced capitalism. For Thompson, the study of mediazation is not a subsidiary discipline; it is germinal to any analysis of the existence or possibility of participatory democracy within the framework of contemporary political economy (see Teer-Tomaselli, 1995). For Thompson, Habermas’s description of the bourgeois public sphere of 18th century Europe, where the personal opinions of individuals became public opinion through participation in free and open debate, “is far removed from the political realities and possibilities of the late twentieth century” (Thompson, 1990: 120).

In his 1995 work, Thompson advances a theory of how mediazation has fundamentally transformed the process of identity formation, freeing the individual from stifling traditional authority structures. His argument is that although mass communication is inherently non-dialogical, it nevertheless creates an open-ended “space of the visible” where citizens are absorbed into the activity of “deliberation”, even if they do not individually participate in the process of public opinion making (Thompson, 1995: 244-258).

Thompson’s account offers very little encouragement for the political or cultural activist eager to tackle the monolith of global capitalism through the advocacy of participatory models of democratic praxis: “at the level of national and international politics, and at the upper levels in which power is exercised in large-scale civil and commercial organizations, it is difficult to see how the idea of participatory opinion formation could be implemented in any significant way”. (Thompson, 1990: 120). Thompson is clearly no radical, but his notion of ‘regulated pluralism’ has been generally well received and is approvingly quoted by, *inter alia*, Barnett (2000), Barker (2002) and Teer-Tomaselli & Tomaselli (1996: 226). According to Thompson: “What we may hope for at best is a greater diffusion of information concerning the activities of powerful individuals and organizations, a greater diversity of channels of diffusion and a greater emphasis on the establishment of mechanisms through which these activities can be rendered accountable and controlled” (Thompson, 1990: 120).

While Thompson’s account is less strident, ‘conspiratorial’ and confrontational than those of Herman, Chomsky and McChesney, it nevertheless is not fully accepting of the *status quo*. The principle of regulated pluralism calls for “the de-concentration of resources in the media industries, and the insulation of media institutions from the exercise of state power” (Thompson, 1990: 19). It calls for a “broad institutional space”, operating on a trans-national scale, taking advantage of “new opportunities afforded by the deployment of new technologies”, which lies beyond “the traditional liberal theory of the free press” (Thompson, 1990: 18-19).
For Barnett, South Africa provides “a practical case of the working out of fundamental tension which has arisen in academic debates concerning the translation of theories of the public sphere into practical scenarios for media policy” (Barnett, 2000: 17). He identifies the poles of this debate as: (i) the idea that national public service broadcasting is essential to the project of nation building; and (ii) that democracy requires pluralism with respect to the articulation of diverse interests and competing identities. At both poles of this debate lie dangerous opposites: (i) that centralization of media under a state-owned public broadcasting system allows for the potential of ideological manipulation by the state; and (ii) that diversification within the framework of liberalization may result in surrender to the overwhelming distributive power of globally-owned commercial broadcasting networks, to the detriment of the continued growth and development of local identities. Here, although Barnett does not acknowledge Thompson, arguments developed in Thompson’s 1995 work, The Media and Modernity, come to the fore. Barnett argues that “[t]he internationalization of economic and cultural practices, and the resulting fragmentation and multiplication of public spheres, re-territorializes [my emphasis] the normative individual subject of the liberal, democratic nation-state into a variety of networks of representation and participation existing at different spatial scales” (Barnett, 2000: 18). What this means for the nation-building project is that traditional ethnographic and historical frameworks are no longer sufficient to formulate or contain the identities of individuals within communities, or even at the scale of the nation state. As individuals gain access to global media products, the process of self-formation becomes “more reflexive and open-ended”; individuals derive meanings from a much wider variety of symbolic sources than were previously available to them “to form coherent identities for themselves” (Thompson, 1995: 186). Traditions are torn from the ritualized present of face-to-face interaction and “re-moored” in new trans-local spatial contexts, compromising the authority of localised ethnic or political authority structures. Thus the normative, hegemonizing authority of the nation state is disrupted from above “through the re-territorialising processes of internationalised markets for cultural commodities”.

While this last statement may usher in the spectre of ‘global media imperialism’, an important pole of Barnett’s argument remains that, despite the disruption of local identities from above the level of the nation state, and despite the reformulation of the notion of identity along the lines of ‘communities of interest’ that transcend ethnographic localities, there nevertheless remain, in South and Southern Africa at least, and probably everywhere in the world, powerful local discourses of identification that retain strong immunities against the homogenizing tendencies of global commercial broadcasting. While local audiences may happily consume metropolitan products, there is ample evidence to show that “local content programming still attracts greater attention from the majority of viewers than imported productions” (Roome, 1997: 11). Thompson points to numerous examples which refute the notion that individuals are subsumed into homogenized global media culture at the expense of their own
deeply-rooted culture and traditions. What he does say, however, is that the power of the latter has been severely compromised by “the growing autonomy of the individual as a reflexive agent” (Thompson, 1995: 187).

In South Africa, the project to capture ‘the spirit of the nation’ within a new, hegemonic discourse remains bedeviled by the legacy of centuries of division and conflict. The promotion of diversity within a broad national identity “contributed to the continuing politicization of issues of culture and identity in the period of ‘transition during the 1990s’” (Barnett, 2000: 19). At the same time, the ability of the national media system “to regulate the forms of culture and information disseminated through broadcasting systems is only likely to be further diminished” (Barnett, 2000: 20).

Concluding his paper, Barnett turns to the idea of a trans-national civil society, though with a cautious caveat. While he acknowledges that one should not “counterpose a utopia of global civil society to the apparently defunct nation state”, he nevertheless points to “the importance of developing trans-national networks of co-operation to pursue progressive agendas for media democratization”, and the need to “make connections between movements for progressive change operating at different scales”.

Unfortunately, what should have been the crux of Barnett’s paper, is only briefly alluded to in his final paragraphs. Like many writers within the broadly critical tradition, he points to the democratizing role of civil society and the public sphere, but his definition thereof and his interchangeable use of these two phrases, leaves behind more questions than it answers. Barnett argues that “the favoured vocabulary of the ‘public sphere’ needs rethinking” (2000: 20), but he leaves this rethinking up to us. He ends by suggesting that the reader “might want to talk instead of the different spaces of representation” that are open to those interested in the pursuit of democratic remedies, and that that the idea of the public sphere, or even of multiple public spheres, located somewhere between the state on the one hand and the market on the other, is too limiting in that it is located in a metaphor of ‘containers’ or ‘arenas’, rather than in ‘networks’ where power is circulated.

**Features of the Namibian Media Landscape**

Kaitira Kandjii’s account of the Namibian media landscape is sparse, offering a clearer, if somewhat bleaker, picture than is offered by Barnett. In his paper: “De-regulation of the Namibian broadcasting Industry: Challenges and Contradictions” (2000)^4, Kandjii provides sobering evidence that the goal of broad-based media access in southern Africa is not likely to be easily achieved.

Several prominent landmarks in the Namibian media landscape present themselves for observation. First, political independence and the demise of apartheid has not resulted in clearly visible outgrowths of economic empowerment at the level of the broad base of society, despite the accumulative activity of post-revolutionary elites. Second, edifices of the apartheid past still stand, like Ozymandian statues in the desert sands, somewhat battered by the storms of transition, but retaining beneath their weatherbeaten surfaces the
tenacious residue of what the Namibian struggle sought to overthrow. Third, respect of the Namibian media, transformative legislation aimed at re-regulation has not brought about meaningful changes in ownership, due to the lack of ‘black’ capital in the country. Fourth, South African capital enjoys a strong presence in the Namibian broadcasting environment. As Hein Marais argues, “(p)owerful historical and current structural pressures - emanating from within South Africa and internationally - favour a continuation of South African hegemony in the region” (Marais, 1998: 139).

Kandjii cites the need to complete the transformation of historical structures of power and control that still bear the imprint of apartheid, the need to free the broadcasting system from government control, and the need to understand the impact of globalization on the provision of media products in local contexts, as central challenges facing the Namibian media. Kandjii’s identification of these needs coheres exactly with Barnett’s account of sub- and supra-national forces acting, like the desert winds, to shape the landscape.

The Namibian media legislation of 1991 and 1992 was an expression of an optimistic goal to “represent the interests and rights of the Namibian citizens”. However, “the NBC was soon politically and economically ‘chained’ by the new rulers” (Kandjii, 2000: 4). As of March 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting has had the power to appoint the NBC Board, and the Director-General of the NBC reports directly to the Minister. The Ministry recently rejected calls from the NBC for an independent Board (Barker, 2002).

Kandjii toys with the notion that the liberalization of the Namibian broadcast media, by allowing the free play of market forces, might contribute to media diversity and pluralism and thus advance the broader democratization of society as a whole. Clearly, this has not happened. Instead, new forms of domination of the airwaves have emerged and historical imbalances have been perpetuated.

A requirement of the Namibian Communication Commission is that, in order to qualify for broadcast licences, foreign investors must form alliances with Namibian principals holding at least 51% of the venture. A holding company registered as Swapo Properties in 1989, and subsequently renamed Kalahari Holdings, entered into a deal with M-Net South Africa according to these requirements in 1991, leading to the formation of MultiChoice Namibia in which Kalahari Holdings has a 51% share. The pattern is repeated throughout the broadcasting sector. As Kandjii rather dryly observes, “South African capital always plays a role in media ownership in Namibia” (Kandjii, 2000: 5).

A central difference between the Namibian and South African landscapes is the non-emergence, in the former, of a black capitalist class with the economic capacity to penetrate the ownership structures of the media system to any significant degree. Kandjii makes a strong case for “empowering Namibians to enter the business of the broadcasting industry”, contending that “black capital intervention” is necessary to bring about “meaningful diversification of ownership” and, in so doing, overcome historical imbalances. However, his example of the case of Kalahari Holdings suggests that this route is likely to be plagued with contradictions. Whether MultiChoice Namibia is capable of
providing the broad mass of Namibians with opportunities for meaningful education, empowerment and participation is open to debate. As Barker (2000) declares: “commercial broadcasting can proliferate without any necessity for the inclusion of news, current affairs and with the total absence of local information”.

The most urgent issues facing any significant development of independent media in Namibia are clearly those of financial provision and adequate infrastructure. A picture emerges of an embattled sector making very little headway against enormous odds. As is so often the case, the rural areas with the greatest needs are those least catered for. The capital and skills base necessary for the development of indigenous commercial broadcasting are lacking and are further hampered by vast distances and a dispersed population. The low level of commercial activity in the country generally disallows advertising as a source of indigenous funding, creating a vacuum for trans-regional capital such as M-Net to occupy. The ability of indigenous capital to impact on the media landscape is limited to entering into what are likely to be unequal partnerships with foreign capital.

Kandjii also notes the apparently slow growth of community broadcasting in Namibia. The capacity to develop community-based broadcasting initiatives which could, in an ideal world, assist in the empowerment of impoverished communities, seems painfully limited. Interestingly, alongside the lack of a satisfactory policy framework and the lack of black empowerment capital, Kandjii observes a “lack of interest by the general public to participate meaningfully” in transformational development of the media (Kandjii, 2000: 2). This suggests the lack of a civil society ethos or framework which could facilitate the process of participation by the public.

**Is No Policy a Policy Goal?**

In his paper, “Is No Policy a Policy Goal?”(2000) Barker argues that “the outcome of liberalization in southern Africa has been an opening of markets to private enterprise, often in a complete policy vacuum, with no regard for the promotion of diversity of ownership and information pluralism”(2000:2). He places the trend towards liberalization of the media in southern Africa in the context of the post-Soviet period. This is characterized by demands of donor countries and multi-lateral agencies: development assistance must be tied to observable progress in the reduction of state control over national media as a sign of ‘good governance’. He directly links the decline in the public sector to the issues of deregulation, privatization and liberalization.

Barker employs the 1991 Windhoek Declaration to identify the key principles for free, independent and pluralistic media in the southern African context. He states that it “arguably contains the most precise and simply formulated definitions on media freedom and pluralism to be found among the plethora of international press freedom declarations”. In summary, these are: (i) that an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to democracy, and to economic development; (ii) ‘independence’ means freedom from government, political or
economic control in its various forms; and (iii) monopolies should be prohibited and a wide variety of media forms reflecting a wide range of opinions should exist.

When these goals are compared with the picture painted by Kandjii, it becomes clear that in Namibia at least, the requirements of free, independent and pluralistic media have not been met. Whether these requirements are fulfilled in South Africa is a more complex question.

According to Barker, it is only recently that the ability of unregulated and privately owned media to deliver the requirements outlined in the Windhoek Declaration has been questioned. Citing Thompson (1995), he notes that “an unregulated market may develop in a way which effectively reduces diversity and limits the capacity of most individuals to make their views heard”. Citing Guerevitch (1982), Barker declares that “[I]t is time that media freedom activists in southern Africa begin to consider the media in terms of its economic determination”.

Throughout the region, rising costs and decreased government subsidies have rudely ushered in an era of commercialization, which existing policy frameworks are clearly inadequate to coherently regulate. A decrease in local content and educational programs is an early indicator of this trend, and, as a recent study in Malawi shows, the rural poor are amongst the first victims of this reduction in public service programming (Barker, 2000). Citing Boyd-Barrett (1995), Barker recycles the familiar refrain that “the undermining of public broadcasting by the process of commercialization has major implications for the quality of public debate”, and that “it is difficult to see how a system dominated by private ownership can guarantee the diversity of information required for the proper functioning of democracy”.

After grappling with the pros and cons of the potential for state control implied by regulation on the one hand, and the dangers of commercialization inherent in liberalization on the other, Barker offers South Africa’s regulatory environment and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) as a model that other countries in the region should follow. Like Barnett, he calls for ‘regulated pluralism’, while acknowledging that “resistance to the process of liberalization is pointless”. Like so many other writers, he looks to civil society organizations, in his case, his own organization, The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), to lobby for “a policy framework that would protect public interest, ensure pluralism and promote a diverse media”, as well as promote the development of community-based media (2000:18). In order to achieve these aims, MISA has begun to establish partnerships with regional and international civil society organizations and institutions.

The picture painted by Kandjii and the arguments put forward by Barker are consistent with the views of Barnett and others. In broad outline, all agree that civil society has a tremendous responsibility to champion the cause of a truly democratic media in southern Africa, as well as elsewhere in the world. The consensus is clearly that neither governments nor privately-owned profit-making corporations are likely to offer sustained, uncontradictory participation in
democratic media development to communities on the ground. This may not
evidence itself as a crisis to consumers in highly developed societies where the
illusion of democracy is sustained by a cornucopia of choices. It is, however, a
crisis in our region where basic information for survival is a pressing need, and
the widespread lack of functional literacy and numeracy, combined with poverty,
condemns people to scrape out a sub-human existence far beyond the reach of the
information superhighway.

In this context, it may even be arguable that, because of their specific
characteristics, the electronic media are not the ideal foundation for the
development of civil society-based independent participatory media in Southern
Africa.

**Media? What Media?**

Radio is widely recognized as the most appropriate means of communication in
Southern Africa because it has a far greater reach and accessibility than print
(Teer-Tomaselli, 1995: 585). But this recognition should not permit the
suggestion, because literacy levels are still so low throughout the subcontinent,
that it might be easier to ‘leapfrog’ over the difficult hurdle of developing a
literate society and instead rely on broadcasting to provide for people's
information needs. While the potential benefits of public service and community
broadcasting in southern Africa are undeniable, I would argue strongly against
allowing the importance of print media development to be de-emphasized.

Broadcast media necessarily involve high levels of capitalization, and lend
themselves to top-down, unidirectional and ‘non-dialogical’ information flow
(Thompson, 1995: 244). In contrast, traditional print media, particularly ‘small
press’ media, offer real opportunities for community-based, multi-directional and
‘dialogical’ information development (see Tomaselli, Shepperson and Parker,
2001). Rapid developments in desktop publishing and small-press technology
offer community-based organizations and advocacy groups the possibility of
harnessing technologies previously reserved by highly-capitalized media
concerns. Community-based newspapers and newsletters, as well as the full
gamut of possible low-cost community education print products, although limited
in the breadth of their reach, are able to achieve a depth of participation that the
more ephemeral electronic media cannot match. More important for the civil
society argument is that print media, because of the relatively low entry levels
required for base-line functionality, are far freer from the financial constraints
and political contradictions that bedevil attempts to harness the airwaves to the
cause of authentic democratization.

Education and literacy are inseparably tied to print-based media. I would argue
that they are equally indispensable to participatory democracy, and to the
development and maintenance of a vibrant and robust civil society. Thompson
cites Habermas (1989) to support his argument that the development of
communication media based print played an important role in the emergence in
Europe of “a vibrant political culture beyond the sphere of the state” (Thompson,
1995: 237). Any nation that attempts to ‘leapfrog’ over the necessity for broad-
based literacy, does so, I would argue, at its own peril. As Hopeton Dunn (2000) suggests, Southern Africa, like most Third and Fourth World regions, is already marginalized from strategic participation in the flow of information around the world. If Southern Africans are to begin to participate in what he calls ‘globalisation from below’, if they are to replace the ‘downloading’ of metropolitan culture with an ‘uploading’ of their own, technical skills are indispensable. These begin not just with the specialist skilling of elites, but with the development of literacy across the broadest possible base. It is here that popular participatory print media projects, where possible combined with community radio, can be a powerful educational and empowerment tool, offering ideal opportunities for active involvement at community level, and for the development of the media skills that are so lacking on the subcontinent.

The ideal of the small, independent, critical ‘alternative’ press, whose social impact is far greater than the limited reach of its distribution, is perhaps not easy to achieve, yet it remains one of the visionary pillars of participatory democracy. The key here is that civil society organs such as these should not, indeed cannot be driven solely by the profit motive and the delusions of the ‘free’ market ethos. To survive and grow they need to be nurtured and protected from ruthless competition from above, while at the same time they need to develop the business skills necessary to flourish at the level of the local. Barker catalogues some of the difficulties faced by small newspapers, both in marginalized environments where low levels of economic activity involve a struggle to “survive from week to week”, and in the more robust South African metropolitan environment where monopolistic tendencies make it “notoriously difficult for any new print media titles... to break into the market”.

It is common cause that a number of influential South African ‘alternative’ titles which flourished in the late-apartheid era when funding for anti-apartheid projects was relatively easy to come by, failed to engage satisfactorily with the challenge of sustainability after the transition. While a lack of financial management and marketing expertise was clearly implicated in these failures, it may be argued that some publications, lulled into a culture of dependence on external funding and driven by ideology and not by survivalism, failed to listen to their publics and thus became irrelevant.

In a fascinating essay, David Balikowa (1995) documents the remarkable survivalism displayed by the Ugandan paper, The Monitor. Starved of state advertising revenue as the result of a punitive response by the Ugandan government to its uncompromisingly critical stance, it was forced to rely on circulation for survival. Its strategy was to incorporate articles written by rural ‘reporters’, retaining “a lot of their originality, especially the style, sense of humour and the detailed identification of people and places” in the published stories (Balikowa, 1995: 611). Such was the popularity of this strategy that the paper increased its circulation from 10,000 to 36,000 copies, thus ensuring its survival. Balikowa notes that unlike Western models of press financing, “where advertising constitutes around 80% of newspaper revenue, in most of Africa, the
ratio is quite the opposite: only about 20% or less of the revenue comes from advertising and the rest from circulation" (1995: 609).

It is not that such media can or should exist outside of the market economy, but rather that these marketplaces should be local rather than global. The recognition of the importance of local marketplaces and regulation to protect them from ruthless competition from above, would be one form of regulatory intervention that might effectively advance the development of organic, independent media organisations, free of inordinate control or influence by the state or by big business.

In increasingly constrained fiscal climates such as prevail in the region, one has to ask where the funds are to come from to implement participatory educational and media development projects at ground level on any significant scale. Once again, the discussion must turn to the responsibility and democratizing potential of that broad and largely ill-defined sector characterized as ‘civil society’.

Civil Society or Public Sphere?
The questions raised by Barnett in the final paragraphs of his chapter are crucial to any democratizing project. It is necessary to look for distinctions between the notions of the public sphere, on the one hand, and civil society, on the other, rather than conflating them as Barnett does, if these questions are to be answered in any meaningful way.

Both ‘the public sphere’ and ‘civil society’ suggest the existence of ‘communities of interest’ that lie between capital and the state. However, Barnett has alerted us to the need to be aware of questions of scale in treating concepts as broad as these. Are we to view these concepts in trans-national or sub-national terms? Do they cross easily between global and local scales? More importantly, whom do they include, or exclude? Is the billionaire company director who acts as the patron of a charitable trust a true representative of civil society? Do elected public representatives whose salaries are paid by the state fall within the ambit of the public sphere? There is no doubt that the social responsibility spending of the world’s most powerful organisations, both public and private, are crucial to the effective operation of trans-national and sub-national non-governmental organisations. The Ford Foundation and USAID are two funding bodies whose contribution to the process of democratic transition in South Africa is inescapable. The extent to which the funding provided by these organizations has been disinterested in specific outcomes is obviously a source of debate. Without the benefit of access to research around this question, it would be imprudent to venture more than qualified speculation. However, it would probably not be unrealistic to argue that the funding policies of international donor agencies are directly related to specific agendas which reflect particular development philosophies.

On the local level in South Africa, the existence of a broad range of civil society organisations and institutions is well-documented (Marais, 1998). Grouped broadly under the rubric of ‘the popular movement’, they encompass
“labour, women’s, civic, student, youth, human rights, church, legal, health, education, media, community advice, legal (sic), housing, land and other groups” (Marais, 1998: 199). As Marais points out, many, if not most, of these organizations “became incorporated into the external assault against the apartheid state” (1998: 201) and their continued existence or efficacy after the transition, in many cases, has been problematic. Marais argues that their very incorporation under the broad struggle umbrella was the result of an ‘instrumentalist view’ that saw them as dispensable once the broad goals of democratic transition had been achieved, and did not look kindly upon the continuation of their role as critics of the state in the post-apartheid period. From my own personal experience, as a service provider to civil society organizations during the transition, I was able to observe the dislocations and disruptions that occurred in the NGO sector after 1994. Whole service departments of NGOs like Lawyers for Human Rights were decimated by the discontinuation of anti-apartheid funding, or redirection of funds away from NGOs towards the organs of the newly constituted post-apartheid state. Without going into too much detail, these examples serve to demonstrate the fragility of the notion of civil society, and how vulnerable the entire NGO sector is to the vagaries of a funding environment which reflects the interests of global agencies linked to state or market sources.

My arguments are that (i) it is necessary to distinguish between the notions of ‘the public sphere’ and ‘civil society’, and that this distinction should reflect the sources of these two terms; (ii) that ‘civil society’ should be the preferred term when discussing the democratizing role of non-governmental organisations in society; (iii) that, contrary to Barnett, there is no space within a strict definition of ‘civil society’ for state organizations or profit-making concerns; and (iv) that although the involvement of both the state and the private sector is essential for the continued existence of ‘civil society’ through the provision of funding, the limitation of this involvement will always constitute a contested ground in which the institutions and organizations of civil society are constantly required to assert, and struggle for, their independence.

In order to distinguish them, it is instructive to go back to the origins of the terms ‘public sphere’ and ‘civil society’. As Thompson points out, both go back to ancient Greece (1990: 110) but it is their re-invigoration in the modern context that concerns us here. According to Thompson (1990), Habermas’s description is of “a bourgeois public sphere which consisted of private individuals who had come together to debate among themselves and with state authorities concerning the regulation of civil society and the conduct of the state”. Here ‘civil society’ is used to refer to the “domain of privatized economic relations which were established under the aegis of public authority” (Thompson, 1990: 110). From Thompson’s account, it appears that the notion of the public sphere is essentially bourgeois and non-revolutionary.

By contrast, the origin of the term ‘civil society’ in the writing of the imprisoned Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, in the late 1920s, bestows upon it a revolutionary pedigree. It is instructive to go back to Gramsci’s (1971) formulation of civil society as comprising “all the so-called ‘private’
organisations such as churches, trade unions, political parties and cultural associations which are distinct from the process of production and from the public apparatuses of the state” (Simon, 1991: 70). In contemporary Southern Africa, one has to add to this list the non-governmental and community-based organisations. It is notable that this definition effectively excludes public broadcasters and press conglomerates, the two sources to whom we have most often looked for solutions to the problems of media access and diversity.

While state-owned public broadcasting offers unparalleled opportunities for information transmission to remote populations, this model only works as long as the public service ethos can be defended from encroachment by the state. The Namibian example demonstrates how easy it is for the state to usurp public service broadcasting for narrow propagandistic ends. By the same token, media owned by multinational conglomerates operating at a level above the nation state, would also fall outside the ambit of civil society. I would therefore argue that truly democratic, participatory and independent media forms can only emerge from the civil society terrain, however hemmed in and vulnerable, and however problematic the definition of this terrain may be.

There is therefore a need to examine the successes and failures of the media which have been produced and sustained within civil society in Southern Africa, and to work towards establishing the conditions necessary to ensure the survival of these kinds of media, whether they take the form of publications or community-based radio stations.

In conclusion, I would like to venture a theoretical distinction between the notions of civil society and the public sphere. The former seems to be more closely aligned to transformative interventions by organizations which, due to the political, religious or spiritual commitment of their personnel, are concerned with a fundamental or radical critique of contemporary social and economic systems. The latter, on the other hand, seems to be more concerned with regulation to protect the right of citizens to enquire into the operations of powerful individuals and organizations in society. Clearly, both functions are essential, though they may represent different interest groupings. The notion of the public sphere does not seem to lend itself to participation by the poorest and most disadvantaged of the world's peoples, while the notion of civil society does.

While they may derive funding from private sector foundations, governments or multilateral aid organizations, the projects of civil society organisations (NGOs, CBOs, church-based development projects and political and labor organizations) seem generally, in South Africa at least, to be clustered around transformative, rather than conservative, goals. At the very least, their definition as non-profitmaking organisations should go some way to pre-empting self-interested accumulative behavior. While this is not the place to begin a discussion of social movements, there is nevertheless an obvious link between non-class-based movements advocating radical social change and the notion of civil society.

Louise Bourgault (1995) ends her study of the mass media in sub-Saharan Africa, undeniably a depressing account, with an impassioned plea for a
communitarian social agenda, and global consciousness that incorporates ethical principles into the process of development. Such sentiments appear to be widespread amongst media development scholars and commentators (see McChesney, 1996; Herman and McChesney, 1997) many of whom argue that the new technologies of global interactivity can and should be employed to unite activists on a global level “to address problems the modern participatory democracies are unable or unwilling to solve” (Bourgault, 1995: 245). Typically, these are presented as the problems of scarcity, ecological degradation, economic dualism and structural inequality and issues of personal alienation and the loss of meaning. The employment of ethical principles to combat these tendencies is a direction “towards which the planet must inevitably move or face perdition” (Bourgault, 1995: 256).

The discourse around the public sphere, on the other hand, while sharing common concerns, appears to situate itself more alongside the idea of regulation rather than transformation. The support for Thompson's notion of ‘regulated pluralism’ discussed above may be based on the belief that the system of contemporary global capitalism is so entrenched that to attempt to transform it in any radical sense would be futile. However, as John Keane (1994: 48-51) has pointed out, contemporary global society incorporates such a pluralism of opinions and interest groupings that to speak of “a unified public sphere” conceived as a ‘space’ or ‘spaces’ is untenable: as Barnett suggests, the notion of ‘networks’ which cross between civil society, capital and the state may be more useful.

In the Southern African context, the underdeveloped nature of the media environment offers both great challenges and tremendous opportunities. I hope I have amassed enough of a consensus from the writers I have cited to verify my conviction that the achievement of truly democratic goals with respect to the Southern African media environment is unlikely to emanate from either the governments of the region, or from capitalist media conglomerates. Ultimately, I would side with Bourgault (1995: 246) in her assertion that a ‘third way’ should be actively pursued. I would support her view that every effort should be made to utilise available interactive media technologies (the Internet, special interest web sites and independent, small-scale desktop publishing) to establish global networks of consensus around what are inescapably planetary issues. Crucial to such networks of trans-global civil society debate and activism should be the recognition that it is at the level of the local, particularly at the level of marginalized communities beyond the ‘loop’ of global media convergence, where the most crucial planetary challenges are often most painfully articulated.

Working amongst disadvantaged communities to develop appropriate (if often rudimentary and limited) interventions, and providing opportunities for people to participate in, rather than be victims of, the global communications order, is a task with few attractions for those whose impulses are primarily accumulative. And yet this humble work is a task of planetary significance. For this reason, I believe that civil society, in order to be coherently mobilized, needs to be clearly defined. Such a definition might include the necessary requirement that
organizations and individuals be committed for reasons other than self-interest (be they religious, spiritual or political) to the genuine and radical transformation of society, and to the promotion of opportunities for authentic participation amongst members of marginalized and exploited communities. Defined in this way, I believe that civil society has a crucial role to play in the democratization of the media in southern Africa, and at the global scale.

ENDNOTES

1 This paper was written in response to papers presented by Kaitira Kandjii and John Barker at the April 2000 Political Economy of the Southern African Media Seminar at the University of Natal. Although I have never visited Namibia and have no first-hand experience of this topic, these two papers, read in conjunction with the paper presented by Clive Barnett, threw into sharp relief several issues that seem to be of crucial relevance to the development of democratic media in South Africa. The paper presents no original insights into the Nambian experience, but attempts to use the experiences presented by Kandjii and Barker as a starting point from which to engage with what appear to be common problems facing media development on the subcontinent.

2 Reference is to Barnett’s (2000) Seminar paper and discussion. Readers are also directed to his chapter in this volume.

3 Habermas’s The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere was only published in English in 1989, 27 years after its original publication in German.


5 Reference to Barkers’ (2000) Seminar paper and discussion. Readers are also directed to his chapter in this volume.

6 Hopeton Dunn, Seminar presentation and discussion (2000).

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Chapter 7

MASS MEDIA AND DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICS AND SOCIETY: LESSONS FROM ZIMBABWE, 1990-2000

JAMES ZAFFIRO

The relationship between mass media and political democratization in Africa is as significant as it is poorly understood. Media systems derive political roles and significance from the societies of which they are a part. An under-appreciated variable in the media and democracy equation is the condition of civil society. Civil society groups working to challenge the established order are significant catalyzing elements in contemporary African politics.

The concept of civil society can be made more useful when broadened to include less-autonomous state actors, particularly judiciaries and legislatures. Pro-democracy members of these under-studied institutions are helping to deepen and sustain democratic reforms by supporting and networking with non-state institutions, including media organizations, opposition parties, human rights groups, womens’ organizations, trade unions, churches, and professional associations.

During the 1990s, across Africa, the participation of organized civil society groups in the political arena was greater than at any time since the nationalist period. This participation was potentially more significant by the year 2000 because of the larger numbers of university-educated professionals, women as well as men, from across a wider cross-section of society. As private sectors grow, in areas of banking, commerce, law, medicine, engineering, and academia, more and more educated elites have the option of careers and political loyalties outside of the state sector and ruling party. They also increasingly have the economic means to become actively involved in politics, particularly in urban, two-career families.

Civic groups need freedom of expression and access to information in order to structure and act on political choices. Sustainable, institutionalized democracy requires social networks and political filtering organizations. Without functioning networks to process political communication, legitimate, representative democratic political institutions and processes are hard to nurture.

Political cultures in different societies prescribe and define media roles differently. The degree to which media institutions are central in the political process varies greatly. Media roles are particularly malleable in democratizing societies. Research is needed which focuses on the articulation of national media systems with changing political institutions and processes, while taking into account historical, economic, cultural, and social influences on the
development of these relationships.

Western-style media democracy demands much of African mass media intention on assuming roles in service of their respective political systems, including: a) surveillance of developments, both positive and negative, which may affect citizens’ welfare; b) identifying key issues (agenda-setting); c) offering accessible platforms for intelligible, illuminating advocacy by politicians and interests; d) serving as a bridge for dialogues across a wide range of views by power-holders, aspirants, and the citizenry; f) holding public officials accountable for their exercise of power; g) educating and motivating citizens about politics and participation; h) maintaining independence and integrity (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990:25-6).

Across Africa, most governments have finally surrendered media monopolies in one form or another. In southern Africa, legislation allowing the licensing and operation of privately owned or community based broadcasting systems is now operational in most states. To promote these trends, two regional bodies have been established: The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA). Both promote free and pluralistic media, free flow of information, and cooperation between journalists as principal means of nurturing democracy and human rights in the region (Bussiek, 1995:261-83).

Zimbabwe is one glaring exception. National media policies in President Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe are fundamentally interconnected with efforts to perpetuate authoritarian, personalistic, de-facto, one-party rule. The Mugabe regime continued to prevaricate, weighing and re-weighing the politically charged trade-offs involved in clinging to its state broadcasting monopoly (ZBC) and press oligopoly (Zimpapers). During the April 2000 elections, the new opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), could have won a parliamentary majority were it not for vote rigging and extreme violence perpetrated against MDC supporters. Mugabe upped the ante in his denunciations of whites and MDC supporters, as his power base began to erode in the face of a civic and trade union movement. To fully appreciate the political significance of media developments one must first understand the shifting political and economic context within which they occurred.

Over the decade of the 1990s, Southern African countries undergoing the most revolutionary social and political transformations, including Namibia, post-apartheid South Africa, post-Kazum Mu Malawi, and Mozambique, had more sweepingly democratic media transformations than those where the structural basis of the political order and ruling elites remained fundamentally unchanged, as in Botswana and Zimbabwe (see Thomas and Lee, 2001; Banda, 1998).

**Media, Civil Society and Democracy in Zimbabwe**
Zimbabwe provides a good illustration of how political space kept open after independence by pro-democracy forces in society creates new opportunities for a
private press to exist, for a more pluralistic media environment to grow, and how these in turn may further nurture and support re-democratization efforts by other civil society groups.

By the early 1990s, several leading civil society groups were pressing for reforms by cultivating links with the private press. Proposals and policy critiques appeared in private publications, usually focusing on a specific issue, particularly Structural Adjustment, ending the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI)-era state of emergency, and plans for a one-party state. Non-state media provided points of entry to a national political debate.

In political terms, the public realm in Zimbabwe in the 1980s and ‘90s was not civic. It was commandist, partly because of the ‘dear leader’ mentality and partly because formal institutions of government remained steeped in their colonial images (Moyo, 1993:16). In the 1990s, as problems of delayed land redistribution, drought, recession, unemployment, and corruption reached new heights, a political counter-culture, distinct from the goals and alliances of the liberation war, began to emerge. Strategic coalitions of NGOs began to make a mark on politics.

NGO interactions with government and the ruling party differ widely, especially from urban to rural areas. The latter tend to be much more dependent on village and district development committees dominated by ZANU(PF). Major impediments to effectiveness of NGOs and NGO networks in widening the space for popular democracy are limited access to political information and channels of mass communication.

In the absence of a level electoral playing field for party-based opposition and a rapidly deteriorating economy, civil society pressures for reform were pivotal. Spearheaded by legal and human rights organizations, workers and students mounted increasingly bold, unprecedented public challenges, including a two-week Zimbabwe Public Service Association (ZPA) walkout in 1996, and weekly Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) strikes over worsening economic conditions in November 1998. Angry public demonstrations over skyrocketing food and fuel prices and shortages, government corruption, constitutional reforms, Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) intervention in Congo without Parliamentary consent, and stalled land policy reforms also proliferated. Public and parliamentary calls for the President to resign were heard.

Civil society groups grew ever bolder in challenging ZANU(PF) hegemony. At least a dozen opposition parties existed and the MDC nearly won a Parliamentary majority in April 2000. Only the appointment of 20 nominated delegates by Mugabe held them at bay. Internal conflicts and divisions in the ruling party run deep and the MDC leader announced his candidacy for President in the 2002 presidential elections. Mugabe, age 77, recently announced his intention to seek a fifth term (New York Times, April 18, 2001: A3).
Media and Re-Democratization

During periods of political conflict or change, media often play influential roles of articulating and amplifying protest or reform efforts of civil society. As part of civil society, media may become an intermediary between state and citizenry, providing public arenas for political discussion and debate, promoting accountability of ruling elites, even serving as a bridge between election periods when parties are less visible, organized, and active in national political life.

Weak civil society and weak mass media are usually found together. Media play a significant democracy-nurturing role to the extent they are able and willing to grant access to opposition political parties and others in civil society for whom official state-run media organs have been closed or denied. In the Africa of the 1990s it is more accurate to speak of media and urban civil society relations. Rural areas remain peripheral to national reform politics. Media organizations working to broaden and extend access to rural areas help strengthen civil society and with it, democracy.

In young democracies like Zimbabwe, citizen familiarity with political alternatives is generally low while political information needs are likely to be high, particularly among rural majorities. In most African polities, for better or worse, mass media have proven to be the main source of such information. In recognition, candidates, parties and other high-profile groups in civil society are becoming increasingly deliberate about mass media strategy.

How are Zimbabwe media amplifying, analyzing, and presenting democratization debates, reform proposals, and demands of wider civil society? It is necessary to appreciate the environment within which they exist. Key forces structuring media roles include: a) nature of media-state relations; b) levels of professionalism, both organizational and journalistic; c) size and character of national media markets; d) nature and strength of civil society.

Limited experience and professionalism are under-appreciated constraints on media support for civil society reform efforts, making meaningful democracy-nurturing media roles difficult and sporadic. Official statements dominate content, with little investigative reporting or analysis, failure to check sources, poor editing, weak placement of items by degree of significance, and a tendency to blur the distinction between entertainment and sensationalism.

To fully understand the condition and performance of contemporary African mass media it is necessary to unearth their pre-independence history. Particularly crucial to examine are the nationalist years, just prior to formal political independence, for clues and insights. How nationalist leaders used mass communication in pressing for political change is of seminal importance for understanding post-independence national media policies of ruling elites and non-state media challengers (Zaffiro, 2001).

Commercial Press Challenges to One-Party Media

ZANU(PF) has always been concerned with issues of media control, not only
maintenance of the UDI-era state broadcasting monopoly, but also limiting press challenges to its authority. Efforts to reign-in the press began soon after independence with a government buy-out of foreign shares of major papers, and creation of a parastatal management board (Zimpapers) subject to official manipulation and control through a Mass Media Trust (ZMMT), the national news agency (ZIANA), and Ministry of Information (see Nyahunzvi, 2001).

Zimbabwe media do play a significant role in national political life, particularly radio, which 50% of the population listen to daily. The parastatal national daily newspaper, *The Herald*, is estimated to reach about 25% of the population in any given week. This influence is further magnified as political messages are diffused further into the population through informal communication in which interested readers function as opinion leaders in their local communities (Walhdal, 1995:70).

Editors of Zimpapers publications who did not toe the government line were sacked. In 1983, Farayi Munyuki, editor of *The Herald*, was squeezed out (Saunders, 1991:24). In 1984, Elias Rusike, a ZANU information and media partisan from pre-independence days, was made managing director of Zimpapers. The next casualty was *Sunday Mail* editor and former ZAPU publicity manager Willie Musarurwa, in 1985. He was fired after repeated pressure from the Ministry of Information which found Musarurwa's independence embarrassing. He was accused of using his paper to publish the views of opposition parties. Henry Muradzikwa, his successor, was also fired under pressure after publishing an embarrassing story alleging that Zimbabwean students had been expelled from Cuba because they had AIDS. From then on, certain categories of stories required MOI approval (Rusike, 1990:55, 77, 95, 103). The Zimpapers board also came under increasingly direct government interference from MOI and ZANU (PF) Central Committee.  

In the 1990s a hard-hitting, post-independence private press began to hit its stride. The weekly *Financial Gazette*, published by Modus Publications, was built from the financial resources and editorial experience of disgruntled former Zimpapers editors. With a circulation of 25,000 its influence far exceeded this number. It was very popular among white businessmen, who supported it with their advertising. The *Gazette* picked up black readership among those who recognized it as a credible alternative to Zimpapers products. The paper regularly published stories and editorials critical of government, despite attacks and threats by Ministers to prosecute employees and have it closed down.

Editors engaged in self-censorship as a *modus operandi* for survival (Kumbula, 1997:157). Battles and causes were chosen carefully. In one such battle the *Gazette* and its editor Trevor Ncube criticized government policy on redistribution of privately-owned white commercial farms. A significant measure of courage, combined with experience, was also needed to publish and survive (Quinn, 1992:47).

On January 23, 1992, *Gazette* published a long article by a lecturer in the
Political Studies Department of the University of Zimbabwe, Jonathan Moyo, entitled "Only a Free Press Can Save Our Country From Manipulation." Until early 2000, when he was appointed as Minister of Information after the widely discredited national elections, Moyo had been one of Mugabe’s most articulate critics and was widely quoted in foreign news reports dealing with political affairs in Zimbabwe. His comments came in response to a Presidential condemnation of private weekly newspapers, magazines, and some individuals whom he accused of “yellow journalism”:

This is where the government-controlled media fails the nation. Their brief is to report ZANU(PF) affairs as if the ruling party is greater than the nation. This docility sometimes takes on disgusting proportions, as when the media reports whatever Mr Mugabe says and wherever he says it without analyzing its contents. Presumably, this is in keeping with the ZANU(PF) doctrine of presidential infallibility. Mistakes have not been covered by the government-controlled media because of the ‘dear leader’ mentality, which has served as a major political impediment to freedom of the press in this country (cited in Kumbula, 1997:175).

October 1992, Rusike’s Modus Publications began what it hoped would be a daily version, with a front-page slogan: “Zimbabwe's only independent daily newspaper” and consistently different lead stories, sometimes directly critical of government. One example was an August 9, 1993 headline: “Poaching: Army, ZRP (police) Implicated.” In 1993, a Sunday Gazette was launched, in direct competition with the Zimpapers Sunday Mail.

These publications gained circulation by successfully projecting themselves as the alternative press, purporting to be articulating the ‘genuine’ feelings of the populace and revealing information that the official media swept under the carpet. Most of their political reporting tended to take a ‘negation position’ relative to government actions or policies under consideration. Clearly, some saw them as a source of credible news and information, even if they lacked investigative reporting, analytical depth, or concrete analysis (Kupe, 1993:157).

As the IMF’s economic structural adjustment programme (EASP) began to bite in the early 1990s, it presented private publishing ventures with severe economic pressures, escalating production costs, stiffer competition for advertising, shifting consumer markets with steeper interest rates and a devalued Zimbabwean dollar. Publishing was concentrated and centralized, with larger, more established, better capitalized publishers squeezing some of the new players out. Among the biggest winners were Zimpapers products.

Modus Publications was hard-hit, borrowing heavily from its profitable Financial Gazette to keep its weekly and daily newspapers afloat. Soon losses stemming from these ventures, particularly rising interest repayments, “prompted emergency survival measures.” In late 1994, the Daily Gazette
closed and the *Sunday Gazette* followed 14 months later. Several titles in the Modus magazine subsidiary disappeared or were released to other publishers, and key fixed assets were sold. Continuing political turbulence at the *Financial Gazette* culminated with the mass departure of key editorial staff in 1996 for a new competing weekly business paper, the *Zimbabwe Independent* (Saunders, 1997:14). By 1998, *Parade* and *Horizon*, two surviving monthly current affairs magazines, had noticeably shifted their content away from critical political features towards light entertainment and sport, in an effort to maintain circulation levels.

The ‘political compression’ of the private press diminished but by no means destroyed its capacity to represent and organize civil society. Some groups now openly expressed doubts not only about Zimpapers but also about the critical sympathies of leading sections of private media. This shifting relationship had significant implications for the role of the press in national politics and democratic reform in Zimbabwe. By allowing a free press to flower, ZANU (PF) benefited externally by being able to point to its media critics as thriving examples of freedom of expression.

Regime efforts to form a media council floundered in late 1994 when the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) walked out of an organizing meeting. Kindness Paradza, ZUJ President, stated that the new body “will be used against us (private media)”. In 1995, a council emerged, chaired by former journalist and High Court Justice John Manyarara. It is comprised of eight media representatives, all editors and publishers, and eight members of the public (Moyo, 1995). ZIANA, and Modus Publications did not join, alleging government interference with media council freedom of action.

ZUJ repeatedly called for an independent media council, bolstered by constitutional protection of free expression, and repeal of laws inhibiting media freedom, particularly the UDI-era Law and Order (Maintenance) Act (Chapter 65), Official Secrets Act, Powers and Privileges of Parliament Act, Printed Publications Act, the Censorship and Entertainment Act and defamation laws (Mutume, 1994).

A law professor at the University of Zimbabwe, Geoff Feltoe, insisted on comprehensive media law reform, including insertion of an explicit provision in the Constitution guaranteeing media freedom, similar to Article 21 of the Namibian Constitution, and passage of a Freedom of Information Act which would impose upon government officials a duty to respond to media requests for information within a reasonable period of time and to justify any refusal to do so on legitimate grounds, such as harm of the public interest or national security (Feltoe, 1993, 47, 49).

Parliament and the courts had the legal right to demand that journalists reveal sources. Two *Financial Gazette* journalists were forced to do so. A third, Basil Peta, was charged for breaching Taxation Law in an investigative piece alleging tax evasion by companies owned by ZANU(PF). Contempt of Parliament and
civil and criminal defamation laws left media vulnerable to legal action for reporting defamatory statements by MPs who enjoy immunity or by publishing certain facts which later turn out to be incorrect even if the editor did so in good faith and in the public interest. The criminal defamation law was used to convict Gazette reporter Simba Makunike in 1995 for publishing a story about President Mugabe's secret marriage to his former secretary (AILA, 15 November, 1995).

Privatization and commercialization had not resulted in significant changes at Zimpapers or ZIANA by 2001. Legal measures to contain or prevent investigative reporting and commentary remained in place. The limits were all still there: limited market, media professionalism, organizational capacity, and state media controls. Privatization alone is not sufficient to guarantee diversity in national political discourse. Ultimately, it will be African owners and editors - or global media capitalists - who decide the nature and extent to which their independent publications will play political roles in African civil society, from communicators of information, to forum for public debate, to provider of political commentary, to watchdog of government.

The Press and Corruption
Accountability of governors to the governed is an essential ingredient of democracy, social stability, and economic development. Media investigation and unearthing of official embezzlement, graft, bribery, ineptitude, financial mismanagement and corruption is an important role in service of political system legitimation. Questioning government expenditures and priorities or wasteful development projects is a related service (Ogbondah, 1994:8). Private newspapers intermittently played this role in Zimbabwe, exposing instances of official corruption and in amplifying calls for accountability and justice. The problem was the tenuousness of private commercial media, both in terms of their economic viability and in terms of their vulnerability to state pressures, competition, and restrictions.

During 1988-89, unprecedented investigative reporting was done on the Willowgate car scandal by Bulawayo Chronicle Editor Geoffrey Nyarota and Assistant Editor Davison Maruziva. Ministers were buying and illegally re-selling cars at exorbitant prices, in violation of the government's own price controls. Despite government pressure and threats, they exposed the scandal. The Chronicle became so popular in October 1988 that people were queuing to buy it, sometimes ignoring the Harare-based Herald, to get the latest details of the scandal. The results were political dynamite:

Maurice Nyagumbo, senior Minister of Political Affairs, committed suicide. Minister of Defence Enos Nkala, who had publicly threatened to arrest the editors, resigned in disgrace, as did the ministers of Higher Education, Industry, Political Affairs, and a provincial governor. (Kumbula, 1997: 172)
It was the first time in the history of Zimbabwe that a newspaper had achieved such results. Nyarota “founded himself booted upstairs, to a newly-created position at Zimpapers” (with no editorial duties) (Kumbula, 1997:169-74). His ultimate contribution was to set a new standard for media reporting, helping to solidify an effective alliance between the press, honest, fed-up civil servants, the judiciary, and the public. Even though the Chronicle was not a national newspaper, it did “mobilize and orchestrate popular protest ... deepening and accelerating political communication” (Randall, 1993:636). This standard is proving hard for commercial papers to emulate, given economic barriers to profitable publishing in Africa (Wiseman, 1996:58).

During 1993, in Zimbabwe, the Financial Gazette reported that government was instructing companies not to advertise with them, and had placed tight controls on the allocation of newsprint (Index on Censorship, February 1993:41). In the wake of the collapse of the Sunday Times in 1995, owner Herbert Munangariher warned of the further stifling of views independent of the government, because “the official press cannot bite the hand that feeds it” (African Observer, 6-19 June, 1995:25). The Sunday Gazette folded in early 1996 for economic reasons, shortly after the Zimbabwe Independent came on the scene.

Churches and Media: Moto

The role of churches in generating pressures for democratic change in Africa may usefully be viewed as an exercise of influence rather than of power by providing a moral dimension to pro-democracy struggles in society. Their influence is also enhanced by the fact that entrenched leaders do not view them as competitors for political power but as more legitimate, disinterested participants, perhaps even mediators in national life (Wiseman, 1996:43).

When the Zimbabwe state sought to more strictly control organized opposition and regime criticism in the 1980s, churches were largely able to weather the worst of the pressure and harassment directed at other civil society groups. Much as was the case for Christian churches in South Africa under apartheid, the exceptional level of public respect for church leaders in societies with large numbers of practising or supportive members gave Zimbabwean religious leaders a degree of influence and status which the Mugabe regime could not easily ignore or suppress. It is hard, and politically risky, to try to destroy the institutional structure or sever international ties of solidarity of organized religions, to ban church services and monitor or censor sermon content.

Church leaders from many different denominations, particularly Catholics, via the monthly Moto, with a circulation of 27,000, played a significant role in articulating pro-democracy demands and providing support for groups seeking political changes (Chiumbu, 1997:66). Religious leaders did not have access to
state media, nor did they try in any deliberate way to use commercial media for humanitarian or social causes. *Moto* was outspoken in its editorial criticism of the state on human rights violations, particularly related to alleged Zimbabwe National Army (5th Battalion) atrocities against civilians in Matabeleland in the 1980s, land policy and corruption. *Moto* also intermittently served as a vehicle for political democratization and system reform proposals of other civil society groups. The fact that it is written in English and has limited, urban-based circulation, restricts its impact.

**Human Rights, Democracy and the Zimbabwe Press**

Respect for human rights is now recognized as crucial for democracy, good governance, and rule of law. Two expressly political rights singled out as human rights are the right to choose one's government democratically and to freely express one's political views. Citizens with no access to information about what is happening in their country, who do not know their legal and political rights, are not empowered for democratic participation (Chiumbu, 1997:1,11,15). Poor, illiterate, rural women are at the greatest disadvantage (see Ziyambi, 1997:4).

Lawyers and jurists have been especially prominent in attempts to preserve the more democratic features of the political system in the face of threats from the Mugabe regime (Hatchard, 1993). Legal and human rights groups in Zimbabwe have been intimately involved in efforts aimed at protection and promotion of political rights. Resistance to authoritarianism was spearheaded by the Zimbabwe Law Society, students and teachers at the University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (ZCCJP), Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (Zimrights), Southern African Human Rights Foundation (SAHRF), the Foundation for Democracy in Zimbabwe (FODEZI) and the Media Monitoring Project, established in 1998. Many leaders of these groups were formerly counted among the regime’s passive supporters (Sithole, 1997:136). Much of their work involved mass media to educate citizens, while calling attention to regime abuses. Media freedom and access are needed in order for such groups to research, publicize and expose problems to wider mass publics (Mukon, 1994:17). After independence, state media have failed to offer access to civil society groups. Commercial media were crucial to the success of these groups. Until it folded, the independent *Daily Gazette* offered space to human rights organizations and covered their activities. In the 1990s *Moto* was joined by *Parade* and *Horizon* as carriers and editorializers of news and current affairs (see, e.g., Moyo, 1992a, 1992b). *Parade* claimed to have nearly two million readers, although its production was about 100,000. *Horizon* established a regular column “You and the Law.” *Parade* had a regular column dealing with women’s issues written by Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) (Chiumbu, 1997:153). It is noteworthy that these magazines all
published in English, rather than Shona or Ndebele, thus limiting readership.

In cases of widespread human rights abuses, particularly the Matabeleland atrocities of the 1980s, the Herald (Harare) and Chronicle (Bulawayo), the largest circulation Zimpapers outlets, simply voiced the official ‘smashing dissidents’ or ‘bandits’ justifications of the regime in their coverage. In 1986, the government arrested the Acting Director and the Chairman of ZCCJP “for supplying sensitive information about Zimbabwe to enemy countries” (the ZCCJP report into 5th Battalion atrocities in Matabeleland to Amnesty International). ZCCJP reports and press releases, sent to all newspapers, were ignored by government media. Instead, ZCCJP itself was brutally condemned in newspapers and by ZBC. The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference responded, stating that the media had “singularly failed to keep the people of Zimbabwe informed of the facts which are common knowledge both in areas concerned and outside them through the reports of reliable witnesses” (Michael Auret, cited in Chiumbu, 1997:91).

Mugabe responded by publicly condemning the Catholic Church “for aligning with PF-ZAPU” while his Minister of Defence accused the bishops of “being in league with Satan and spreading rumors that the government was abusing human rights” (Bulawayo Chronicle, 18 and 28 April, 1984). When Amnesty International corroborated the findings of the ZCCJP report, Mugabe’s condemnation of the report (“rubbish”) and Amnesty (“Amnesty Lies International”) received page-one coverage in The Herald (November 21, 1985:1).

Independent newspapers like the Financial Gazette, Daily Gazette, Zimbabwe Independent, and magazines, particularly Moto, Horizon, Parade, Southern African Political and Economic Monthly (SAPEM), Journal for Social Change and Development, Read On and Speak Out/Tauri/Khulumani offered significant access, or public space, in the absence of coverage by state-controlled media bodies (see Ronning, 2000, for details on specific independent newspapers; and Manhando, 2001). Stories like “How the Bill of Rights Protects You” (Parade, October 1990) are only effective to the extent they are accessible to those most in need of reading them. Far more effective was a Legal Resources Foundation produced ZBC-Radio 4 programme called “You and the Law”, given radio’s greater reach (Chiumbu, 1997:25).

The effectiveness of ZCCJP, ZCC and Zimrights depends upon gaining even limited mass public access and exposure through mainstream media nationally, and beyond. Outside of the roughly 3,000 members, very few read their newsletters (Zimrights News, Zimbabwe Human Rights Bulletin), although these have been opened to key individuals and civil society groups for editorial contribution with important results. Even more telling, failure to gain exposure in national media, or outright hostility (negative reporting) severely limited their success in mobilizing public pressure on the regime. Because of the importance of free media to their success, ZCCJP and Zimrights were in the forefront of
civil society pressures directed at the ZANU(PF) regime to scrap all laws which inhibit it.

An ironic sign of ZCCJP and Zimrights' successes was the passing of the Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Act in 1995. Its aim was to reign-in NGOs viewed as anti-regime by empowering the Minister of Labour to take direct control of offending organizations, or proscribe them. President Mugabe threatened to use the PVO Act on civic groups which do not tow the government line. In one public speech he threatened Zimrights for breaking what he called "ZimLaws" and he reminded them that the government has "ZimPrisons" (Chiumbu, 1997:149).

Human rights groups are disproportionately significant because although they lack mass membership they comprise a highly potent core of articulate, educated advocates for reform. Their position, education, experience, and networks of connections across civil society and the state, sometimes extending directly into the media sector, allow them to efficiently channel their views to the right people at the right time, and in the right way.

**Defeating the One-Party State**

After the collapse of socialist regimes across Eastern Europe, from 1989 onward, human rights groups and non-state media proliferated and became more effective in partnership. Especially illuminating is how media-civil society partnerships entered, covered and ultimately influenced the debate and eventual decision to abandon efforts to impose a one-party state. ZCCJP took the lead in the campaign. On April 11, 1990 they took out a full page ad in the *Herald* arguing that "a constitutionalized one-party state is contrary to basic human rights" and recommended that plans be abandoned. The statement won immediate endorsement from ZCC, ZCTU, students, and intellectuals. The message was read from pulpits, on factory floors and in classrooms (Sithole, 1997:137).

The *Financial Gazette* questioned government's assertion that a one-party system was needed or wanted "when country after country the world over is dropping this practice"). Together with the churches, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), university students and staff, independent publications ran stories and hosted editorials condemning the idea as undemocratic during the critical period (December 1989-September 1990) when the Central Committee of the ruling party was coming to a final decision. Every issue of *Moto* and *Parade* carried at least one story (Chiumbu, 1997:124-26).

**Building Electoral Democracy**

In the absence of even rudimentary efforts by government or political parties over four previous post-independence elections, significant voter education initiatives were undertaken by human rights groups during the run-up to the 1995 elections. ZCCJP set up an inter-agency Voter Education Committee with
representatives from ZCCJP, ZCC, Zimrights, and Legal Resources Foundation. The committee produced six pamphlets in English, Shona, Ndebele and Tonga and produced videos which were widely distributed.

The Electoral Act (1990) and Political Parties Act (1992) were major grievances for ZCCJP, Zimrights and other groups because of their corrosive effects on political opposition. Until 1992, ZANU(PF) was financed by public funds funnelled through the Ministry of Political Affairs. Under increasing criticism, this Ministry was abolished but ZANU(PF) continued to draw public funds under the terms of the 1992 Act which grants funding to any party having 15 or more seats in parliament. ZANU(PF) had 118 of 120 seats (Sithole, 1997:130).

Zimrights sponsored a national conference on electoral laws in 1994. It was attended by a representative cross-section of civil society groups, including all major political parties, except ZANU(PF). A National Multi-Party Consultative Conference was organized by SAHRF to work out a common approach to the 1995 elections. Six opposition parties attended and in their closing document called for a boycott of the elections and the convening of a national multi-party constitutional conference to re-draft the "undemocratic" Zimbabwe Constitution.


Without this risk-taking reportage, no national media body would have pointed out how some constitutional, legal, and practical aspects of Zimbabwe's electoral framework inhibit participatory democracy. The biggest problem with this reporting was the absence of sufficient opposition party articulation and promulgation of programs and platforms. Independent papers would have provided fuller representations of opposition parties if those parties had been equipped to provide them with the necessary information to accomplish this. At least the independents tried. Zimpapers and ZBC could not.

Official media bias is as much an open a secret over the post-independence period as it was under the Rhodesian Front between 1962-79. The ZANU(PF) regime continued to selectively maintain and use inherited colonial media and security laws to exclude critical voices from state media. There was still no
room in official political culture for legitimate criticism and patriotic dissent. Civil society groups outside the net of ZANU(PF) were still viewed as threats.

There were some improvements in election media policy from 1990 to 1995. In 1990, ZBC aired ZANU(PF) radio and television commercials equating voting for opposition ZUM candidates with choosing death:

One ad featured the screech of tyres and the crushing of glass and metal in a motor accident, followed by a voice warning coldly: "this is one way to die. Another is to vote ZUM. Don't commit suicide, vote ZANU(PF)!" Another showed a coffin being lowered into a grave followed by the stern warning: AIDS kills. So does ZUM. Vote ZANU(PF) (Moyo, 1992b:75).

In 1990, Zimpapers and ZBC were regularly announcing locations and times of ZANU(PF) rallies and giving front-page coverage to ZANU candidates' speeches, while ignoring opposition parties. By 1995, some of the opposition parties gained some visibility and reach via the private press, especially Modus publications, in urban areas at least. Rural voters were virtually unable to obtain more than the ruling party line via radio (ZBC) and Zimpapers publications (Moyo, 1992b, 94-100).

In response to some especially offensive 1990 ZANU (PF) adverts, ZBC Directors created an Election Coverage Committee (ECC) prior to the 1995 elections. It was charged with monitoring news coverage and advertisements. ECC could change advertising content and broadcast schedule, editing out anything it considered insulting or dubious. ECC decided that parties running parliamentary candidates in at least 15 districts would receive 30 minutes of free air time on TV 1 and Radio 1,2, and 4, while parties with fewer candidates would receive 5 minutes on each channel. ZANU (PF), ZUM, and ZANU (Ndonga) met the 30-minute terms, while FPZ and three others received 5 minutes. In addition, all parties were invited to take part in a televised political debate on the day prior to the election, which has now become a tradition in Zimbabwe (Darnolf, 1997:74).

The 1995 elections still witnessed blatant state media partisanship. In April, the Zimpapers' Sunday Mail carried a verbatim article "Why People Should Vote for ZANU(PF)". ZANU(PF) reproduced directly from the ZANU(PF)'s own newspaper, The Peoples' Voice (Chiumbu, 1997:132-33, 136-7). Through its interference with the nominally independent Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust, the Mugabe government continued to use the Ministry of Information to direct and control access and content.

A study of media coverage found that ZANU(PF) received 85% of the 1995 campaign coverage over ZBC, while the three main opposition parties managed only 3% each (Darnolf, 1997:179). Press coverage was also revealing. In the four largest newspapers in Zimbabwe, the ruling party received an average of
77% of all political coverage. Besides calculating the amount of coverage, election researchers also analyzed content and found it "deficient, in terms of advancing democratic pluralism" (Waldahl, 1998:72). To understand why political reporting in Zimbabwe was what it was it is necessary to understand who the journalists and opposition politicians were, in addition to appreciating the difficult environmental constraints under which they operated.

**Opposition Parties, Mass Media and Democratization**

Historical constraints and an authoritarian political culture significantly limited emergence of viable opposition parties in Zimbabwe. Those which did form had a difficult time being accepted as legitimate, let alone viable. State media coverage of opposition parties amounts to little more than a predictable succession of shrill condemnations, portraying them and their followers as unpatriotic, if not treasonous.

Further complicating their plight, constitutional and electoral system changes introduced at the expiry of the Lancaster House Constitution in 1990, particularly the switch from proportional representation to a plurality, first-past-the-post system, severely cut chances of opposition parties to gain parliamentary seats. Electoral violence aimed at opposition candidates, and discriminatory campaign finance laws further stunted opposition viability, especially during the 2000 elections.

What would have to change before opposition parties in Zimbabwe could credibly challenge ZANU(PF) dominance of politics and government? To attempt an answer is to learn much about problems associated with attempts at re-democratization. One must go well beyond electoral system reforms to a more holistic analysis of the condition of coherent, viable, organized, party-based opposition, including how opposition parties communicate within civil society. This is where mass media enter the debate.

Party systems, like media systems, also reflect and help form civil society. To what extent are party-media relations politically significant? If organizational capacity is accepted as an important indicator of party strength, then party access to, and ability to use mass media should be seen as a good indicator of party viability and competitiveness. Inequities in media access across parties suggest a less than democratic party system.

To be accepted as viable alternatives, opposition parties need media access, visibility, and effective amplification among potential voters. But that is only a first step. There must be more of substance for media to report than repetitive, shallow condemnations of incumbent leaders. Opposition parties must articulate and publicize platforms and policy alternatives to those of the ruling leadership.

Perennial complaints of opposition parties and candidates across Africa are media bias in favor of the ruling party and lack of media access. As more elections are held on a regular basis, and as impartial observers are increasingly able to monitor media coverage, it is becoming possible to examine such claims,
in the light of their generally acknowledged significance to the larger issue of democratization. Good electoral studies now exist for Zimbabwe. The more recent ones have tended to devote more attention to media issues (see Moyo, 1992c, Darnolf, 1997, and Waldahl, 1998).

Serious new opposition parties emerged in the late 1980s-early '90s, following the ZANU-ZAPU “Unity Accord”. They represented a form of growing urban civil society pressures for more inclusive and participatory political options, as the Mugabe government became increasingly detached from popular aspirations.

Former ZANU(PF) Secretary-General in exile and cabinet minister Edgar Tekere’s Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) was created in 1989, following his expulsion for openly criticizing the one-party state idea. ZUM fielded 107 candidates out of 120 constituencies in the 1990 elections, won 23% of the popular vote but only came away with 2 seats. Under the old proportional representation system it would have been at least 23.

The Democratic Party (DP) came on the scene in 1991, formed by a breakaway faction of ZUM members led by Emmanuel Magoche, a medical doctor, at least partly in response to Tekere’s highly caustic, personalized, dictatorial leadership. Much of the DP’s platform and objectives seemed designed to appeal to the intelligencia and shrinking urban middle class.

The Front/Movement for Popular Democracy, founded in 1993 by Austin Chakaodza, an academic, suffered from many of the same problems of urban bias and high-handed leadership which have limited the electoral appeal of the DP and ZUM, along with the older opposition parties UNAC and ZANU (Ndonga) under Bishop Abel Muzorewa and the Rev. Ndabangi Sithole, respectively (Nkiwane, 1998:98-9, 101).

The Forum for Democratic Reform was founded in 1993 by former High Court Chief Justice Enoch Dumbutshena. Its highly respected, moderate leadership and wider policy appeal made it a potentially potent electoral threat to ZANU(PF). Much of its core support came from high-level ZUM defections (Sithole, 1993:8,17,20). The government made much of its white support as evidence that Forum had “sold out” to white interests. Serious in-fighting led to an untimely split, just two weeks before the 1995 elections and the party was only able to present candidates in 27 of 120 constituencies, receiving 5.9% of the vote but not winning a single seat (Nkiwane, 1998:103).

Opposition parties in Zimbabwe were hurt by neglecting the rural voting majority, ethnic divisions (clearly ZANU(PF) dominates among the 80% Shona-speaking rural majority), lack of internal party democracy, voter apathy and fatalism, political violence, and an inability to form viable electoral alliances or coalitions (Nkiwane, 1998:102-08). By the 1995 elections, none of these groups was in an effective position to challenge ZANU(PF), lacking any capacity to generate critiques of government, alternative policy recommendations, or to deliver messages to a national electorate for debate and consideration via mass
Significant opposition also emerged from within the ranks of the ruling party itself, taking the form of independent candidates, former ZANU(PF) activists opting to quit the party and seek office under no party banner. This development was symptomatic of the growing incapacity of ZANU(PF) to tolerate criticism from within and also stands as an indictment of the new opposition parties which largely failed to attract disaffected prominent ex-ZANU(PF) members to their fold.

A milestone was the 1996 High Court-mandated victory of Margaret Dongo, ex-ZANLA fighter and former ZANU(PF) MP. She was only one of two non-ZANU(PF) MPs and was a particularly visible, outspoken critic of regime policies. Her success was heartening to others close to giving up on elections as a way of challenging ZANU(PF) dominance. This is both an indictment of ZANU(PF) and of the opposition parties, all of which, in her opinion, are “full of egotistical opportunists” (Nkwane, 1998:104).

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in September 1999. Its leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, has close ties to labor and in fact was Secretary-General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) at the time of the party’s founding. The MDC has emphasized the economic crisis in appealing to potential supporters. Besides labor, the MDC enjoys support from a wide range of social and professional bodies, including students, lawyers, and the business sector. The party won 57 of the 150 seats in Parliamentary elections in May 2000. Tsvangirai was to stand trial in May 2001 for a statement that government officials charge constituted incitement to overthrow the Mugabe regime (New York Times, 1 May 2001: A11).

The Politics of Broadcast Reform
Studies consistently suggest that radio is the most important source of political information for Zimbabwean voters, second only to direct, face-to-face personal communications via rallies and town meetings (Darnolf, 1997:61). Pressures for commercial, public service, and community-based broadcasting are increasing, and with new models emerging in places as diverse as South Africa and Ghana, will impact developments in Zimbabwe. ZBC is the most important source of political information in the country (Moyo, 1992c: 94-100).

ZBC has failed miserably to live up to the post-independence promise of helping to make politics transparent by creating a public sphere in which everyone could participate. ZANU(PF) did exactly what its pre-independence predecessor, the Rhodesian Front, did with state broadcasting, conspicuously using radio and television as tools of government propaganda, uncritical news and views, and self-glorification (Mano, 1997:12, 24-25). For this, citizens are made to pay license fees.

The ZBC drifted after 1992, as factions within the ruling party battled for control over state broadcasting (Maja-Pearce, 1995:123-4, 129). ZBC was run
by a 9-member Board of Governors, appointed by and subject to the authority of
the Ministry of Information and the President. The Director-General, similarly
appointed and influenced, was theoretically responsible for the day-to-day
operation of ZBC's four radio and two television stations (see Manhando, 2001).

Radio 1 (AM/FM) was aimed at English-speaking audiences. Radio 2
(AM/FM/SW) broadcast in Shona and Ndebele. Radio 3 (FM), an English
commercial pop music station, targeted youth. Radio 4, (FM/SW) the
educational station, broadcast in English, Shona, and Ndebele. TV1 and TV2
aired mostly English programs. All broadcasts originated from the Harare
(Pockets Hill) studios, for security reasons. Radio 2 had an estimated 3.7
million Shona and Ndebele listeners. On TV1 and TV2, only 30 minutes a day,
the news, broadcast in Shona and Ndebele. Imported English programs were
shown without any subtitles or dubbing (see Zaffiro, 2002).

The Ministry of Information complained of too much foreign content, ZBC
countered by pointing out the continuing lack of government financial support to
develop a local production capability, despite survey results consistently
reporting public preference for quality local programs (Manhando, 1997:49). To
finance costly technology updates, like the switch to digital and purchase of
space on satellites, ZBC needed to depend ever more heavily on advertising,
even on. Radio 4, and on foreign donors. It will still be at least a decade before
pay-TV or satellite broadcasting affects the dominance of ZBC radio in rural
Zimbabwe (Manhando, 1997:30,42,52-3).

Zimbabwe held out against private broadcasting longer than any of its
neighbors. However, with the arrival of unregulated PAS4 satellite frequencies
on the KU and C-Bands, private broadcasting will come to Zimbabwe sooner
rather than later, in one form or another (Manhando, 1997:37). Private radio,
when it does arrive, will still be limited by government control of licensing and
urban-centered, revenue-seeking, economic interests. The Joy-TV licence was
awarded to ZANU(PF) cronies without proper tender procedures, using tax
payers' money without Parliamentary consent, in breach of the Constitution.

After 1996, the President or Minister of Information could assume direct
control over state media, severing any remaining strands of independence. A
Media Council, formed in 1995, was charged with formulating policies for
protection of media autonomy but little progress was made. Government also
reviewed the 1974 Broadcasting Act, with the stated goal of amending it to allow
for private broadcasting (Manhando, 1997:25).

Statutory safeguards are needed to guarantee the independence of a reformed
ZBC. An independent, widely-representative, non-political board of governors
is needed, as well as a severing of the financial dependence on government
subventions. The days of appointment of senior broadcast managers from the
ranks of ZANU(PF) must be brought to a swift and final conclusion.

South Africa's experiences in the 1990s are very relevant (Louw, 1993;
Teer-Tomaselli, 1995, 2001). A restructured ZBC should include regional and
local radio stations, complemented by community radio, non-profit and locally controlled commercial stations. More than political will is needed. Civil society development and media professionalism need to reach critical mass to support pluralistic broadcasting. Financial viability is also no small matter, not just for start-up but over the long haul.

Zimbabweans need broadcasting policies which actively promote decentralization and emphasize access and service for diverse groups, especially rural communities. Community radio and public service broadcasting are essential components. Policies emphasizing public participation in media management are needed. Finally, measures must be agreed upon to effectively limit domination of national broadcasting by global conglomerates.

**Conclusion**

Democracy in Zimbabwe is still breathing. Its widely expected demise in the 1990s has not come to pass, although significant stresses occurred over land policy, corruption, and freedom of expression during 2000 in the run-up and after the parliamentary general elections. These will intensify with Mugabe’s decision to run again in 2002.

South Africa’s ongoing experience with simultaneous political and media democratization offer some useful lessons for Zimbabwe: a) legal protection of free expression and an independent judiciary are essential for democracy; b) state media domination is inimical to democracy; c) regime control of political information inhibits democracy; d) media independence - economic as well as editorial and legal - is crucial to a functioning democracy.

At its best, media can facilitate and connect, empower and clarify, offer a forum for proposals and serve as a reality check for governing elites. To nurture democracy, media must acquire a capacity to anticipate and analyze not only actions of politicians but policies and their implications (Ngugi, 1995:51).

The best way for media to help nurture democratization in civil society is to be staffed by professionally trained, well-educated individuals. Educate, organize, and professionalize journalists, editors, and media managers. Zimbabwe media organizations have begun to more aggressively seek out external support for education and training, while joining with others in the SADC region to develop their own resources, via organizations like MISA in Windhoek and the Nordic-SADC Journalism Center in Maputo. Donor money makes a difference: indeed, at times it is the difference between life and death. But official aid to private publications is risky, as Sweden learned from the angry reaction of the Zimbabwe government over its support to Horizon in 1991 (Nilen, 1994:35).

Experience can be gained, as illustrated by creation of *Zimbabwe Independent* by Rusike and Modus in 1996, after previous failures. The new venture is maintaining journalistic standards while succeeding economically. Alternatives are foreign ownership, of the Rupert Murdoch variety, or no private press at all.
Dependence on government, party, or foreign commercial printing facilities is a major barrier. MISA has called for soft loans from the international community to help its members set up independent printing facilities (Bussiek, 1995:278).

The question of newspaper access must also be addressed. The Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust provincial newspaper project was one of the few attempts at establishing a system of regional, indigenous language weeklies in Africa. Seven papers reached sectors of society with little or no access to other media, presenting issues and problems of direct relevance to local populations. Yet these papers still fell short of what private newspapers achieved, in terms of tackling controversial issues, presenting readers with political arguments and analysis, and educating readers about their legal and political rights. However, they soon folded as state support waned in the face of their support for opposition parties.

News of what was really going on in the country tended to flow from urban, official sources. There was a debilitating lack of reliable information to and from the rural grassroots. One group, Popular Education Collective (PEC) was trying to begin to change this, via its magazine Read On, published five times a year, which used a popular education approach and targets rural readers. Read On used simple language combined with critical analysis to tackle major issues not addressed by official media.

Popular magazines and community theater may turn out to be more relevant and effective, in terms of reaching the hardest to reach, than private newspapers. Popular magazines in Zimbabwe contributed to opposing a state-monopolized political discourse, giving more people access to the public sphere (see Nordanger, 1993:123-47).

Zimbabwe needs a comprehensive new national broadcasting policy. Privatization does not equal democratization. Such a policy must attempt to strike a balance between public service and commercial viability. Public service broadcasting, whether undertaken by ZBC or others, must succeed in reaching as much of the rural population as possible, which has virtually no access to TV today. M-Net, transmitted by MultiChoice, or other options will do not good for the majority, who lack not only televisions and sufficient cash but electricity (Manhando, 1997:46-47).

New attitudes about access to official information and more transparent governance should underpin any successful media policy reforms. This will be even harder to nurture. In 1992, SADC journalists called upon their governments to scrap colonial era Official Secrets Acts and replace them with statutes guaranteeing the right of freedom of information for all citizens. None have yet done so.

ENDNOTES
1. Further instances were the dismissal of Tommy Sithole after 16 years as editor of The Herald (replaced by Mugabe’s nephew Chikerema); the firing of Simba Makoni as managing director of Zimpapers (after a conflict with Chikerema on editorial issues that
involved *The Herald* and the coverage of ZANU-PF); the demise of the Community Newspaper Group because they reported opposition perspectives; the firing of Edward Moyo as ZBC Director General for refusing to sanction ZBC black-outs on students and trade unions; the dismissal of the entire Board led by Professor Tichaona Mahoso on failure to carry out Minister of Information, Chen Chinutengwende’s partisan orders in 1993, and the resultant appointment of card holding high ranking ZANU-PF officials James Chitauro and Kotsho Dube to lead the Board and Luke Manyawara and Don Mahleka as Director General and Deputy Director General respectively. During the late 1990s, ZBC studios were used by ZANU-PF to subsidize a pay-per-view TV venture, Joy-TV, which uses the public broadcaster’s facilities. Joy-TV was established through political connectedness without going to tender, and the equipment worth more than Z$1.3 billion was guaranteed by government against the advice of the Attorney General (Zimind, 12.12.98). (See also Dube, 1995).

Moyo and Kindness Paradza were certainly extensively as champions of the democratic process until the late 1990s after which they turned against the civic movement. Moyo (as the spokesman of the pro-Government Constitutional Review Commission) by using the mainstream media (ZANU-PF platform) to attack the civic organisations-controlled constitutional reform pressure group (the NCA), calling its members “National Constitutional Assembly mandarins who, unable to swallow their dogmatic untruths about the real reasons behind the NCA’s non-participation in the constitutional Review Commission, ... individuals with long-standing histories of failed activism in opposition politics like Masipula Sithole, Kempton Makumure, Washington Sansole, Margaret Dongo, Edgar Tekere, Welshman Ncube ... disgruntled students, workers and upstart lawyers ...” (Zimind Online 02.07.99). These are the people behind the successful “NO” vote against the entrenchment of the Mugabe dictatorship, therefore by opposing them Moyo was taking an anti-democratic movement stance. Paradza apologized to ZANU-PF for “having blindly worked for foreign controlled papers” (Independent Press).

For a detailed analysis of the one-party state debate see Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991).


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Part II

ACCESS, EMPOWERMENT AND DEMOCRATIZATION
Chapter 8


RUTH TEER-TOMASELLI AND KEYAN G TOMASELLI

The Age of Transformation

In the ‘post-apartheid’ parlance of South Africa, ‘Transformation’ has come to mean the adaption and reformation of institutions, both in the public and private sectors, to accommodate the change in political culture and ethos following the first universal franchise election of 1994. From universities to public corporations, from government departments to private companies, across the country organizations reviewed their mandates, spelt out mission and vision statements, examined the content of their production and distribution, and re-oriented the composition of their workforce and client bases. The years 1994-2000 were marked by rapid and often contradictory attempts to alter the structures of ownership and control, of employment and budgetary allocation, of managerial style, corporate culture and ethos; from learning curricula to media contents. At every level of society there was an attempt to change the ways things were done, and to introduce new and better, more democratic, more demographically equitable, more politically and gender sensitive ways of doing things.

With respect to the media, the socio-political imperatives of the ‘new South Africa’ have been compounded by on-going globalization of the international media environment. The digital revolution, the impact of satellites and rampant globalization changed the communication landscape completely. From 1994 on, international capital began to acquire interests in local media companies on an unprecedented scale. Domestic black ‘empowerment’ consortia also purchased in previously white-owned media corporations (Tomaselli, 1997, 2000).

The transformation of the media occupies a special place in the changing milieu of the socio-political landscape. The apparent dilemma lay in the circumstances in which these key locations of reform and revolution in the broader society themselves needed to be reformed and revolutionized. Media, in common with the education sector, organized labor, and the law, were dubbed by modernistic structuralists as ‘ideological state apparatuses’ (Althusser, 1972). Despite the deserved criticisms of this deterministic line of argument, it remains true that newspapers, magazines, television and radio are both the sites and the instruments of transformation.

As sites of transformation, there is a contested politico-economic tussle in the structural transformation of the media: the make-up of ownership and shareholdings, the control of management and editorial stance, the composition
of the workforce employed in the media industries, and the number and diversity of competing and associated media in both the print and electronic sectors.

As *instruments* of transformation, media provide essential platforms for debate, information and education around issues shaping the kind of society we are, and the kind of society we wish to become. More subtly, but in some ways more importantly, the media choose and frame the kinds of stories we read, see and hear. They provide images in which we see ourselves and others, as well as role models to which we are able to aspire, visions of the ‘other’ against which we rebel ... all these heavily-laden signifiers are the raw material through which we confirm, modify or negate our already-existing sense of identity, both at the personal and at the national level. The media are thus crucial sites of contestation in the ‘circuit of culture’ (Hall, 1997:1-5) in which the production, presentation, regulation, consumption, and creation of meaning are all intimately implicated in the creation of identity, at both the personal and the national levels.

This chapter concentrates on institutional transformation, and the distribution of power and benefits, and should be read in conjunction with Farhana Goga’s (1999, 2002) study on the distribution and composition of employees in the industry. Another useful companion is Guy Berger’s discussion in this volume.

**Transformation of Broadcasting**

Historically, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) played an important role in both constructing and supporting the apartheid structures of pre-1991 South Africa. In the 1980s the SABC explicitly supported the then government in its effort to combat what was represented as the ‘Total Onslaught’ of ‘revolutionary forces’, supposedly spearheaded by the African National Congress (ANC) in exile (Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 1996). With the general transformation of South African political imperatives, being perceived as the voice of the government was no longer an option. It was a political and commercial liability. Thus, from January 1991, a process of restructuring began, in which pragmatism, rather than propaganda, became the dominant ethos. The structural change was in part a result of a prolonged campaign to ‘free the airwaves’ (Jabulani, 1991).

For purely analytical purposes, two broad ‘camps’ of media activists could be identified in the early 1990s. The ‘National Party camp’ was made up of para-statal organizations, most notably the SABC, the Electricity Supply Commission (ESKOM), South African Posts and Telecommunications (SAPT/Telkom), Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Significantly, all these bodies themselves have been subject to exhaustive transformation, indicated, in part, by changes of name as well as structure and ethos. Aligned to the para-statals were M-Net subscription television and the Afrikaans newspaper group, Nationale Pers Beperk (Naspers). The most important initiative undertaken by this lobby was the appointment of
the Viljoen Task Team under the chairmanship of Christo Viljoen, then Chairperson of the SABC Board (see Viljoen and Cronje, 1993). Among the many criticisms of the Team were the demographically ‘unrepresentative’ nature of its composition, in terms of race, gender and political affiliation; and the heavily protectionist stance it took towards maintaining the dominance of the SABC within the media environment, thus effectively excluding other potential media entrants (see Louw, 1993: 286-293).

Within the ‘ANC-oriented camp’ the Film and Allied Workers Organization (FAWO), the Campaign for Open Media (COM) and the Community Radio Working Group and its various affiliates, acted as the fulcrums around which a series of initiatives were undertaken. Among the most notable of these were: a march on the SABC building in August 25, 1990; a media policy workshop at Rhodes University in the same year; the highly influential Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves Conference in Doorn, Holland; a second media policy workshop, this time held at the University of Bophuthatswana, and the release of the ANC's Media Charter, all of which took place in 1991. The following year, COM hosted a conference entitled “Free, Fair and Open Media”, which culminated in a set of proposals forwarded to the Conference for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), and the establishment of a Campaign for Independent Broadcasting (CIB) (all in 1992) (see Louw, 1993:294-378; Pinnock, 1993; Jabulani, 1991).

These initiatives culminated in the democratic and transparent appointment in May 1993 of a new governing Board for the SABC, and the setting up of a regulatory body - the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the following year. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act 153 of 1995 required that body to conduct an enquiry into the protection and viability of public broadcasting services, cross media control and South African content, known as the Triple Enquiry, completed in 1995 (IBA, 1995). Taken together, these two developments were the turning point heralding the ‘new’ broadcast environment.

In line with the social, economic and political changes taking place within the country as a whole, the SABC was in the vanguard of visible change. To this end, much creative energy was expended on negotiating the statement of a new ‘Vision and Values’ framework which would provide the ethical core in the task of transforming a former state broadcaster into a fully fledged public broadcaster. Summarized briefly, this vision was a commitment to deliver full-spectrum services to all South Africans, in all parts of the country, and in each of the eleven official languages. Their program content was aimed at protecting and nurturing South African culture and creativity, and reflecting the reality of South Africa to itself, and to the world. South Africa was to be viewed from a distinctly South African perspective (SABC, 1996a:2).

A further turnabout of the restructuring of the business side, as opposed to the programming side of the operation, was implemented under the so-called McKinsey process. McKinsey is a British-based consulting firm which was
engaged by the SABC in 1997 to advise on the restructuring of the Corporation. The same company had been contracted by the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1996. Although the SABC continues to refuse to make the McKinsey recommendations public, one effect was that 1,400 jobs were lost, saving the Corporation approximately R450m (City Press, 24 October 99:13). Further restructuring was envisaged, when the commercial arm of the Corporation will be to split from the public service channels. The commercial services are intended to generate revenue for the Corporation, thus helping to cross-subsidize the public service. In essence, then, it was envisaged that the SABC would be corporatized and registered as a limited company governed by the Companies Act. The state became a 100% shareholder. Corporatization in various guises was a strategy implemented across a wide variety of para-statals as the government grappled with restructuring state assets. Eskom, the electricity utility company, for instance, followed a similar route by incorporating the commercially-driven Eskom Enterprises while the public service responsibilities remained with the Electricity Corporation.

The most visible evidence of the SABC’s new approach was the reconfiguration of radio and television channels from 1995 onwards. Prior to this repositioning, TV served the interests of the middle classes only: predominantly, white, ‘coloured’ and Indian, with an increasingly large percentage of black people falling into this category. In order to put such an ambitious plan into effect, the SABC mandate received considerable stretching. Among other projects, the following targets were aimed for:

- extension of airtime for all official languages (other than English) on television;
- increase in local content programming;
- extension of TV footprint to reach all potential viewers;
- introduction of regional TV slots in all provinces;
- equity and universal access to religious programming;
- provision of curriculum-based education on both radio and television; and
- upgrading of the African language radio services.

Not all the above ambitions were achieved. In the sections which follow, a brief summary of the actual changes in both radio and television will be touched on.

**Repositioning Radio**

At the beginning of 1996, the SABC broadcast 22 regional and national radio services. Eleven of these, one in each of the newly designated official South African languages, were ‘full-spectrum’ stations, which meant they offered a full range of programming genres: information (news, actuality, sports programs, discussion shows); entertainment (music, request programs, quizzes, novel
readings and drama) and education (both formal and non-formal). In addition, these stations were specifically charged with the mandate to “build national identity”. The radio portfolio also consisted of two national music format stations (Radio Metro and Radio 5) and 7 regional music services, including Radio Lotus, aimed specifically at listeners of Indian descent.

The SABC made the ‘repositioning’ of its radio stations a priority in terms of the reassessment of its role in society. The new purpose was to compete effectively in a deregulated environment in which new commercial and community stations would actively seek audiences and revenue. It was necessary to retain existing audiences loyal to the stations, as well as to attract new listeners. The ideal aimed for by radio stations was to be ‘audience driven’—that is, the tastes, likes and dislikes of the audience should be ascertained through continual research and audience feedback.

It was found that language stations were inadequately resourced for the new mandate of audience-based programming. There was an urgent need to understand listener needs and wants, and upgrading of these stations became an urgent priority. Upgrading included the improvement of technical facilities and the increase in the area of signal distribution (broadcast coverage area). The projected broadcast coverage of each of the eleven African language-based stations was aimed at reaching 80% of native-speakers of the language by 1997, and 90% by the turn of the century. Creative programming capacity, including the increase and training of staff, was to receive attention. All the radio stations received new names to mark the ‘relaunch’ in line with the IBA’s Triple Enquiry Report which stipulated that “in the identification of stations' reference to language or ethnic group will not be permitted” (IBA, 1995).

Afrikaans Stereo (previously Radio Suid-Afrika) was renamed ‘Radio Sonder Grense’ - RSG (Radio Without Boundaries). The station’s vision, expressed as “lively and transforming” aimed at breaking down the barriers of the past, particularly those within the Afrikaans-speaking communities, regardless of race.

SAfm was launched in March 1995, the result of a redefinition of the national English-language station previously known as Radio South Africa (RSA) (Stenhouse, 1995). The station began life as the “A” Service, and later the English Service. It was argued that the continuation of RSA was untenable because: firstly, the station enjoyed a disproportional allocation of resources as compared to other stations in the SABC’s portfolio; secondly, it was serving a dwindling listenership; thirdly, while it was run on supposedly commercial lines, the station suffered a financial loss; and finally, it was not “demand driven by the larger English audience needs”. In the words of Govan Reddy, the SABC’s Chief Executive of Radio at the time, Radio South Africa was “an old fashioned radio station with a dwindling, ageing, predominantly white audience” (Business Day, 7 April 1995:8).

The transformation of RSA, the first in the radio stable, was not well received
by listeners, and resulted in much controversy, particularly with regard to the presentation and standard of language used. Many of the older programs were rescheduled, while others were dropped completely. The new programming left regular listeners “feeling isolated and insecure” (Toale, 1997), while failing to attract a new listenership. By September 1995, six months after the relaunch, the listenership had slipped from 400 to 230,000 (AMPS, 1995). Following this setback, the station was in a continuous state of reassessment; by early 2000 it had regained its lost audiences.

*Radio Good Hope* began its life as a transmission split from one of the original regional music stations: *KFM*. It broadcast only in the Western Cape. Unlike the other regional radio services, the station was considered a valuable part of the public service stable because it served a traditional segment of the Western Cape audience, the so-called ‘coloured people’, better than any other radio station. For *Radio Good Hope*, the challenge of repositioning lay in the ability to deliver a public service mandate without relinquishing its commercial imperatives. In order to achieve this, an innovative strategy was put in place with a twenty/twenty format: news headlines were broadcast at twenty minutes past, and twenty minutes to the hour, thus creating sections in which different forms of programming could be contained. The format allowed for twenty minutes of uninterrupted music, current affairs or a period of educative programming.

**The Age of Deregulation: Creating Radio Diversity**

The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communication agreed with the IBA recommendations expressed in the Triple Inquiry, that the SABC divest its regional radio stations in order to hasten the establishment of a competitive broadcasting environment in South Africa. It was seen as the “first round of privatization of state assets in the New South Africa” (IBA press release, 20 September 1996). The stations were to be made available to consortia of bidders.

The license transfer took place after a complex process beginning with the determination of price and of public hearings, during which the various offers were assessed in terms of their bid prices, as well as ‘public interest’ considerations formulated by the IBA. Some of the latter included the following: the bidders should be persons domiciled in the province of the radio coverage area; be persons from diverse groupings; and not own a substantial portion of other media interests in the area of broadcasting. The new owners needed to cater for the language needs of the area, and of meeting IBA local content requirements. These provisions were designed to force the processes of diversification of ownership and editorial content. A further seven ‘greenfields licenses’ (i.e. licenses without existing stations attached to them) were allocated in late 1997. These are also commercial regional radio stations, often with quite distinct niche audiences. In addition, there were 82 licensed community radio stations throughout the country by the year 2000.
Transformation of Television

Introduction of television

The year 1976 saw a profound change in South African leisure time activity when television was introduced into South Africa. Initially, only one channel was in operation for five hours an evening, and the broadcast time was equally divided between English and Afrikaans languages. A second channel was introduced in 1982, which carried TV2 and TV3 as split signals beamed to different geographical areas of the country along a supposed ethnic logic. TV2 broadcast in Nguni languages - Zulu and Xhosa, while TV3 broadcast in the Sotho family of languages - North and South Sotho and Pedi. In the late 1980s, the TV structure was changed. TV1 remained purely English and Afrikaans, while TV2/3/4 became a single integrated channel, named Contemporary Cultural Values (CCV) (see Tomaselli et al., 1988, for detailed history of SABC-TV). Although there was still a significant amount of African language programming, with a transmitter split to accommodate the news in different languages to different parts of the country, the ‘glue’ which held the programming of CCV together was English, since, in the sentiments of the Station’s manager, English was the only common bond between all the peoples of South Africa.

In keeping with the post-electoral mandate discussed earlier, the TV channels were repositioned in 1996. SABC1, with the largest footprint, broadcast most of its prime-time programming in the Nguni group of languages - Zulu and Xhosa, with some additional Pedi and Ndebele - alternating with English; while SABC2, with the second largest footprint, carried Sotho, Tswana and Afrikaans during prime time. This policy ensured the significant downgrading of Afrikaans from being a co-equal language with English, to a minor language, given a greatly reduced allocation of broadcast time, on a par with other African languages. SABC3 was now an all-English language channel, designed to meet the needs of urban, educated audiences of all races.

Private Television

Electronic Media Network, broadcasting as M-Net, is a subscription television service which started life in 1986 owned by newspaper groups, with the dominant interest being awarded to Nasionale Pers (Naspers) (see Collins, 1993). M-Net uses terrestrial encryption technology (as opposed to cable) to deliver its service. Transmission is via a scrambled signal requiring a decoder and the payment of an annual subscription fee. M-Net was conceived as a wholly entertainment-oriented product. Initially, it was envisaged as an
encrypted subscription channel, with an advertising base predicated on its
subscription list. However, an ‘open time’ slot of two hours each evening,
during which time the signal is encoded and available to subscribers and non-
subscribers alike, provides a much bigger advertising base.

M-Net is part of the international subscription television group Nethold, active
in 59 countries, in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The channel does not
have an overt public service mandate. Traditionally, its main audience focus
was upper and middle class people of all races, and servicing this sector
remained its core business. Apart from increasing its local programming
content, and diversifying its on-air presenters to reflect the ‘rainbow’
composition of South African society, and promoting a variety of ‘socially
responsible’ initiatives, most notably Red Nose Month in aid of child welfare,
M-Net did little to alter its positioning within the post-apartheid milieu.

Multi-Choice is a subscriber management company. Its business includes
access control services, management of decoders, decoder repairs, sales and
marketing, monthly billing and fee-collection, as well as technical customer
support for subscription-television. Originally a service division of M-Net,
Multi-Choice operated as a separate company, although it continued to provide
subscription management for M-Net. In 2000, Multi-Choice had 2.7 million
subscribers, in 31 African countries and 12 European countries, making it
Africa’s biggest provider of pay-television channels, including a million
international satellite television channels and 48 audio channels on its
PanAmSat4-delivered subscription service, Digital Satellite Television (DSTV)
(see Banda, 2002). After the consolidation of the company’s subscription
television business into the Network Holding Group, the holding company
became known as Multi-Choice International Holding (MIH), the overarching
holding company for the whole of the “M” family, including M-Net, M-WEB,
Mobile Telephone Network (MTN Cellular), DStv as well as a number of other
engineering and electronic manufacturing projects (Teer-Tomaselli, 1999).
The first commercial free-to-air licence was awarded to e-TV late in 1998.
Owned by a consortium of black empowerment business (80%) in an equity
partnership with Time-Warner (20%), the inaugural management of the station
was largely white. Technologically, it was the most sophisticated channel on the
African continent, with 100% digital broadcasting. Very little of the
programming content is currently produced in South Africa - approximately 2%
excluding news - and most of the programming was in English. e-TV does not
require viewers to purchase a subscription or decoder to receive the signal.
However, its transmission ‘footprint’, or the area in which reception was
available, was curtailed to the heavily populated urban areas, and did not cover
most rural areas unless the subscriber received DStv, the Multi-Choice platform,
which broadcast throughout Africa.

For most viewers unable to afford the subscription rates of M-Net, and for
those viewers outside the broadcast footprint of e-TV, the only available television channels were those provided by the SABC. Furthermore, apart from M-Net’s broadcasts in Afrikaans, and a scattering of African languages by e-TV’s continuity announcers, only the SABC provides broadcasting in languages other than English.

**Transformation of Print Media: Newspapers**

Prior to the 1994 elections, the printscape was dominated by two English-language media groups, Argus Holdings Ltd, Times Media Ltd (TML); and two Afrikaans-language groups, Perskor and Nasionale Pers (National Newspapers). These companies were interconnected on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) within the wider web of South African monopoly capital (see Tomaselli et al, 1987). Between them, the four press groups together also controlled M-Net. The media environment was tightly managed, with closely regulated advertising, printing and distribution arrangements. Complex relationships thus existed between the media conglomerates of the apartheid era and other South African capital interests.

**The phases of post-apartheid print media ownership**

Argus restructured in 1993 via ‘unbundling’, which is the selling off of constituent parts of the company. Unbundling, as undertaken by Argus, was punctuated as indicating a commitment to black empowerment. Despite the fact that the media conglomerates chose to undertake selective ‘unbundling’, the result was a redeployment in allocative control as a means of shaping structural processes. (see Louw: 1993:159-180) By allocative control is meant “the power to define the overall goals and scope of the corporation and to determine the general way it deploys its productive resources”.

Operational control is identified with those who exercise ultimate authority over human and material resources on a day-to-day basis (see Murdock, 1982:119-123). Frequently, those managers working at the level of operational control have a good deal of autonomy, despite the fact that their range of options may be limited by the goals of the organizations for which they work, and the level of resources they have been set. The distinction is an important one when applied to the concept of ‘black economic empowerment’, since the crucial debate within business circles and reflected widely in the media, poses the question, “Is BEE only about equity ownership, or is it about black owners also having management and operational control of the companies in which they are invested?” (Financial Mail, 20 August 1990:46).

**Phase I:** The first phase of Argus unbundling occurred when 52% of the largest daily newspaper targeted at black readers, was sold to the black-owned
Corporate Africa. In turn, SANLAM, an Afrikaner-owned insurance and financial conglomerate, held 17% of Corporate Africa in September 1996. Corporate Africa owned 75% of NAIL, while Argus retained 25% as well as the printing, advertising, and management contracts, thus retaining allocative control. In the second half of 1998, black shareholders and directors owned 10% of the NAIL equity, while ‘public’ shares made up a further 18%. The rest of the shareholding was divided between traditionally white insurance and investment companies. This arrangement is reminiscent of the centralized action/power and structure/determination processes of the white-owned press under apartheid which has re-emerged in relationships between black-managed newspapers, their holding companies, and emergent black-dominated capital. In 1994, The Sowetan, owned at this stage by NAIL, acquired the last of the 1980s progressive-alternative newspapers, New Nation, a union-supporting weekly with socialist-tendencies. From its founding in 1986 until 1994, New Nation had been donor funded. After 1994, however, the paper was unable to attract sufficient advertising revenue. Shortly after its takeover by Sowetan, the paper was shut down (see Mpofu, 1995; Tomaselli, 2000c).

Phase II: The impending ANC electoral victory in April 1994 reopened South Africa to foreign reinvestment on a large scale. Irish-based Independent Newspapers (IN), owned by Tony O'Reilly, also identified Argus as a significantly under-cultivated asset (The Mercury, 13 March 1994:13:6). IN bought 31% of Argus from Anglo-American in January 1994, a stake which increased to 58% in 1995 and 75% by 1999, and a 100% by the end of that year. Argus became the largest company in O'Reilly’s international stable. Whereas in February 1994 the two distinct English language presses were Argus and Anglo-JCI’s TML (with the latter having minority share holdings in the former), IN now secured effective allocative control over Argus, and separately listed the company on the JSE as Independent Newspapers. A second phase in restructuring was stimulated in April 1994, when IN went on to purchase TML’s share holdings in companies previously owned by Argus, thus securing a majority hold over much of the English-language print media. Thus, only the sale of The Sowetan and the consequent formation of NAIL was an unbundling exercise in the strict sense.

The history and significance of the Johnnic deal

Phase III: The purchase from Anglo-American by the National Empowerment Consortium (NEC) in late 1996 signalled a pivotal advance towards the interpenetration of black and white dominated fractions of capital. By early 1994, Anglo-American had settled on Johannesburg Consolidated Investments (JCI) for unbundling, following ANC demands for blacks to play a greater role in the economy. Johnnic, the R8.5 (US$ 1.5) billion industrial arm of the unbundled JCI, had both direct and indirect interests in the Central News
Agency chain of retail stores, the recording company Gallo, subscription television management Multi-Choice International Holdings, and the newspaper group, Times Media Limited.

NEC 1994 was a loose association of smaller businesses and unions,\(^{15}\) joined by NAIL after January 1996. Although NAIL had the management experience and funds to buy Johnnic on its own, some of the other NEC constituents (as did Anglo-American) questioned NAIL’s commitment to black empowerment. The unions viewed NAIL as a vehicle for black enrichment\(^{16}\) of an elite group of businessmen rather than facilitating real popular progress.\(^{17}\) NEC initially bought 20% of Johnnic for R1.5 billion at a 7% discount, with an option to boost its stake to 35% within 18 months of the conclusion of the deal, at a discount of 5%.

The NEC takeover of Johnnic was the biggest cash deal in South African history. Within two years of the 1994 elections, black-dominated capital controlled 10% of the JSE, a rate of accumulation far greater than that of previously disadvantaged Afrikaner capital growth at any time during apartheid. One of Johnnic’s companies, MIH, for example, owned 40% of Network Holdings, the M-Net satellite TV provider in Europe and Africa. In addition, in late 1996, Pearson’s, a British-based publishing group, purchased 50% of two TML titles, Financial Mail and Business Day. As a majority shareholder, NEC had allocative control of its core assets. Consequently, it exerted a controlling interest over TML of which it owned 91.4% NEC therefore was represented on the boards of TML and Multi-Choice, which included M-Net. Cyril Ramaphosa, the first chairman of the new Johnnic board, described the Johnnic deal as “a good step towards greater diversification of the media industry” (The Mercury, 28 October 1996). Ideological opponents, however, counter-argued that the result was a concentration by a particular constituency aligned to the ANC.\(^{18}\) Although NEC was not involved at the operational level of TML, it was able to implement black empowerment at the allocative level.

*Phase IV*: Against all predictions (see, e.g., Louw, 1995), the National Party (NP)-supporting Afrikaans-language press also underwent a sea-change during the early 1990s. Nasionale Pers (National Press/Naspers), the dominant Afrikaans press group, bought control of the conservative northern, Perskor, in the early 1980s. This purchase was the outcome of attempts within Afrikanerdem to retain old-style apartheid in the early 1980s (Muller, 1987:146). Naspers in 1996/7 formed new firms and sold shares to companies owned by black business. Its managing director announced that the group was “selling the family silver” to black interest groups for moral and practical reasons (*Sunday Times*; 11 August 1996:4). 51% of the black targeted *City Press* was earmarked for black investment groups. Naspers also merged its two largest educational publishing concerns, together with its interests in distance education, into a new company and then sold 50% to black partners.
The restructuring of Perskor is instructive. At the start of 1996, Perskor owned a number of highly profitable magazines, a stake in M-Net, the English daily, The Citizen, and a half stake in Rapport, a national Afrikaans Sunday paper, amongst other media. Kagiso Trust, a large ANC-supported NGO, had funded United Democratic Front activities during the late 1980s. Empowerment schemes being its objective, Kagiso had previously relied on anti-apartheid funding from overseas donors and contributions from local interest groups. In a move to become self-sufficient, Kagiso\textsuperscript{19} set up Kagiso Trust Investments (KTI).

KTI's initial media acquisition included a 25.5\% ownership of two former SABC commercial radio stations (see earlier in this chapter). Along with Mail and Guardian Media, the consortium applied to the IBA for a new radio licence. Perskor's deal with KTI was effected in mid-1997. With the purchase of City Press, KTI became a joint controlling shareholder of the Perskor Group, until 1998 when the two parted company. The deal between Perskor and KTI was both political and financial. Perskor, which had monopolized the government printing contracts during the apartheid era prior to 1994, now found itself being edged out of the market. The marriage of convenience with KTI was an attempt to help Perskor "shed its verkrampte [reactionary] image and regain some of the government's book printing contracts" (Sunday Times, 24 November: 10).

Similar to the NAIL-SANLAM alliance, the KTI-Perskor cooperation signalled new communities of practising joint partnerships in which the one party sought economic empowerment, and the other political protection.

\textit{The Final Result:} The NP's inability to represent big capital in the post-apartheid era and the new-found libertarianism amongst firms like Naspers and Perskor resulted in some unexpected shifts of political allegiance during the four phase transitional period outlined above. The Cape Town Afrikaans daily, Die Burger, the 'mother of Afrikaner Nationalism', had editorially supported the small liberal Democratic Party (DP) while criticizing the NP during the 1994 elections (Uys, 1996:8). Naspers, in what would have been a heresy and politico-economic suicide prior to 1994, even donated funds to the DP, ANC and NP election campaigns (Die Burger, 11 May 1996: 12).

\textbf{Identity and Ethnicity of Ownership}

The Argus-IN restructuring emerged as a significant departure from the pattern of concentrated ownership that historically characterized the South African print media. For the first time ever, mining capital had relinquished newspapers previously regarded as strategically important in ensuring both its dominant role in the economy, and the security of capitalism in the face of rising Afrikaner national socialism. The later acquisitions by black-dominated capital of TML and the share offerings to black investors by M-Net and Nasionale Pers in 1996 showed a similarly clear break with the practices of Afrikaner capital. Yet this process, the fourth stage of media control restructuring, took place under a quite
Nationalism and ethnicity

The restructuring of the media industry was both a break from, and a continuation of, historical patterns. A ‘rationalized’ public sphere, organised by private, profit-driven organizations and subordinate to the principle of profit-maximization, remained largely closed to wider public participation. The South African public sphere thus largely remained under the control of “property-owning private people” whose new-found autonomy is rooted in the sphere of commodity exchange (Habermas, 1989:110).

As the previously ‘white’ newspapers attempted to cross racial readership boundaries, they experienced a loss from their traditional readership bases, though this was compensated for by an increase in Indian and ‘coloured’ readers. One possible solution to creating diversity and reader cross-over is to bridge class and racial differences. This can be done through a reverse racial substitution of staffers under the IN or TML ownership structures, but this requires commercial risks. For some, the reproduction of corporate philosophy is the key: “successful publishing depends on having an editor who is ‘in tune’ with his readership”, opines Ken Owen. New content and ideological orientation often impacts negatively on proven reader profiles. Audiences do not translate neatly into saleable markets, and in South Africa, as in any other liberal democracy, audiences who are consumers are more important than those who are not. The composition of the workforce in all sectors of the South African media is provided by Goga (1999, 2002; see also Manhando, 1996), while readership/audience profiles and content are not our primary concern in this study. While the black middle class continues to grow apace, the most profitable readership for the foreseeable future, continues to be dominated by white, Indian and ‘coloured’ readers. This situation is not very different from the state of being during the dying days of apartheid. Money needs to be made from media. The significant sums of black pension money now invested in TML would have to be protected, not risked (Efrat, The Mercury, November 27, 1996:8). In 1998, TML and NAIL therefore agreed that the only way to cross racial divides was to establish a new newspaper, Sunday World, which they launched in March 1999.

These new ventures, no matter the race of the persons who own them, are as likely to bolster capitalist interests as they have in the past, and thus support the continuance of a class-based social formation. As co-owner of Mafube Publishing, Thami Mazwai stated when discussing the NEC takeover of Johnnic vis-a-vis its new shareholders: “To be multiracial is in the logic of business” (Sunday Independent, 19 January 1997:4).

The new black owners may indeed have facilitated some sort of Africanization of values in the media, but financial survival is determined by readers and advertisers, not by intellectuals and cultural commissars who claim
‘traditional’ legitimacy or cultural vision. Mazwai also referred to “diversity in ownership and management”, something which offers the opportunity of dialogue but from the perspective of the new class of media moguls. New modes of identity-formation around the practices of journalism in an African context are being forged within the columns of weekly journals and newspapers during the period of media transition. The level of debate indicated that many media organizations, both print and broadcast including the national broadcaster, accepted the new discourses of ‘nation’, non-racialism and a South African identity/ies.

To recapitulate, during apartheid the English press ideologically protected English-dominated capital in general, and mining capital in particular. Now the new ownership cadre demands profits in the context of global capital while also attempting to forge visions of an African identity. At heart was the competition for political power and the control of instruments which mediate the discourse of that power.

Role of Mainstream and Alternative Media

In the era of putative democracy following the 1994 elections, and in the absence of an overtly oppressive regime, the rationale for the ‘alternative press’ of the struggle era was eroded. Although much racial tension, poverty and unrealized human capacity remained in South Africa after 1994, most of the alternative print media which had addressed these issues closed in the early 1990s (see Tomaselli and Louw, 1991; Switzer and Adikhari, 2000).

The developmental problems bequeathed to the new and legitimate state by the old could be confronted. Funding which was almost entirely donor-based dried up for many NGOs, and most particularly the alternative press, as funding agencies channelled their support into government initiatives aimed at redress in the delivery of basic social necessities. At the same time, the intellectual and managerial cadres from many resistance organizations moved into government. The organizations themselves frequently collapsed as their guiding personalities took up posts in Parliament or the civil service. Most of the notable protagonists of the erstwhile ‘alternative press’ were absorbed into the mainstream media. In the wake of democratization, the commercial and public service media revealed an almost insatiable need for journalists representing ‘previously disadvantaged groups’, as well as political opinions previously under-represented within the mainstream newspapers and the electronic media. Other organizations shifted from donor funding to more market-related stances. For example, the Weekly Mail formed a partnership with The Guardian of London to establish Mail and Guardian Publications Proprietary Limited (see Merrett and Saunders, 2000).

Some of the role of the ‘alternative media’ was reinvented in terms of community radio stations, of which the IBA licensed 82. These stations were not run by the same people as the former alternative press, nor did they perform the same functions - that is, to act as fulcrums of democratic organization with the
national social movements (see Teer-Tomaselli, 2002). However, they remain locally based, concentrated less on overtly political ways of identity formation, more on cultural expressions and so on in the micro public sphere. Whereas in the 1980s press collapsed the local to the national in terms of struggle discourses, the radio stations were local/global in terms of democratic discourses.

Nationalism and Nation-Building

Social solidarity is reinforced when audiences share the same cultural and informational environment. John Reith, the first Director General of the BBC, and the ‘father’ of public service broadcasting, recommended in 1925 that “public service broadcasting should act as a national service. It should act as a powerful means of social unity, binding together groups, regions and classes through the live relaying of national events” (cited in Keane, 1996:33). He argued that this is best achieved when audiences shared common programming and were subjected to a monopoly provider of a single service. Although the ideal of a universal single-channel environment is now an anachronism, nation-building continues to be an important consideration of many media corporations, both public and private, across the electronic and print media. The SABC, for instance, includes the following provision in the Corporation’s Guidelines for Programme Content:

In a multi-cultural society, the SABC needs to ensure not only that the diversity is reflected, but (sic) that it is reflected positively [...] Programmes should contribute to a sense of nation building and should not in any way disparage the lifestyle or belief systems of any specific cultural group or in any way attack the integrity of such a group, unless it is established to be in the public interest. However, the news and beliefs of different groups are obviously open to honest, thoughtful scrutiny in programmes like documentaries (SABC, 1996b:10).

These sentiments are repeated so frequently, and are so entirely self-evident, that they have now become a canon of common sense assumptions. Therefore, it is worth critically reconsidering the concept of ‘nation-building’ and the part that media contributes to this process. For the sake of brevity, only the case of the SABC will be considered in this short overview.

Local Content

An important aspect of identity is the opportunity to see and hear reflections of ourselves on screen and radio. In this regard the role of local drama productions cannot be underestimated. The Triple Enquiry Report of the IBA laid considerable emphasis on local content programming in South Africa, and imposed significant quotas on the public broadcaster (SABC, 1996b:10).
Through local music, and through locally produced, entertaining, informative and educational programming, produced by a wide range of South African producers, television and radio will make a vital contribution to democracy, nation-building the development in South Africa. Local quotas will protect and develop our national culture, character and identity, and will address needs and extend choice for the public and will enable growth and development in the South African industry (IBA, 1995).

The IBA argued that South Africa, as a nation with diverse cultures and languages, had not sufficiently seen itself reflected on the country's television screens (IBA, 1995:134). Fears of imported foreign programming over-running the national culture and identity of nations were commonly expressed, and even more so in a deregulated, multi-channel environment of satellite and cable, which is able to offer a myriad of programs simultaneously. This, of course, is the case throughout the world, where the great bulk of television programming is procured from the cheapest possible source - mostly in English, and typically from the United States.\textsuperscript{23} Local content programming, particularly when it includes a high proportion of drama, documentary and sport, is an enormously expensive enterprise, as any national broadcaster worldwide will testify.\textsuperscript{24} Nevertheless, it is essential to the project of protecting national identity and national culture, as well as providing for the diverse language needs of the audience.

As a means of achieving its policy goals, the IBA prescribed specific conditions regarding programming, including the broadcasting of local programming both during the daily schedules and at prime time. A median of 50% of local content was set for the SABC, to be complied with over three years.\textsuperscript{25} The local content across the three channels differs widely.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & SABC1 & SABC2 & SABC3 & TOTAL \\
\hline
Local & 29.34\% & 53.64\% & 28.80\% & 37.26\% \\
\hline
Imported & 70.66\% & 46.38\% & 71.20\% & 62.74\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{SABC Local Content levels for October 1997 in percentage of broadcast minutes.}
\end{table}

From 1994 on, SATV1, relaunched as SABC2, popularized with the catchphrase "Come Alive with Us", had the highest levels of local content. Until 1997, it met the revised quota of 30\% within the first two years of implementation. However, neither SABC1, branded with the slogan, "Simunye - we are one" (see Roome, 1997), which broadcast predominantly in English and the Nguni languages (Zulu and Xhosa), nor SABC3, an all-English channel catering for a more upwardly mobile audience, and branded as "Quality shows", reached the 30\% goal.

Audiences used to exogenous programming, in which the quality typically is very professional, do not easily settle for inferior productions, simply on the
grounds that they are ‘local’. One way around this dilemma is the large-scale use of dubbing into a local language. An added advantage of dubbing is that the original imported soundtrack can be ‘simulcast’ on another audio channel - either through the television set, or synchronized on radio. In subsequent modifications, the level of local programming content was adjusted to 30%, to be complied with over five years. Different quotas were set for the commercial channels to that of the SABC, since it was argued, the latter had to carry higher local content obligations to meet its specific mandate as a public broadcaster.

Apart from the Department of Broadcasting and Telecommunications, to which the IBA reported, other government bodies were interested in the question of local content. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology’s (DACST) interest in local content stemmed from its responsibility for ensuring that all South African agencies, including the broadcasters, consider the cultural implications of their policies (Mtshali, 1995:5). The policy position of this on local content is unequivocally ideological in its orientation, and is based on the concept of the African Renaissance referred to below. DACST Minister, Lionel Mtshali, suggested that within the broader concept of the African Renaissance lay a notion of what can be called a South African Renaissance: the emergence of a new consciousness and a sense of shared heritage, culture and history, of which local content on television and radio is a prime contributor.

**News, Views and Legitimacy**

The greatest numbers of viewers are attracted to television during prime time (18:00 hrs.-21:30 hrs.), and broadcasters are thus able to charge premium rates on advertising space. During these precious hours, local content was above the 30% mark for all channels. SABC3, with its notoriously low levels of local content overall, is particularly striking. The explanation for this anomaly appears to lie in the amount of news and current affairs programming put out on SABC3 during this time, which raises the local content level substantially.

**Table Two: SABC Local Content levels for October 1997 Prime-Time (18:00-21:30), in percentage of broadcast minutes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SABC1</th>
<th>SABC2</th>
<th>SABC3</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>59.18%</td>
<td>68.76%</td>
<td>24.15%</td>
<td>50.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imported</td>
<td>40.82%</td>
<td>31.24%</td>
<td>75.85%</td>
<td>49.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The English language News of SABC3 featured significantly among the top ten most highly rated programs broadcast during prime time, measured both by absolute viewer numbers (audience ratings) and audience appreciation. However, there is a ‘double value’ in these news programs: not only are they very popular, and therefore, in a semi-deregulated market very profitable program genres, but they are also the prime carriers of legitimacy. The Trinity of the public service mandate is to educate, entertain and inform, and as
broadcasters internationally have learnt over the past sixty years, information is a highly powerful, as well as profitable, enterprise. Indeed, it can be asserted that news is the most important part of the public service mandate. John Fiske (1987:281) notes:

News is a high-status television genre. Its claimed objectivity and independence from political or government agencies is argued to be essential for the workings of a democracy. Television companies applying for renewal of their licenses turn to their news and current affairs programs as evidence of their social responsibility.

In line with this, the SABC increased its daily news bulletins from September 1998 from four to seven a day. However, even if news conveys legitimacy onto the public service broadcaster, legitimacy is always measured in terms of its editorial independence. The SABC, particularly, remembering its historically close connections with previous political dispensations, was aware that one of the most significant threats to the ethos of public service broadcasting is the international phenomenon of the loss of legitimacy and credibility in the face of pandering to governments. With the heavy emphasis on nation-building, there is always the danger that unbridled nationalism may disintegrate into unashamed apologies for sectarian interests. Traditionally, public service broadcasters have looked to legislation to protect them, and maintain a degree of independence from the government of the day. This is a theme that will be taken up again at the end of this chapter.

A Powerful Means of Social Unity

In his now classic text, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (Anderson 1983: 47) reminds us that ‘the Nation’ is an abstraction, a construct of the imagination. It is a community which is imagined as both sovereign and limited. In his view, ‘the nation’ emerges when the realm of the church and dynasty recede, and no longer seem to answer to mankind’s craving for immortality. The nation, with its promise of identification with history, enables people to surpass the finality of death and eradication. The need to create a view of the nation arises most profoundly in periods of distinct social stress: when new developments within, or pressures from outside, undermine a sense of continuity, then most strikingly, is there a “need for ‘ethnic revival’” (Smith, 1986: 176).

The need for the consolidation of national identity is keenly felt in developing countries, and the role of the mass media rightly has been foregrounded in this debate. Media provides the self-image of a society. Television has been likened to the role of the medieval bard, since the bardic mediator occupies the center of its culture; television is one of the most highly centralized institutions in modern society. This is not only the result of commercial monopoly or government...
control, it is also a response to the culture’s felt need for a common center, to which the television message always refers. Its centralization speaks to all members of a highly fragmented society (Fiske & Hartley, 1982: 26).

Nations are created in the historical and sociological imagination through identification with generalized communal heroes set in equally generalized, but dramatized, locations and times. Eric Hobshawn (1983: 13-14) focuses on “that comparative recent historic innovation, the ‘nation’ with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest as closely bound up with ‘invented traditions’ from the 19th Century: commemorative anniversaries, flags, anthems and heroes”. The repeated and reinforced use of the South African flag, representing the new ‘rainbow nation’ of post-1994 South Africa; the consciously multi-ethnic mix of on-screen presenters, the motto of the SABC 1 channel as “Simunye: We are One”, are all symbolic interplays which can be seen as part of the ‘instrumentalist’ conception of nation-construction, in which nationalism is “an instrument of legitimation and mobilization, through which leaders and elites stir up mass support for their competitive power struggle” (Smith, 1992: 68). Elsewhere, Hobshawn notes that central to all modern ethnic-nationalist mythology is that communities exist ‘in nature’, obeying the same laws of birth, growth, maturation and decline - and rebirth. However, this development is not cyclical, as it would be in nature, since the period of decline is regarded as ‘unnatural’, a matter of ‘betrayal’ from within, or ‘subjugation’ and decay from without (Smith, 1986: 191). Thus national mythologies are linear in character, although they take the form of stories of birth, death and renewal, which typically devolve into a series of motifs or elements following a commonly set pattern of eight identified elements. For the purposes of the present argument we will concentrate on only the following:

- a myth of the golden age; that is, how we become great and heroic
- a myth of decline; that is, how we decayed and were conquered/exiled; and
- a myth of rebirth; that is, how we shall be restored to our former glory.

The legends are personalized: they are the stuff of drama. Nominally the story of a ‘community’, a national mythological narrative, requires human, and superhuman agency to bring it to fruition, thus most of these elements require the mediation and inspiration of superhuman agents, or ‘heroes’ to be either present or to have been taken forcibly out of the narrative. The dramatic mythologies are often elaborate “reconstructions of the communal past, mixing genuine scholarship with fantasy in the service of an ethic of regeneration” (Smith, 1986:191).

Nations learn to ‘know’ these heroes, these events and myths, through what
Anderson (1983:49) calls the “technology of print capitalism”. The rise of printed literature and the press made it possible to ‘narrate’ the nation and to imaginatively ‘construct’ it. All the more powerful was the rise of radio and TV culture, which has allowed national leaders unimpeded access to their constituencies, while at the same time providing a fertile ground for the re-articulation of stories, mythologies and romances of the past. Nostalgia for the past, especially the ethnic past of “one's own” people has indeed been a feature of society in all ages and continents. Nationalism is a mass phenomenon (Connor, 1992:50).

“*In Dying we are Born Again*”

In one of the clearest examples of the remembering of the golden age, and the rebirth and restoration to former glory, come the mythologies which make up the African Renaissance (see Mbeki, 1998). This theme is widely debated in both the print and the electronic media. The African Renaissance is in part a critique of “the attitude that nothing positive will ever come out of Africa and her social and political institutions without the wise supervision of European institutions using European methods of social interaction” (Thulasizwe Mnogomenzulu, *Natal Mercury*, 20 May 1999:8). Even in the area of entertainment, the idea has taken a strong hold. “A positive example of the approach [taken by] M-Net is the shift from an imposition of the Western values of beauty contests to a standard that is more African”, notes Ghanaian cultural critic, Atukwei Okai (1999:360). The pageant referred to here is the “Face of Africa”, an annual promotion which ‘discovers’ beautiful girls and turns them into ‘stars’, and which in its marketing presentation, is based on the roll call of African beauties: Amina, queen of Zaria, Makeda, queen of Sheba, Tiye, Nubian queen of Kemet, and ten others:

The African continent has, since the beginning of time, produced a number of great queens . . . powerful forces that, through the ages, have demonstrated outstanding qualities, despite the inferior status that has been placed on them (*Network, The M-group newsletter*, August, 1999:2)

The SABC has taken it onto itself, as part of its vision and values, to promote the African Renaissance with quite a missionary zeal. A banquet was hosted by the SABC on 13 August 1998 at which Deputy President Thabo Mbeki delivered his African Renaissance address. The event was televised live on SABC2 for the full period of two hours, and by satellite to the rest of the continent. A theatrical production, entitled, tellingly, *An African Dream*, “examines Africa, past and present historical epochs, in a quest to find those values and experiences that imperatively facilitate a smooth transcendence into the Renaissance”. The communique continued: “the play illustrates the history of the values
embroidered in Africa’s quest to realize a vision that will usher in a new beginning and rebirth of the African soul”. Thus, in the most unambiguous terms, the SABC associated itself with the process of mythology-building.

Has there been an Increased Public Voice?

As we read through newspapers, watched television and listened to radio between late 1998 and April 2000, we had an impression of a definite swing within media content towards a repositioning of sectoral interests along both socio-economic and ethnic lines. South African media seems to have followed the international trend of creating a stronger commercial ethos, conceptualizing their audiences as consumers and voters rather than primarily as citizens. At the same time there was a counterveiling tendency evidenced through the significant investment in supplements on literacy, formal and non-formal education, health, civic development, socio-economic upliftment and the like by all sectors of the print and electronic media.

Both the print and the electronic media opened spaces for the interrogation of topics central to the notion of the South African identity: issues such as freedom of speech, who is an African, what constitutes ‘local communities’, the African Renaissance, and like topics were debated within the national arena, rather than the previously constrained areas of racially-defined ‘identity’ politics (Makgoba, 1999). To some extent this led to a re-invigorated public sphere. The increased level of discussion, which is of an inclusive rather than exclusive nature, must have had some discursive impact on the project of nation-building.

The downside of the new-found emphasis on indigenization was the rise of an unquestioning chauvinism, and the tendency towards a blurring of distinctions between media owners and the present government. This can be seen as a dangerous development when viewed in the light of the precedent set in the closeness between the old-style Afrikaans, the state-broadcaster status of the SABC, and the generally apathetic line taken by much of the ‘liberal’ English-language press and the past apartheid government.

ENDNOTES

1 Wynand Harmse took over as CEO of the SABC in 1991. A previous Financial Director of the Corporation, Harmse was more concerned with creating a profitable and sleekly-run organization than a political empire. Nevertheless, the ingrained organizational culture of political timidity remained for a number of years.

2 Racial categories used do not imply any pejorative distinctions, but indicate the manner in which the broadcast sector was segmented historically.

3 ‘Full spectrum’ broadcasting is a genre typical of BBC-type public service broadcasting, in which the needs of all parts of the language-community are catered for. It supposes a pattern of listener loyalty premised on habitual listening at particular times during the day, a routinized sense of radio-ritual. The model is premised on the assumption of
channel scarcity, in which one channel must suffice for all listeners, and predictably, it is most popular among those language groups for which there is not great listening choice, most notably in South Africa, the African-language radio services. For those languages well serviced by different radio services, for example, English, the more commercially oriented ‘branded’ stations appealing to a segmented audience defined by age, income or musical taste, attract a higher number of listeners.

4 At the time, the station was the best resourced of SABC’s radio channels, with 126 transmitters and a staff of 53 (Business Day, 7 April 1995:8). This was compared to Radio Zulu with 20 transmitters and a staff of 31, but with ten times the size of audience. Furthermore, RSA made a loss of R20m in 1994, as compared to the profit of Radio Zulu of R32m. Reddy argued that “no public broadcaster could justify running such an expensive and dying station that had little relevance to million who use English as a first or second language” (SABC Annual Report, 1994).

5 The radio stations which changed hands in this way were:
   - Radio Oranje in the Free State,
   - Radio Algoa in the Eastern Cape
   - Highveld Stereo in Gauteng
   - Jacaranda Stereo in the Pretoria region
   - KFM Stereo in the Western Cape was acquired by Crescent Consortium at a price of R65 million.

6 The ‘greenfields’ radio licences were awarded to the following stations:
   - Kaya-FM (township youth - Gauteng)
   - Classic FM (Classic and Jazz, Gauteng)
   - YFM (youth - Gauteng)
   - Punt Geselsradio (Afrikaans talk radio - Gauteng)
   - P4 Radio Cape Town (Jazz - Western Cape)
   - 567 Cape Town (Music/talk - Western Cape)
   - Punt Geselsradio, (Afrikaans talk radio - Western Cape)
   - P4 Radio Durban - jazz - KwaZulu-Natal

7 IBA (1999). The implications of these stations will be discussed in the section under alternative media.


9 Allocative control covers four main areas of corporate activity:
   - The formulation of overall policy and strategy
   - Decisions on whether and where to expand (through mergers and acquisitions or the development of new markets) and when and how to cut back by selling off part of the enterprise or laying off labor
• The development of basic financial policy, such as when to launch a new share issue and whether to seek a major loan, from whom and on what terms.
• Control over the distribution of profits, including the size of the dividends paid out to shareholders and the level of remuneration paid to directors and key executives (Murdock 1982:122).

SANLAM, a mutual company, historically had powered middle class Afrikaner financial advancement following the British destruction of the Afrikaner agricultural economies between the late 1880s and the 1930s.

Owned by Motlana, in May 1996, NAIL was valued at R900 million via Corporate Africa on the JSE. Other investors included SANKORP, the investment arm of Afrikaner insurance giant, SANLAM (21.5%) and the black consciousness National Council of Trade Unions (13%). NAIL's principal investment is 30% equity in Metropolitan Life, the country's fifth largest assurance company, bought from SANLAM, in 1992. It also has a 10% interest in MTN, a cellular network, and 21% of the African Bank, South African's first black owned financial institution. The National Council of Trade Unions, a BC grouping, owned 13% of NAIL.

As of the beginning of August, 1999, the stakeholders in NAIL were as follows:
• Black shareholders and directors 10%
• Public shares 18%
• Investec 18%
• Old Mutual 18%
• SANLAM 10%
• Board of Executors 10%
• Holland Insurance 21%


We are indebted to Bold et. al. (1994) for their research into the O'Reilly takeover of Argus.

COSATU-affiliated unions, backed by large retirement funds, founded the NEC in early 1995. NEC was made up of 50 black business groups.

Unions had become major investors in retailing, stockbroking and radio. In September 1996, the SA Clothing and textiles Workers Union Investment Company, via its stake in Africa on air, which includes PrimeMedia, gained control of Highveld Stereo and bought 10% of Motolink (Sunday Times Business Times, 24 November 1996: 14). Union investment companies were supposed to operate separately from the union, an ideal not matched in the practice (South African Labour Bulletin, 1996:38).

Motlana in particular was singled out for criticism (Mail and Guardian, January 19,

17 Lunsche (1996:5). This perspective was borne out in 1999, when NAIL directors tried to award themselves over R120 million in *ad hominem* payouts.

18 The protagonists of this debate were Cyril Ramaphosa, and Nigel Bruce, former editor of the *Financial Mail*.

19 Kagiso sold insurance giant, Liberty Life, a 25% stake in KTI, for R50 million. KTI made its debut in motoring through Kagiso Motors, a joint venture with Imperial Motor Holdings. As part of the New Radio Consortium, Kagiso Trust was awarded Radio Oranje and East Coast Radio, two of the six SABC stations out for sale in 1996 (*Sunday Times Business Times*, 24 November 1996:14). It also has interests in catering, and a 40% stake in Haum Publishing, now called Kagiso Publishers. This purchase was facilitated by a $5 million loan from US Merchant Bank, JP Morgan. Haum was previously a very conservative operation. Kagiso is one of the few black groups not involved in the Johnnic deal. Donald Gordon of Liberty serves on the Kagiso board; his father-in-law, Hylton Appelbaum, having played a major role in the development of Kagiso (Fallon 1996:13).

20 Restructuring and mergers flared again in 1998/9, so further phases occurred after this fourth phase, which marks the periodization of this particular study.


22 a) the ideological, directed towards the purposes of building a nation and an identity; and b) the economic, direct towards the development of a film, television and recording industry (Simons 1998:22).

23 The latter country has enjoyed a first mover advantage, allowing it to dominate the global audio-visual market. In the United States, the domestic broadcasting sector is structured on a private basis, with networks related to a tangle of stations and affiliates. This allows for great economies of scale, since the cost of production is recovered in the primary, domestic market, and copies can be sold into the foreign market at a far lower price than the original. In the audio-visual industry, unlike almost any industry for agricultural or manufactured goods, it is far more expensive to produce a television or radio program, a compact disk or film than it is to copy it. Thus, it is always cheaper - indeed up to thirty times cheaper - for any broadcaster to buy a program than to produce it for themselves (Ward, 1997).

24 It is worth noting that a locally produced drama would cost as much as R15,000/US$2,500 a minute (the norm is R8,000/US$1,300) while the drama of the same standard produced abroad, in English, would sell for as little as R600 (US$100) a minute.
In meeting the 50% quota, the IBA established specific minimum quotas for different program categories, as follows:

- Drama: 20%
- Current Affairs: 80%
- Documentary and Informal knowledge building: 50%
- Education Programming: 60%
- Children’s programming: 50%

For some unexplained reason, the category of sports programming was not included in the quota.

The News in Xhosa and Zulu are the most popular programs on television, while the News in Sesotho, as well as English and Afrikaans, all command substantial audiences, well in excess of the general norm.

Audience size is measured in Audience Rating points (AR’s) by the South African Advertising Research Foundation, which is external to the SABC. The SAARF publishes a bi-annual All Media and Products Survey (AMPS) which is the accepted standard in determining audience figures as well as product usage for the country’s main media. In addition, the SABC undertakes its own research in Appreciation Indices (AIS), which measures the qualitative value placed on specific television programs by viewers.

SABC Press Release, 26 August, 1998. Up until September 1998, there were television news bulletins at 07:00, a short headline bulletin at 13:00 hrs., a national news bulletin at 18:00 hrs., the main news bulletin at 20:00hrs. followed by news headlines at 22:30hrs. Under the new arrangement, short bulletins were added at 10:00hrs. and 16:00hrs., while the lunchtime bulletin was extended to a full service, including live business reportage, together with information and stock prices direct from the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Some more concrete proposals, information and analysis can be found in Tomaselli and Shepperson (1999; 2000); Boateng (1999); Nxasana (1999)

In fact, the SABC went beyond the narrow ambition of nation-building, and in the spirit of global (or at least supra-regional) enterprises, took on the challenge of spiritually revitalizing the entire continent: “As a nation builder, the SABC is committed not only to our country, but to the rebirth of the whole continent”, proclaimed a press release dated 24 August, 1998. This disclaimer echoed the words of an SABC spokesperson the previous week: “The SABC has a major role as nation builder in our own country, and being the ‘pulse of Africa’s Creative Spirit’, we have a responsibility to spread the African Renaissance message to all corners of the continent.”

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CHAPTER 9


GUY BERGER

Transformation from what, to what? This is the definitional question posed by Steenveld (1998), which needs to be answered by anyone wanting to analyze South Africa using the term “Transformation.” There is, arguably, no absolute definition. For the purposes of this chapter, however, a tripartite understanding is used. The key focus is transformation from a racist society, based on unfair discrimination. Transformation of this goes through two analytically distinct moments: transformation first to fair discrimination – corrective action to change racial imbalances resulting from racism; then transformation to a nonracial society. The end point of transformation then is doing away with racial distinction altogether: deracialization such that race has no social significance.

However, transformation in South Africa should not only concern race, as important as this is. Instead, the society also needs to be assessed in terms of two other aspects: transformation from a non-democratic dispensation to a democratic one, and from an economy of underdevelopment to one of development.

The democratic issue concerns a pluralism of media that includes significant political independence from government. Such media, however, are a benchmark of democracy when they also contributes directly to this system. Assessing media’s place in democratization therefore encompasses their contribution to the development of a common public sphere, an informed and active citizenry and civil society, an accountable government, a culture of respect for human rights, and an appropriate legal regime.

Economic transformation designates socio-economic change that improves people’s lives, and especially spreads economic benefits to sectors previously excluded from them. This process may (but not inherently) involve changes in class structure and interclass mobility.

In sum, this chapter examines media transformation from three vantage points. The emphasis is placed on race, but the argument also gives some attention to politics and economics (i.e. the democracy and development issues). The arenas for assessing these three transformation foci are: ownership and control, media diversity and pluralism, staffing, media role and content. For reasons of space and a scarcity of information, the arena of audience transformation is not considered.
Transforming ownership concentration and control

One of the most critical factors for the role of media in deracialization, democratization and socio-economic transformation concerns ownership and control. As was graphically evident under Apartheid, concentrated ownership works against these roles. It facilitated a degree of control that arguably did as much as repressive media laws to shape media’s contribution to South Africa’s racist and draconian capitalism (see TRC, 1998).

Broadcasting prior to 1993 was almost entirely a state monopoly and, within this, was tightly controlled not only by the government and the propagandist board it appointed, but by the Broederbond and latterly military ‘securocrats’, and in a few cases by Bantustan dictators. The only private television broadcaster was M-Net, licensed by government to the newspaper industry and forbidden to broadcast news (see Collins, 1993). Newspapers were privately owned and therefore less subject to the same level of state control as broadcasting. But the press was effectively held by just four white-owned groups – all with a range of stakes in Apartheid, notwithstanding limited contradictions that derived from differing ownership interests, cultural traditions and institutional rationales (see Potter, 1995; Tomaselli et al, 1987). The two English language newspaper chains, Argus and Times Media Limited (TML), were ultimately sourced to mega-corporation Anglo-American; the Afrikaans language companies, Naspers and Perskor, were tied to Afrikaner financial capital. In all this, interlocking companies and pyramid structures meant there was a form of horizontal integration of the newspaper sector with the oligopolistic and protectionist pulp and paper industry on the one side, and ownership of printing and distribution facilities on the other. All this meant formidable barriers to potential newcomers. Worse, there was very little direct competition between the groups – an oligopoly existed even to the extent of a legal agreement specifying that Caxtons (at the time, part-Argus owned) would not enter the sold-newspaper business and, for its part, the Argus group would not compete in the free-sheet or magazine market.

In short, if a pluralism of media owners and ease of entry into the industry are healthy for democracy and socio-economic development, pre-1994 South Africa was far removed from this. In parochial racial terms, media ownership basically was a white South African preserve. But the picture has changed dramatically since then in the race and even class of ownership, and in the diversity of media holdings.

Changes in Print Ownership:

Ownership change began with the print media. Enter foreign ownership in the first instance, in the form of Irish magnate Tony O’Reilly, who in January 1994 bought 35% of the Argus company; this share rose to 58% in 1995. This change
also included gaining full control of the Cape Times, the Natal Mercury and The Pretoria News, papers that until then were not wholly in what came to be called Independent Newspapers. In April 1999, O'Reilly bought out other shareholders (24%), and subsequently de-listed the company in South Africa. Considered in terms of concentration, this foreign investment was not a positive development from the vantage point of pluralistic democracy in that in Cape Town and Durban, the same company now owns both morning and evening papers. However, at the same time, the entry of international capital did see a noticeable increase in competition in the newspaper industry more broadly, although at the higher end of the market. It took the form of more vigorous competition by Independent titles with those of other groups, as well as the launch of new publications Business Report (going head to head with Business Day for advertising and readers) and the Sunday Independent (taking on the Sunday Times).

Following O'Reilly, fresh foreign ownership was introduced (again in the higher end of the market) when UK-based Pearson PLC bought half of Business Day and the Financial Mail from TML, and went on to set up, with TML, a large internet publishing operation called I-Net Bridge. Pearson also partnered with Caxton in a 50% joint venture in Maskew Miller educational publishing. The foreign investment trend was also evident with 62% of the Mail & Guardian being bought out by the UK-based Guardian in March 1998, a move that undoubtedly prevented the closure of the loss-making South African paper. Swedish group Dagens Industri took 24% in Mafube publishing during the period.

This foreign investment signaled the exposure of South African print media to international media forces and it ended the white South African monopoly. On balance it added to competition and diversity in the media landscape. However, while it injected funds into the South African economy, besides Mafube, there was little if any contribution to black economic empowerment.

It was not all a case of capital inflow to print media between 1994 and 2000. Ironically, the liberation of South Africa saw the death of the liberation movement's support media, mainly because foreign funds for these alternative publications dried up under the donors' mantra that the country was 'normalized'. This development saw the demise of all the 'alternative' newspapers besides the Mail & Guardian. Thus South, Vrye Weekblad and New Nation died, as did their magazine counterparts like Work-in-Progress as well as the shortlived publication successors in the community press (Nemato Voice, Cape Dokta) (see Switzer and Adhikari, 2000). The Independent Media Diversity Trust, whose contributions from the mainstream SA media industry had come to an end, also ran short of print media funds from foreign sources and despite successful support for radio for a period, became increasingly marginal to media diversity over the period.
Racial and class changes in print ownership

Concomitant with the capital inflow and corresponding change in the print ownership, a further change took place in both the form and racial character of the ownership of several print media groups. From the vantage point of pluralism as a factor in democracy, these changes can be heralded for further promoting competition and for bringing new and previously excluded black players into the media business. Not only black capitalist ownership of media came into play, but owner-stakes by unions, women’s groups and even a development trust (Kagiso Trust Investments) entered the picture (and not only in print, but also in broadcasting – see below). Though there were exceptions like Kagiso and the National Union of Mineworkers investment company, many of the new owners were highly geared in financing their acquisitions – leading to accusations by President Nelson Mandela that they were hollow, indeed virtually bankrupt, owners (Mandela, 1997:34; see also Boloka, 2000). Yet, while it is true that these new owners will still be repaying the banks for a long time to come, that they now have formal title is still significant when compared to the white and purely corporate concentration pre-1994.

First in this change in race and/or class ownership was the ‘unbundling’ of the Sowetan by Argus in 1993 to Dr Nthatho Motlana’s New African Investments Limited (NAIL). NAIL’s subsequent over-extension and directors’ share-scam saw its inglorious demise in 2000, when the company was compelled to institute its own unbundling exercise. Thus it sold off a wide range of holdings to remain in 2001 with core insurance interests, and its media assets housed in subsidiary New African Media.

Second in print’s race/class ownership transformation chronology was Anglo-American selling off Johnnic, the holding company of TML which published five newspapers (two with Pearson), and several magazines. Johnnic also owned 43% of Cape and Transvaal Printers (CTP), the holding company of Caxtons, which in turn (since acquiring Perskor in 1998) added the Citizen and a clutch of magazines to its empire of 40 freesheet newspapers across the country. Taking ownership of Johnnic was a consortium of black business and, significantly, labor interests, all headed by veteran unionist and ANC negotiator, Cyril Ramaphosa. Known as the National Empowerment Consortium, the new owners included NAIL and other black capitalist interests, but also had half their shares held by labor, including 13% in the hands of the National Union of Mineworkers and 10% by the S.A.Railway and Harbour Workers Union (Tomaselli, 1997). NAIL, through ownership of Metropolitan Life, also had another 11% of Johnnic. As with O'Reilly, consolidation of titles followed purchase. Thus, soon after the NEC takeover, TML took full control of the Daily Dispatch, and went on to bring local minority black business owners into both that paper and its two Port Elizabeth dailies. In early 1999, TML and New African Publishing (part of
New African Media) together launched a new newspaper, the *Sunday World*, to compete mainly with Naspers' *City Press*.

Third off the mark in the print ‘empowerment’ ownership transformation was Nasionale Pers (Naspers) relinquishing part-control of *City Press* to Oscar Dhlomo's investment company Dynamo (although Dhlomo sold his shares back to Naspers in late 1998). Naspers in 1999 launched what it called the Welkom share scheme, claiming thereby to have trebled the company's shareholders by enabling more than 17,000 previously disadvantaged people to become Naspers shareholders. (Critics pointed out that the bulk of the company’s shares were still held by unlisted nominee directors).

Fourth came the entry of the Kagiso Trust development agency (yet another form of ownership) into media, with printing and book publishing businesses which it soon merged with Perskor. (As noted above, Perskor was itself absorbed by the partly Johnnic-owned Caxtons in 1998.) Kagiso kept its media and exhibition interests and merged them with Publico to create Kagiso Media which by 2001 considered merging with Primedia, a company that already had a minority shareholding (9%) by the National Union of Mineworkers. Kagiso was subsequently absorbed by NAIL.

As regards distribution infrastructure, ownership of Allied Publishing was expanded to include NAIL's New African Publishing alongside TML and Independent. Naspers retained its distribution agency. Printing presses continued to be owned by Caxton, Naspers and Independent. Ownership of advertising companies was also slow to change. A handful of new black-owned firms emerged over the period, and a number of formerly white agencies brought in black partners. NAIL acquired a stake in radio advertising sales agency Radmark. Notwithstanding the limited changes in all these support industries for the media, if a pre-requisite for all-round transformation was breaking the white South African capitalist stranglehold on the print media, this happened in regard to the important issue of the ownership of titles.

It is the case that the break did not completely turn the landscape upside down. In 2001 the largest number of titles was still with Independent and Naspers (foreign- and local- white-owned respectively). According to a government report (MDDA, 2000:16), TML and New African Media had 38% of daily newspaper readership, based on five of 17 daily titles. Foreign-owned titles accounted for 33% of daily readership as a whole (MDDA, 2000:17). The break with the past should also be qualified with the acknowledgement that the new owners did not mean new life for loss-making print media. New African Publishing bought, briefly sustained and then closed the alternative paper *New Nation* in 1997 (see Tomaselli, 2000; Mpofu et al, 1995). Despite its connection to Kagiso, Perskor in 1998 still shut shop on the historic Xhosa-language newspaper, *Imvo*. In late 2000, TML closed the unprofitable *Evening Post* which had served mainly black readers in Port Elizabeth. Nor did black ownership generate black-language print media. Only *Ilanga*, the Zulu-language newspaper
owned in effect by the Inkatha political party, (having been sold it by Argus), provided a serious alternative to English or Afrikaans in print.

These dampeners on racial and class ownership transformation in print are not to minimize the significance of what did happen. Nor should they be taken to suggest that this arena had run out of steam by 2001. The mergers, exchanges and cross-holdings noted above gave rise to speculation that there could be more centralization ahead, such as Johnnic swallowing Caxton, or even Johnnic being bought by NAIL. NAIL itself publicized in 2000 that it was looking for partners for its media operations which would eventually be completely separated from its financial services core business. Certainly, the two-sided coin of black unbundling and acquisition was still spinning fast, six years into the post-Apartheid media era.

In summary, after 1994, transformation of race and the form of ownership in print media titles looked rather giddy in a sector that had otherwise experienced only minor changes in previous decades. The pattern, however, was positively head-over-heels in broadcasting.

**New owners in broadcasting**

Leading the way in new ownership outside of print was the newly-created community broadcasting sector, where community-owned radio stations were licensed in profusion. There were 89 recorded by the Independent Broadcast Authority (IBA) in August 1998 to be actually broadcasting. An analysis of these suggests that an estimated 37 were owned by black communities, the others being white ethnic communities (eg. Greek, etc.), Christian groups and campus stations (see also Teer-Tomaselli, 2002).

Unlike in print, there was foreign funding for many of these black community stations. An estimate by the author puts donations by two groups, the Danish government and the Open Society Foundation, at close to R8 million for the period. The South African government itself pledged in 1998 to fund 18 community stations (although no independent mechanism for selecting these was proposed). In 2000, it reported that 36 stations were being supported and that the project was being run in collaboration with the National Community Radio Forum. A total of 232 applications were lodged with the IBA by the end of 1998 for four year licenses for community stations, and hearings proceeded through 2000. Contemporary figures are hard to come by, but in 2001, the IBA website held an undated list of 65 stations that had been licensed (IBA 2001). According to the information provided by the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) to the Department of Communications in February 2001, there were 71 licensed community stations. Of these, 39 stations in seven provinces had four year licenses, although not all were broadcasting. The remainder were on one year renewable licenses, many still in the process of applying for the four-year permit (Woods, 2001).
These ownership developments in community broadcasting were paralleled in 1996 by the privatization of six SABC-owned stations to primarily black interests (including women’s, labor, civic and business interests) (see Teer-Tomaselli, 1998). Eight new commercial radio stations were also licensed to private owners including, again, significant black interests. These include youth station YFM which numbers youth organizations and the National Union of Mineworkers (via Hoskens Investments Ltd.). Also with interests in YFM was Union Alliance Media, a subsidiary of Union Alliance Holdings, which in turn represented COSATU and NACTU unions, whose 2.3 million members each individually had shares in the company. Cape Talk radio was bought by Primedia, but with a 23% stake held by the Mineworkers Investment Company, 23% by the SA Clothing and Textile Workers Union and 20% by Siphumelele Investments. The miners and Siphumelele also owned almost half of Primedia’s Radio Highveld, and the Women’s Investment Portfolio had 15% of the station. Kagiso Trust took ownership (through Kagiso Media) of East Coast Radio and Radio Oranje, and had a 42.5% stake in Jacaranda FM (Barnett, 1999).

Television was also part of such race and class ownership trends. Naspers-controlled M-Net had for a period been part-owned by black interests until Johnnic sold most of its 20% in the company. M-Net now sold 20% of its stakes to small black investors, to be paid for by amortization of the dividends. Called the Phutuma scheme, it was claimed by the company to have generated more direct black shareholders than any other ‘empowerment’ exercise. Then there was a hotly contested license eventually being awarded to the trade union-linked Midi consortium in 1998 to set up e-TV. Investors in Midi included Hoskens at 34% (in turn controlled by the Mineworkers Social and Benefit Investment Company and the SA Clothing and Textile Workers Union), as well as the SA National Civics Organization and the Youth Development Trust amongst others. The other major empowerment partner in Midi was Vula, which counts the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa and the Communications Workers Union amongst its significant shareholders.

However, with the failure of e-TV’s smaller empowerment partners to deliver capital to help cover unforeseen losses, their share stakes diminished as new money was found. Thus in 2000, Afrikaner capital in the form of Rembrandt was brought in with a 26% share. Vula’s share fell from 25% to less than 10%, and Midi increased its holdings by taking over unmet obligations of other black groups via a new company named Sabido. The IBA had instructed Midi to ensure that there would be no reduction in total ownership by historically disadvantaged South Africans, but it also – within this overall condition – expressed regret over the narrowing of the ‘beneficiary base’ of shareholders representing specifically the disabled, civic organizations and youth groups.
All these ownership developments in broadcasting signify the creation, almost overnight, of a totally new category of diverse black broadcast owners. Significantly, as with print, the media assets were generally just part of broader portfolios, rather than being the core business of the new owners.

**Capital flows and broadcasting**

Significantly, too, the ownership changes in broadcasting followed the experience of print with foreign ownership entering the picture, although this time always in partnership with local black economic groups. Thus, Midi’s members included a 20% share held by Time Warner. Likewise, foreign investment also came into partly black-held broadcasting with Norwegian money in two “greenfields” licenses for commercial jazz radio stations (P4). At the time of attempting to launch its (flawed) Astrasat analogue satellite service in the mid-1990s, the SABC had attempted unsuccessfully to interest Rupert Murdoch in a partnership. However, foreign (as well as domestic) private ownership of SABC assets may yet emerge if the Government pursues its 1998 *White Paper on Broadcast Policy*. This envisaged the separation of SABC’s commercial and public services as “a precursor to the possible privatization of, or the introduction of private equity to, the SABC’s commercial services.”

(http://docweb.pwv.gov.za/docs/policy/broadcastingwp.html)

There was also capital outflow in the form of investment abroad by local broadcasting media from 1994 to 2001. The period saw significant foreign investment by SA broadcast media groups Naspers-controlled MultiChoice International (MIH), and an unsuccessful foray by radio and magazine company Primedia into television, cinema, internet, events organizing, and outdoor advertising in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Australia and the Far East. Naspers M-Net and Supersport listed on the Nigerian stock market. Naspers MIH Holdings (owners of M-Net, DSTV and others) listed on the Dutch stock exchange as well as the USA’s Nasdaq. So too did Open TV, in which Naspers held shares along with AOL and Time Warner. Union Alliance Media bought pay-TV interests in a large number of African countries, and invested in radio in Botswana, Malawi and Namibia. SABC sold content across Africa and the Caribbean, and also launched two satellite channels serving Africa as a whole, thereby staking its claim as aspirant owner of a continent-wide franchise for African news and entertainment. For the first time then, South African media (off a broadcast base) became active in global media markets.

These transnational developments may augur well for economic growth, if not automatically for socio-economic development. Previously, black South Africans were presented as victims in international media, and all South Africans were victims of a surfeit of USA-sourced programming back home. From being a global pariah in the past, South African media during the 1990s became a player, albeit small, in the international mass media arena.5
Cross ownership of media

Importantly, there also emerged a degree of medium cross-ownership amidst all these developments. Sowetan-owners NAIL early on bought a 42% stake in Jacaranda (subsequently housed in New African Media). This was later followed by KFM being acquired for the stable. New African Media also purchased independent television production company, Urban Brew, and in 2000 set up Sowetan-TV and the Thengisa advertising sales agency. Meanwhile, Independent Newspapers and City Press (with the Communication Workers Union and ANC-linked investment company Thebe) were central to Kaya FM. Print media company, TML, had interests in Classic FM, and also developed specialist business television operations culminating in a satellite channel, Summit TV. Also emerging as a cross-media player in all this flux was Primedia, which owned three commercial radio stations, and had large interests in cinema and in business-to-business magazines.

Cross-ownership between broadcast and print is generally seen as negative for media’s democratic role, and indeed is limited for this reason by the IBA. But it can also assist in socio-economic transformation by increasing the economies of scale and chances of survival for groups such as South Africa's new media owners. By 2001, it seemed that there was little in the way of negatives arising from the extent of cross-ownership; rather, it was helping to consolidate otherwise fragile media owners. In 1999, the IBA agreed with the National Association of Broadcasters to re-examine its restriction on companies having more than 25% in more than two FM and two AM radio stations, although nothing had come of this by 2001.

Cross-ownership went beyond media during the period, with media companies developing interests in other enterprises. Cellular telephony was significant here. Johnnic swapped its shares in M-Net for Naspers’ holdings in M-Cell so as to pick up control of MTN and develop interests across Africa. On a smaller scale, Hoskens acquired a 5% part of Vodacom cellular telephony. As elsewhere in the capitalist world, media and telecommunications interests have become linked at ownership level in South Africa. Johnnic is likely to partner with state-owned Transtel in seeking a second fixed-line telephone license when Telkom’s monopoly ends in 2002.

New media platforms

The Internet ‘arrived’ as a new medium in the 1999 elections when old media were routinely trounced by the interactivity, speed, breadth and depth of online coverage. However, the Internet’s link to transformation of race and/or class ownership was minimal compared with TML and Pearson’s initiative in I-Net Bridge. Naspers became a force with its 24.com which rapidly went on to merge with the M-Net affiliated company, M-Web, in 1999. Naspers also part-owned
global new media company Open TV, and it further held international media technology firm, Mindport. Primedia bought independent service Iafrica.com, and grouped this site with the new venture, Metropolis, which aimed to build “vertical communities” between businesses. In 2000, however, Primedia cut back substantially with the failure of the electronic business-to-business model in South Africa.

Independent Newspapers was slow off the mark, but began a partnership, supplying content to Yebonet (later World Online), the Vodacom cellular telephone venture into internet service provision (ISP). Independent began putting more serious money into an Internet presence by late 1999, with a news portal which integrated content from all the company’s South African titles. The company also owned a cellphone content and transaction company, I-Touch, which was listed internationally in 2000. Black-owned MTN (via Johnnic) belatedly but successfully joined in launching Internet and other information services via cellphone in the wake of similar businesses set up by Vodacom-SABC and by Vodacom-Independent newspapers. A number of WAP portals emerged, including one linked to SABC, which media institution also launched multi-lingual SABCnews.com in 2000.

Small Internet publishers such as Woza proved the potential for sustainable entry of tiny voices into this form of publishing, and black-owned Safika set up Izania.com. New NGO web publishers, such as WomensNet, a women’s resource database (www.womensnet.org.za), empowered civil society. The Parliamentary Monitoring Organization produced a record of parliamentary portfolio proceedings online, allowing for close scrutiny of elected representatives (www.pmo.org.za).

The Internet service provider (ISP) business became a hotly-contested terrain when Telkom entered the field and claimed monopoly rights for its Intekom offshoot as against private players. While the issue simmered through the period, there was already a phase of rapid mergers and take-overs in the sector, with Naspers’ M-Web leading the way, followed by WorldOnline (see Goldstuck, 1999). Attempts to spread new media technologies to disadvantaged communities in the form of Multi-Purpose Community Centers began in 1997 with the establishment of the Universal Service Agency, but had made little impact by 2001. The Internet, then, remained largely white-owned although it seemed likely to have increased relevance for democracy and development.

Also worth noting is that during the period under study, the government unbundled signal provider Sentech from SABC. By 1999, Sentech announced its intention to launch educational and health TV channels, as well as a digital satellite pay-TV station. Union Alliance Media was reported to be a likely partner in the latter. Government in 2000 announced that Sentech would be partially privatized, heralding likely further progress in race and class ownership transformation (Sukazi, 2000). In 1999, M-Net unbundled its signal provider, Orbicom, which was bought by black-owned Johnnic.
Grassroots media diversity

The scrapping or suspension of most repressive media laws after 1994 meant space for media to contribute to democracy (see Berger, 1999). From an ownership and development point of view, it also meant that the media qua businesses no longer had to fear closure or expensive legal actions. While this normalized the climate for investment in media, it was nonetheless still extremely difficult for grassroots media to find capital. The political economy of the post-Apartheid market made possible finance for new race and class ownership at other levels of media, but it would have to be the state that stepped in at the bottom-end. However, what had not materialized up to 2000, was the pre-1994 hope that a new government would make possible a series of new media owners serving the poorer communities. The matter of a statutory funding body for such media diversity flickered on and off between 1994 and 2000, and was lobbied for by the National Community Media Forum, and proposed both in the Comtask commission into government communication and the 1998 Broadcasting White Paper. A government proposal for a statutory Media Diversity and Development Agency emerged at the end of 2000, and there were hopes that this could be instituted during 2001 (MDDA, 2000). The envisaged unit would be resourced by government, the media industry (possibly by a tax on advertising) and donors. Its funds would be allocated mainly to addressing racial and language imbalances in the ownership of broadcasting, though with some service for print and new media. The impact that the agency will have on media transformation remains of course to be assessed.

Ownership change and control of content

What is especially noteworthy in the print ownership transformation is the important matter of how ownership impacted on editorial control. Under Apartheid, there was little distinction between the two. However, since then, the new owners have brought with them far more enlightened views as regards respect for editorial independence. From the point of view of democratic transformation, this can be seen as a significant advance. The issue was tested during the 1999 elections when the editor of the Financial Mail endorsed an opposition political party (and urged financial support for it too). This embarrassed the ANC-aligned owners (National Empowerment Consortium). The outcome of the publicly-debated differences, however, was that the editor retained his job. Over time, it is likely that South Africa’s new media owners will appoint editors (as opposed to inheriting them) who are likely to be individuals that share their political views. But if the Financial Mail precedent holds, it could be that such even appointees would not be fired should they step out of line – unlike what happened to editors like Tony Heard, Allister Sparks and Raymond Louw who became “dissident” during the Apartheid era.
Editorial independence in broadcasting also changed between 1994 and 2001. In SABC, control changed ahead of other changes in the media landscape, and long before the SABC’s own corporatization ownership change. As part of the new dispensation, the public broadcaster had initially enjoyed the appointment of an independent board selected through a highly transparent process. This was a function of the political balance of forces prior to the 1994 elections, when the ruling Nationalist Party feared the scenario of the SABC continuing as ‘his Master’s voice’, but lost to a different master in the form of an ANC government. For its part, the ANC needed to detach the broadcaster from Nationalist control ahead of the election. Both sides, therefore, had genuine interests in a politically-independent public broadcaster at the time. After coming to power, ANC interests changed and government reasserted its right to make appointments to the board. However, the process remained subject to parliamentary and public involvement, so that although government wielded state-ownership of the SABC, it did not have direct control at this level (Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 2002).

Corporatization, as legislated in 1999, meant a change in ownership form for the public broadcaster. It put the state formally in the position of sole shareholder, and this status was used to justify government (as opposed to the SABC Board) approving the appointment of a new chief executive officer during 2000. At the same time, the 1999 Broadcasting Act which enabled corporatization also established a charter setting out the editorial independence of the broadcaster from political interests, so that neither cabinet nor board may legally interfere in editorial content.

A similar control scenario evolved with the licensing body, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). In 1998, the government had attempted to assert control by bypassing the IBA and establishing the separate South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA), with far less autonomy than that granted the IBA by the multiparty-authored South African constitution. When in 2000, the two institutions merged into the new Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), it was the result of a long tussle over which model of control would be adopted. As with the SABC, the result was something of a mix – but, importantly, one where although government directly funds ICASA and determines overall licensing policy, it does not have direct control over the issuance of licenses.

In summary, government/state ownership and control in broadcasting is a far cry from the days of Apartheid, although from the point of view of democratic transformation the political independence of broadcasting has continued to be a site of struggle.
Assessment – Pluralism and Diversity

Taking into account all these developments in ownership, control and the establishing of new media enterprises, there has been tangible progress as regards racial transformation and there have also been major gains in class terms. Diverse racial ownership arguably is also a more fertile foundation for more racially representative media content, even if the latter does not necessarily follow the former.

Concerning the political significance of the changes, South Africa's democratic prospects are richer in that media ownership is far more pluralistic than previously, despite few changes in the support industries of printing, distribution and advertising. And notwithstanding some important losses in print, there was a great deal more media available, creating a degree of density that served South Africa on a far greater scale than pre-1994. Pluralism in ownership is, arguably, more likely to correspond with a diversity of contents than would limited ownership, even if it also does not on its own guarantee this. A greater number of owners, increased competition and an expanded industry all mean that centralized control by a single entity or oligopoly is probably no longer possible, even if the government were ever to try to amend the constitutional clause on media freedom and resort to Apartheid-style media repression. As discussed above, democratic transformation is also positively affected by the new terms of ownership of the public-broadcaster: state-ownership of SABC today is separated from state editorial control (even if not from government influence and financial control). The new-found editorial independence in print can be hailed as a contribution to democratic transformation.

From a socio-economic point of view, transformation is a mixed picture: two-way foreign investment, increased broadcast outlets and the rise of the Internet as a medium have been positive developments, but unfortunately, there have been some contractions and some failed ventures in print. The SABC unbundled its profitable stations, and went on to wrestle with financial crises while also trying to adopt an aggressive and expansionist business approach. However, the flip side of its unbundling meant empowerment for a new sector of the economy.

The most salient development in the period was the entry of black business, labor and other segments into the media economy, which constituted at least a significant step in the direction of development. Although there have been setbacks as with NAIL, even there black ownership of media interests have survived. New owner representatives such as Johnnic's Cyril Ramaphosa and (similarly, ex-unionist) Irene Charnley have injected powerful skills into making the media business work, while a range of community activists have helped the industry grow in the form of community radio stations. In other words, a swathe of people formerly excluded from ownership and control of productive media...
assets have now gained access. On the whole, the mix of owners is becoming more representative of the society, although lagging behind in print and new media.

Jane Duncan (2001, in this volume) argues that the racial and class changes in media ownership mean that only some 30% of South Africans (whether workers or capitalists) benefit, still leaving 70% out of the picture. She is correct to highlight this, although one can also point out that a figure of 30% is still a vast improvement on the ratios under Apartheid. Arguably, even the 70% also benefit in other than economic ways – such as from the cultural and political impact of black media ownership. The bottle, of course, is admirably half-full or disappointingly half-empty, depending on whether one looks at the past or the future. But it indisputably contains a lot more liquid than it did before 1994 (see Berger, 2000c).

**Transformation and human resources**

For media to play a properly democratic and/or developmentalist role, it needs to be staffed and managed by people with a sensitivity to this role and who are also in a position to communicate with the bulk of the electorate. Under Apartheid, most media unashamedly serviced white audiences and interests, and much of the small portion directed to blacks promoted Apartheid thinking. In the new South African conditions, a transformed role of the media requires, as a necessary, albeit not sufficient, condition, a change in the imbalances in media staffing towards demographic representativity. By this is meant particularly racial representativity, but also representativity along gender lines (see Goga, 2002, 2000). Staffing areas especially relevant to media can be identified as advertising agency staffing, media management staffing and editorial staffing. The continued white staffing in the advertising industry is seen to result in a lack of understanding of black consumers and ensuing prejudicial effects on media servicing this constituency. Despite some efforts, not much progress had been made in deracializing advertising staff (MDDA, 2000:26-7). As regards management, the boards of Naspers, Caxton and Independent (which has an advisory board) are still predominantly white and male (MDDA, 2000:19). Similarly, senior business positions within enterprises are usually still held by white males, even in black-owned companies. These features curtail the impact of racial transformation, and may also have implications for political and economic transformation. But with the application of the 1998 Employment Equity Act, this transformation can be expected to gather additional momentum.

Editorial has made the greatest strides in changing the race of media staffing. According to the South African Union of Journalists’ testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a former managing director of TML has said: “That was the reality of life in South Africa in those days. We were writing for a White audience essentially; the Black side of the story has only recently become of any
consequence. ... If you are catering for a White audience, why have Black journalists?” (Cited in Braude, 1999:40). In narrow terms, this argument, if blinkered, has some rationale to it, as does the logical obverse – that black journalists are needed to service black audiences. On the other hand, it remains within a racialized paradigm whereby only whites can properly speak to whites, only blacks can properly speak to blacks, and neither group really needs to hear the other side of the story. To transform South Africa ultimately into a deracialized society must mean any journalist speaking to any audience. In this regard, changing imbalances in editorial staffing so that it is more representative in terms of racial demographics is only a first, though certainly an essential, step. Arguably, only when the imbalances are corrected, which requires continued racialization, can the situation make significant progress towards nonracial journalism.

Broadcast staffing

From early on, the SABC (in part due to its character of broadcasting in indigenous languages) was able to claim representativity at most levels of the Corporation, and increasingly at top editorial (and even business management) level (see SABC, 2000). The broadcaster as a whole came under the direction not only of black people, but also of those with credentials of a commitment to a democratic role of media. Chief executive in the critical early years of transition was Zwelakhe Sisulu, former editor of the democratic and social-democratic newspaper, New Nation. Television lost the once-familiar face of Lester Venter, and saw less of his long-standing colleague_FREEK ROBINSON. In editorial ranks, black journalists assumed control of editorial content. This was paralleled by the appointment of white democrats. Community radio stations based in the townships were staffed largely by black youth, and the newly privatized or licensed commercial stations also saw significant black staffing. Midi’s e-TV was initially driven by Jonathan Proctor, who had previously worked for Bophutatswana dictator Lucas Mangope, running Bop-TV. However, black democratically-minded journalists played an important part, and Proctor was soon replaced by former trade unionist Marcel Golding.

In 1999, e-TV requested the IBA to ease its racial requirements for staffing to accord with the Employment Equity Act. This law makes no distinction between African, Colored and Indian employees. The company said it was having trouble achieving the levels of African staffing that it pledged to the IBA at the time of applying for its license. According to e-TV, the problem arose from its location in Cape Town where there was a relatively lower African population than the rest of the country. The IBA rejected the appeal, thereby holding e-TV to its initial tight transformation timetable.
Black and white in print

All round, the media's editorial leadership over the six year period became far more black in staff profile. Compared to 1994, nine major newspapers had replaced white editors and/or deputy editors with black counterparts by February 2000.\textsuperscript{10} By June 2000, there were 12 black editors out of 30 of the country's major newspapers (MDDA, 2000:20). A clear factor driving this transformation was the change in ownership. The group most vulnerable to criticism around the lack of black ownership, the foreign-owned Independent Newspapers, was unsurprisingly the leader in training and promoting black journalists. TML, reporting to Cyril Ramaphosa, came a close second.

The changes in staffing demographics were insufficient to convince the ANC that there was sufficient transformation. President Mandela, citing black journalists as his sources, said that many of the new black appointees attacked the government because this won them favor in the eyes of their white bosses (Mandela, 1997). The rhetoric implied that critical white journalists should hold back because they reflected only minority interests, while critical black journalists should realize whose side they ought to be on. The race card, it seemed, had not expired despite political equality for all races. While playing the card may have pressurized media bosses to speed up ‘corrective action’ over the period, it is also the case that race served as a convenient club for politicians (and others) to counter critical coverage. The extent to which this was effective in limiting the democratic potential of the media merits further research.

Journalists’ organizations

These transformations in staffing had echoes in journalists’ organizations. The South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) was formed in 1996, through a merger of the newspaper-based and predominantly white Conference of Editors, and the cross-media Black Editors Forum. Although the new body included a broader layer of media leadership than the Conference of Editors (which represented only editors-in-chief), SANEF’s relatively elitist (editor-level) and nonracial character helped spur the growth of the Forum of Black Journalists (FBJ). SANEF’s platform was both press freedom and corrective action, and the organization held several meetings with government ministers over these issues. SANEF also brokered an agreement limiting the use of subpoenas under Section 205 of the Criminal Procedures Act that under Apartheid was used to force journalists to reveal information. It further defused a crisis when the SA Human Rights Commission issued subpoenas to dozens of journalists to testify at hearings into media racism in early 2000. The FBJ helped to reduce the media hostility of vigilante group, People Against Gangsterism and Drug Abuse (Pagad). However, both organizations still remained relatively weak during the period. Between 1994 and 2000, race relations amongst journalists probably worsened, and not only amongst white and black, but also between Coloreds,
Transforming education and training

The calibre of journalists has implications for the role of South Africa’s media in democratization and socio-economic transformation. During the period, black journalists generally had strong ‘street’ savvy as well as experience of both their own communities and white society. White journalists lacked these kind of strengths, but had the advantages of typically working in their home-languages and of having higher education qualifications. The result of both sides' relative weaknesses, combined with a falling rate of black matriculants, amounted to a crisis of recruitment and training for the media industry during the period. Accordingly, training came into focus as a key aspect of empowerment and a key plank in buttressing ‘corrective action’. Substantial resources were put into training by groups like Independent Newspapers and the SABC. Government set up a school of broadcasting in 1998, impatient with what it (incorrectly) saw as the white-oriented intakes in tertiary level media courses. Meanwhile, a host of private courses of uneven reputability emerged.

Towards the end of 1997, journalism teachers began to take cognizance of the new challenges facing them. These included the requirements of the transformation-oriented South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which called for definitions of standards in the form of educational outcomes, and for external accreditation of education providers claiming to achieve these. The 1999 Skills Act, which taxes industry pay-rolls in a bid to promote training, dovetailed with SAQA so that only the use of accredited education providers would qualify industry to claim rebates. In response to these developments, journalism teachers formed the Broadcast Educators and Trainers Association and the Print Educators and Trainers Association of South Africa. These organizations proved to be still-born. However, once industry began to drive the standards generation process (a pre-requisite for the accreditation of training and thence for the rebate of the skills levy), trainers began to get involved via SANEF. The Skills Act not only established a levy to fund training, but set up Sector Education and Training Authorities to develop sectoral skills plans as well. At the start of 2000, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and internet content providers, along with the printing and the entertainment industry, set up a training council, the Media, Advertising, Publishing, Printing and Packaging Sector Education and Training Authority (MAPPPSETA). Also impacting on training was the challenge by the Human Rights Commission Hearings into Racism in the Media which prompted a range of courses in reporting race and human rights issues (SAHRC, 2000). The extent to which these developments in training would impact upon media transformation was not evident by early 2001. Certainly, however, the training agenda was much changed from pre-1994 years.
Transformation and media roles
Changes in ownership and staffing do not in themselves imply or determine changes in the role of media, although they make these possible and in some cases, necessary. But while transformation in ownership and staffing can be measured fairly easily, this is less the case with the normative role played by the media. However, given the importance of this matter to transformation, it is worth presenting even an impressionistic account of developments here. It is an area that could certainly be followed up with more detailed empirical research.

Socio-economic and political constraints
Journalists and media owners do not decide on a role for themselves in the abstract, but rather within a context that includes the economics of their enterprise. South Africa's new black and/or worker ownership did not automatically change the orientation of media businesses that were bought. That black mineworkers became significant co-owners of Business Day newspaper did not mean their voices and perspectives held sway over role or content. In fact, this particular publication remained one of the only two dailies with a majority white readership, and its contents still pitched towards the interests of that readership. It is an interesting point to note that whereas for centuries whites have made money out of blacks in South Africa, a publication like Business Day, under its new owners, now generates money from whites for blacks. To continue to do so, however, requires that the publication hold onto its up-market audience and advertisers, who in South African conditions have been primarily white. Less up-market media than Business Day have less of a constraint in this regard, although the transformation challenge has still been how to cater for black audiences without losing white.

The same principle has affected the commercial broadcasting sector. As acknowledged by the National Association of Broadcasters, the majority of existing commercial stations have an adult contemporary format that targets high-income white listeners (Business Day, 18 February, 2000). This was also the experience of the public broadcaster. Thus, early on, the SABC's radio stations took on indigenous language names, and editorial resources were spread more equally across them (previously, Afrikaans and English received the lion's share) (Teer-Tomaselli, 1995). But due to the absence of advertising support for fragmented and low-income audiences, attempts to orientate the broadcaster towards carrying substantially more broadcasting in indigenous languages proved unsustainable. Teetering on bankruptcy, and without a state bail-out, the SABC had to call in the McKinsey consultancy company, retrench 700 staffers and cut back on this costly multi-lingual side of its public service role (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998/9). Still, SABC-TV in 2000, as compared to 1994, had upgraded at least some of the time devoted to African languages (at the expense
Afrikaans), although English (established as the second language of preference for most South Africans) was also substantially increased (Barnett, 2000). The way in which this amount of English, and the context of its use, impacted on SABC’s contribution to deracialization, democratization and development needs further research.

Besides the market, political factors also constrained SABC’s political role. Government retained the revenue when the SABC (under IBA instruction) privatized its money-spinning radio stations, sending out a signal that they would not receive financial support from the state. This was institutionalized with corporatization in 1999, which specified a trajectory where the institution would be split into a Public Service Broadcaster and a Commercial Public Service Broadcaster, the latter being purely market-driven. The rationale was that the partly privatized, commercialized arm would be free of public service obligations so as to concentrate on generating revenue. This profit in turn would serve to subsidize the SABC’s other arm, which enterprise would be required to maintain public service obligations. The idea was therefore to enable the SABC to run one TV channel and several unprofitable radio stations as public services, without having to make up the financial losses by appealing to the central state fiscus. This controversial scenario was likely to be put into effect during 2001. While it may aid development by saving the state money, the negative impact of commercializing much programming could mean the transformation potential of the broadcaster is possibly less than it could have been with tax money to support content with a development (rather than commercial) rationale.

The significance of all these points is that the slow pace of broader socio-economic transformation acted as a brake on the transformation of media markets, and thereby on the parameters of the media role, including language use. Likewise, government policy towards the SABC (akin to its failure to financially support grassroots media) further constrained role options. This does not mean, however, that media roles, and perceptions of these roles, stood still during the period. Even within the economic/racial parameters of audiences and advertisers, debates raged about whether journalists should be playing a ‘patriotic’ or ‘critical’ role in relation to the new political power holders. Thus, between 1994 and 2001 many (white) journalists argued that they should be either critical watchdogs or objective professionals (see Morris, 1996). On the other hand, some black journalists, like Thami Mazwai, called for a more constructive, ‘patriotic’ approach towards a government that not only represented the majority of citizens, but which also needed support at an early stage of the fragile process of nation-building and transformation.¹³
A patriotic role

Foreign-owned Independent Newspapers’ management defined the group as being “friends of the new South Africa” (The Star, 20/09/1997, http://archive.iol.co.za/Archives/1997/9709/20/inn.html), and its parliamentary editor, Zubeida Jaffer, proposed that the media adopt an imbongi (bardic) role, combining both praise-singing and criticism. This repudiation of a purely watchdog role and dilution of a critical one, it was often alleged in newsrooms, had its origins in the interests of the Irish owners who wanted to protect their investment (Williams, 1998:194). Yet, while some newspapers did seem ‘soft’ on the government, Independent titles were not uniformly (or even with any consistency) in this category. Indeed, the journalists and coverage that got most up government’s nose came from Independent’s Newton Kanhema (Sunday Independent), Kaizer Nyatsumba (Editor, Independent on Saturday) and Mathatha Tsedu (Deputy Editor of The Star). The critical role of the press is further discussed in the next section.

At SABC, notions of the Corporation’s role were dominated by commercial imperatives of building audiences, which translated into cheap entertainment programs sourced from the USA. The SABC’s increasing commercialization could not but affect its editorial budgets, and concerns were expressed over its limited spending to cover the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and, later, over its ability to cover the 1999 elections adequately. As regards adopting a political role, the option of being critical was subordinated to the roles of nation-building (especially through sport and entertainment; see below), voter education and serving as a forum for political parties (Teer-Tomaselli, 1995). There was an ongoing struggle between old and new guard editorial producers to get even this dispensation in place. The Corporation re-launched itself in 1995, to a video that incongruously celebrated the broadcaster’s anti-democratic and racist past. As the new guard gradually entrenched itself, however, various critical and independently-minded elements in its ranks came under pressure. At the same time, the Corporation did grow its informational role significantly, with record time being given to news and current affairs, and the delivery of information on new platforms like cell-phones and Internet (see Sandison, 2001; Rama, 2000). It also played a part as a political forum, offering platforms to a range of parties and organizations. While opposition political parties complained about ANC-bias by the SABC, this was generally unsubstantiated. The licensing of the free-to-air commercial television channel, e-TV, provided a partial check and balance on SABC, with the two institutions needing to keep their credibility as politically fair forces in the face of competition from each other.

The SABC did see itself as playing a key ‘patriotic’ role: that of nation-building. Whereas the Corporation had previously stressed the separateness of South Africans, producing different ethnic/racial content for different ethnic/racial audiences, it now tried to bring people together. It is debatable
whether a manufactured nationalism can strengthen or stifle democracy and/or development. Nonetheless, SABC saw nation-building as part of its mission under the new South Africa and committed substantial resources to this endeavor. Under the Thabo Mbeki presidency, it expanded that thrust to include building the ‘African Renaissance’ project (see Barnett 2001 in this volume; Teer-Tomaselli, 1999).

Although English was the primary language used on SABC, the Corporation nonetheless tried to project a multi-racial reality. Television advertising often portrayed images of a fantasy world of cross-racial beer-drinking harmony.

A small body of research does exist on SABC’s content as pertains to media role. “SABC presents a new South Africa à la United Colors of Benetton, suspiciously amicable and homogeneous in its picture of perfect diversity,” writes Balserio (1997:3). In her view, the “Simunye” (“We are one”) rallying cry of SABC television offered little to fulfill the promise of nation-building in a context when “the informal economy of violence is the pernicious alternative” (1997:15; see also Roome, 1997). Similarly, Saks (1997) describes as “somewhere over the rainbow”, the way that the SABC’s ideology tried to blend local and global programming into nation-building constructs. In the context of media promoting sport as a nation-building subject, and specifically in regard to coverage of the 1995 Rugby World Cup, Steenveld and Strelitz (1998) have highlighted the contradictions within and without the endeavor.

Like SABC, much community radio tended to eschew a critical role in favor of more developmental objectives. This did not exclude a powerful local democratic potential. But its efficacy was limited by its lack of skill in journalism. Music and talk shows were and remain the staple on most stations, and news that is carried tended to come from Network Radio Services, a company based in Johannesburg and disseminating Gauteng-oriented, rather than local community, information. NRS was bought out in early 2000 by a British company and renamed Live Africa Broadcasting Corporation. Similarly, private broadcasting, also partly as a result of licensing conditions, shied away from a partisan or watchdog role. However, the entire broadcast sector still did make content more accessible to mass audiences – in this way enhancing the potential for media to facilitate grassroots awareness of electoral choices in elections (See MMP, 1998, 1999b). Print media also reflected some sense of nation-building by shifting from white-dominated subject matter, to embrace a ‘rainbow nation’ outlook, giving extensive critical coverage to violent racism. A highly visible turning-point was reflected in the large color photographs published just ahead of the 1994 elections of dead white vigilantes, slouched against their Mercedes Benz, after being shot for their attempt to prop up Bophutatswana’s President Lucas Mangope against the democratization tide. Henceforth, the photos seemed to signal, whites had had their day, and the active newsmakers were black South Africans. Willy nilly, news and photographs of black people began increasingly to take pride of place in most of the formerly
white print media. White readers may not have liked this, and indeed newspapers lost readers from this community. But for the remaining white audience, the representations reflected changing power realities that they could not wholly ignore. The same readers, who probably preferred to forget the past, would also not have welcomed the surprisingly high volume of print and broadcast coverage that was given to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Reassuring to them, however, would have been the way that parliamentary and political reporting frequently fell into the facile stereotype of “the fat cats on the gravy train”, or the “Bisho bungles” variety.

‘Patriotic’ coverage was also highly evident in both print and broadcast news about economic policy. This saw the uncritical welcoming of the government’s neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy, and there was little analysis of Pretoria’s effective burial of its previous Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) thrust. There were increasing reports of black advancement in industry, and of black economic empowerment, reflecting, and possibly amplifying, these changes in the wider society. Publications like Mafube’s Enterprise and Independent’s Personal Finance and Business Report supplements in all the company’s titles raised the economic literacy of many readers.

A critical role

The critical role of media fell to print media in the period under survey, although some content reflecting politically critical roles did occur in limited areas of broadcast journalism such as Safim’s current affairs and SABC-TV’s Special Assignment investigative programs, and critical dramas like Yizo Yizo (see Smith, 2001). Print generally combined its critical role with a partially patriotic role, and most journalists and editors stood on the side of maintaining critical independence when criticized for not being ‘patriotic’ enough.

The critical stance entailed was investigating state corruption, nepotism, anti-democratic practices and attempted cover-ups, and to a lesser extent, racist practices in society (see Berger, 1999). However, the exposés were mainly in relation to the new black political power elite, to the neglect of the white economic elite. A critical role for print (and private broadcast) was also much evident in crime reporting, reflecting negatively on the failure of the new state to enforce law and order. While supporting an economic policy that reduced the state’s role in society, media content contradictorily also took a highly critical stance of the state’s problems with “delivery”. To the extent that delivery problems were related to government mismanagement (rather than the reallocation of resources from white privilege to a mass constituency), the media did play a productive critical role for democratic transformation. All this therefore was content that counted towards a critical democratic role, but not entirely unambiguously.
To sum up, the significance of the patriotic and critical roles for deracialization, democracy and development is complex. The media’s impact was constrained by market structure, but there were noteworthy changes compared to the past. It would be fair to say that in both patriotic and critical roles generally, the media (and especially SABC) supported deracialization and moved away from white-dominated content. In terms of democracy, media served as a positive factor in adopting a role as a force independent of government, providing a forum, promoting an informed citizenry and a common public sphere. In the case of print, a critical role was also played, helping to keep government accountable. The extent to which media promoted an active citizenry and civil society is unclear.

As for transformation of the economy (of which of course it is a vested part), media probably played a greater part than previously, but still not much, and this has evidently not been an important project in most journalists’ consciousness.

**Conclusion**

A number of commentators have taken different views of media transformation since 1994. In its submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA) said that “nothing had changed”. Sandile Memele (1999) declared that “the more things change, the more they stay the same”. In his view, transformation is simply a device by the bourgeoisie to ensure the continuation of a system that exploits. In the view of the Black Lawyers Association, “despite recent changes at ownership level, the political agenda of the media has not changed” (cited by Braude, 1995:49). In similar vein, the ANC wrote in its annual report for 1999:

> On the media front, after five years of democracy, little has changed in the media environment. The ANC is still faced with a primarily hostile press corps, as media is still primarily owned and controlled by antagonistic forces with minority interests. The result has been a continuous onslaught of negative reporting on the ANC and the ANC-led government (ANC, 2000).

Tomaselli (1997:16) has argued that racial substitution in the media will not “automatically provide increased popular access or diversity of opinion in the media”. Instead, continuation of a class-based, if “more inclusive”, society is what is entailed (1997:51). He has further argued that black owners may facilitate the “Africanization of values”, but financial survival is determined by readers and advertisers (1997:60). Tomaselli’s views have received support from Boloka and Krabill (2000), for whom the media changes to date are necessary, but far too inadequate to count as authentic transformation.

Many of these criticisms under-value racial transformation: they concentrate...
on class as if it were the sole substantial concern in transformation; further, they
do so only in regard to a bi-polar structure, where the benchmark of significant
difference is the supercession of capitalist class relations per se. Yet as discussed
above, racial changes in ownership are important, and they have an impact on
business success, editorial independence and staffing.

Further, in class terms, the new ownership taking shape in media is by no
means restricted to corporate capitalists or individual shareholders, but includes
a range of civic institutions. Even as regards capitalists, there are significant
differences between pyramid-style ownership, as in NAIL, and mass individual
ownership, as in M-Net's Phutuma or UAM's worker shareholders. It is
probable that non-capitalist ownership per se will not directly change the profit-
orientation of media businesses and the markets within which they have to
operate. But these developments in property relations significantly alter the
parameters of who benefits financially from media ownership.

So, the changes have made an impact on deracialization and development. It
will take time for such varied race and class ownership forms to impact
(alongside other determinants) further on the role and content of media, in ways
ranging from modest to major. But both the achieved changes and their ripple
effects should be assessed rather than rejected as nothing more than racial
substitution and class continuity.

Turning to the politics of media transformation, what the skeptics also raise is
the question of political continuity of media role as a force against
democratization. This focus tends to obscure important issues like the media's
nation-building role, and misses the complexity of critical and patriotic aspects.
It runs the risk of reducing the media's role in democratic transformation to
unconditional support for the leading agent of transformation, viz the ANC
government.

This chapter has argued that there were mammoth positive developments in
South African media in the first six years of the country's democracy, in the
quantity of the media; in ownership, staffing and training; in race and class (and
even in some respects gender). (One should not forget the legal environment,
although this chapter has not focused on it; see Berger, 2000a). Content and
political role need more research, as does the question whether there have been
changes in audiences' politics, racialized tastes and economic literacy.16 But
although all of these changes need to be tracked through far more empirical
work than has been possible here, it can still be acknowledged that there have
been highly significant developments in the media since 1994.

Some of these changes accorded with South African society's transformation
along lines of deracialization, democracy and development. Many also counted
directly as evidence of transformation, and some contributed to the wider
societal transformation. That there is still a way to go in expanding
transformation's impact on the South African media, and the media's impact on
broader transformation, is not disputed. But the media landscape after six years
is almost unrecognizable compared to that existing beforehand.

The wider picture is that racism still exists in South Africa, but it no longer rules. The old draconian political dispensation is gone, and democracy is part of daily public practice and discourse. Development has proved the hardest nut to crack, with transformation in terms of black economic empowerment proceeding erratically, unevenly and slowly. The transforming media reflects all these changes and contributes to them. If its evolution continues to make a difference, that in turn may help bring a transformation in emphasis. Thus, as South Africa is increasingly able to leave behind the issues of racial and democratic transformation, so media’s role in development can gain greater urgency and attention. In turn, this scenario will move beyond the important question of “transformation from what?” and bring to the fore the other side of the equation: “transformation to what?” Media’s role in deracialization and democracy will continue, but its relation to development will then move to center-stage.

ENDNOTES

1This chapter revises an earlier article (Berger, 1999). Unless otherwise stated, facts and figures below are drawn from a wide range of publicly available press clips and online corporate data.

2Conspicuously absent in this schema is transformation from a gender relations point of view. It is an acknowledged limitation of this chapter that relatively little attention is given to this critical matter. In explanation, though not justification, it is because gender’s significance in structuring society under apartheid was so overshadowed by race, politics and economics. Accordingly, the focus of transformation as progress away from this past therefore privileges these particularities. It is certainly the case, however, that South Africa’s progress in gender transformation is an issue that merits special attention in its own right. Duncan’s chapter in this book goes some way towards this.

3Duncan’s chapter in this book differs from this emphasis in that she privileges the significance of economic transformation (or, more correctly, the shortfalls therein), over and above racial and political transformation. Her starting point therefore is the determinancy of one realm (the economic) vis-à-vis the others. In contrast, this chapter attempts to assess the transformative relevance within each realm in its own right. This is not to ignore relations between realms (and within these, the importance of the economic), but rather to composite a picture of the whole based on the relative autonomy of the parts. This approach is intended to avoid a potentially economically reductionist account that could underrate the importance of changes in regard to race and politics.

4By ‘black’ is meant here all South Africans who were oppressed under: African, Colored and Indian. Racial transformation in this sense covers the change in the situation of these three groupings as a bloc. There are differences between the three groupings in some aspects of transformation which will be touched upon in the chapter.
Given the limited size of the South African domestic market (even assuming that development does deepen it), it is likely that such international expansion will only increase. It is questionable, however, whether all international markets are as receptive to South African content as they are to South African investment – particularly Eurocentric markets as regards content featuring black people. Transformation of consumption prejudices by white audiences is not just an issue within South Africa, but in global media consumption markets such as Europe and the USA.

Primedia in 1999 bought a controlling share in the football club Kaizer Chiefs, emulating the practice of other media companies abroad. Union Alliance Media spread its portfolio across a wide range of holdings. Until its unbundling, NAIL held investments in finance, book publishing and new technology.

Cross-ownership and concentrated ownership is not always economically advantageous. Kagiso is widely regarded as having weakened its media focus by taking on board the exhibition business. NAIL was infamously over-extended. On the other hand, companies like Johnnic, Primedia and African Media Entertainment (AME) seemed to have some success in leveraging their wide range of holdings into synergies between delivery and content operations – maximizing value between, for example, cellular telephones, cinemas, internet and business information in Johnnic, and between web-based ticketing, outdoor display and international concerts in AME.

This issue is important if one regards the spread of Internet access as important for deracialization and the deepening of democracy and development. Telkom’s argument is that the (time-restricted) monopoly it has on landline voice telephony should include internet service provision. The logic seems to be that, as with telephony, if the part-foreign owned corporation is exposed to competition, it will not be able to generate sufficient profit to cross-subsidise the roll-out of infrastructure for the bottom end of the market. It is the case that private ISP’s would wire up elite suburbs and neglect townships, while Telkom has a mandate to service both. At the same time, it is clear that SA Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (SATRA) licensing could have required private ISP’s to deliver some social investment, at the same time ensuring that Telkom did face some competition.

Data on staff demographics exists for many media companies, but is not easy to aggregate meaningfully given the divergent categories used to classify staff positions. Frequently, the specificity of editorial employees is often hard to identify, as is the control chain and the gatekeeping that impacts on content. More relevant is that most of these companies now have formal corrective action policies concerning hiring and promotions, but there is little in the way of evaluative mechanisms (see Goga, 2001b).

The papers are: the Cape Argus, Daily News, Natal Mercury, Pretoria News, Star, Saturday Star, Independent on Saturday, Evening Post, Sunday Times. Fisher (2000) describes some of the subsequent setbacks in this process. However, these do not alter the general tendency.
This increased racialization of identity of South African journalists may appear to run contrary to deracialization. However, as argued at the outset of this chapter, transformation requires continued racial discernment as a precondition for corrective action against past racial imbalances. This in turn is necessary if South Africa is to be able to move beyond race altogether. (See Berger, 2000a; 2000b; 2001). The affirmation of black identity and the problematizing of whiteness are probably necessary stages of a long journey to a society in which race loses its relevance.

In fact, a survey in 2000 showed that at nine training institutions, 50% of students were black, 28% white, 15% coloured and 9% Indian (Berger, 2000d).

The two approaches are loose, descriptive generalities, rather than rigorous concepts. They have actually been combined at times, such as when Nelson Mandela has urged the media to “become part of the new South Africa in both word and deed”, and simultaneously to act as “a watchdog to make sure that our famous revolutionaries remain on course” (Cape Times, 20.11.96). However, there are instances when the two roles – whose definitional content is frequently issue-dependent – are not quite as compatible as Mandela suggests. Sides (or at least emphases) have often had to be chosen.

Bisho is the administrative capital of the poorly-run Eastern Cape province.

According to MWASA: “It is true that you now have a few faces of colour in management ranks. These however fall far short OF reflecting the demographics of South Africa. More important is the question of control. The media is still owned and controlled by the same media monopolists of the past. The so-called unbundling process has not shifted the balance of power. Even with the Johnic [sic] take over of part of TML, nothing much has changed both in terms of managing the paper and the content of the paper. The South African media is Eurocentric. This then means that the minds of the South African public are controlled and influenced by a small group of the same old order. This is extremely dangerous for a fledgling democracy” [MWASA, 1988:17], cited in Braude, 1999:49, footnote 132.

The Financial Mail (4 February 2000) reported: “Despite some cultural convergence, it’s still true that blacks and whites read, watch and listen to different media in SA.” The magazine cited a study demonstrating how TV, radio and magazines (as compared to newspapers) experienced difficulty in reaching audiences across cultural and language barriers.

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Chapter 10

MAGAZINE MATTERS:
TOWARD A CULTURAL ECONOMY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN (PRINT) MEDIA

SONJA LADEN

Social Change and the Limits of Political Economy Analyses

The dynamics of South Africa’s media industry in general, and its print media in particular, have typically been analyzed in terms of political economy frameworks that tend to focus largely on the economic role of the South African state and its institutions, the creation of state corporations and their joint ventures with private capital, and the ways in which these have set about monitoring and controlling the black press and other media (see Tomaselli, Tomaselli and Muller, 1987 and 1989; Tomaselli and Louw, 1991; Louw, 1993; Switzer, 1997; Tomaselli, 1997 and 1998). Given the predominance of colonialism in Africa, and the primacy of apartheid and its institutions in the recent history of South Africa, the scholarly preoccupation with the formal constraints imposed by and through South Africa’s political economy, and their role in shaping country’s socio-political history, is both understandable and methodologically fitting.

This top-down politically-oriented approach is also understandable in view of the way concepts of ‘free enterprise’ are thought to have entered the discourse of apartheid following reform measures instigated by the Wiehahn and Riekert Commission reports in the late 1970s. Although it is clearly the case that for decades after these reforms black South Africans continued to remain disenfranchised and were formally excluded from official decision-making processes in most socio-political and economic spheres, the point I wish to make here is that despite having been deprived of political rights for so long, black South Africans have long since been more than passive subscribers to, and casualties of, colonialist legacies and the apartheid regime. In what follows I expand on and try to refine this view historically, conceptually and descriptively.

In general, I will argue that analyses of the South African media stand to benefit from broadening their scope of attention from standard politico-economic factors (i.e. the South African state and its institutions, state corporations and their convergences with private capital, and how these have shaped the black press and other media) to the socio-cultural determinants entailed, among other things, in the ways the consolidation of a commercial black press in South Africa came to bear on the (re)production of individual selfhood and collective identity among black South Africans in urbanizing environments. This cultural economy should focus, say, on procedures of social stratification, and the various and
shifting ways demographic change (migrant labor and urbanization) has impacted on existing and new socio-cultural networks, practices, and representations within black urban culture. It would also need to consider the various and changing uses to which material and cultural goods are put, the agency of individual consumers and groups thereof, and the dynamic workings of the cultural institutions and practices, frequently unofficial, entailed in the culture of consumption.

The history of the print media in South Africa is perceived here as integral to the rise of a prevailing consumer culture in South Africa; this means that roughly from the 1930s on, black South Africans have grasped consumption and consumer practices as viable ways of reorganizing their social, political, economic and cultural lives. For the purposes of this article, then, consumer culture and matters pertaining to the culture of consumption are best understood in terms of devising new ways of doing things in life, and accessing new resources and sets of strategies directed at the social and individual production of selfhood. In revisiting the history of South Africa’s print media, it is profitable to focus on relations between “the material and the cultural, on the culture of things-in-use” in South Africa, rather than on views deriving from “current debates concerning the relations between ownership of material goods or things, status, and inequality” (see Lury,1996:5; for other relevant views on the interdependency of consumption and culture; see also Birmingham, 1997: 13; Morley, 1998: 492.) This should enable media scholars to grapple with a broader picture of the complex, heterogeneous socio-semiotic factors (i.e. agents, cultural components, institutions, market strategies and regulative mechanisms) through which South African society in general, and the South African print media in particular, have been, and are still being, re-configured.

Although South Africa’s official entry into the world of democratic nations was formally consolidated with the country’s first democratic elections in April 1994, I suggest that unofficial, ‘civil’ procedures of democratization have been underway in South Africa for many years. I further contend that South Africa’s still ongoing transformation can only be fully understood if we acknowledge that even as they were victims of the apartheid state’s regulated modes of exploitation and oppression, black South Africans have long since been actively engaged not only in political protest, resistance, and social unrest, but also in a changing cultural dynamic in which their sense of cultural agency was slowly but surely being transformed into new forms of more or less organized sociability. Indeed, at the level of unofficial socio-cultural practices, the very proclivity of black South Africans toward formulating new forms of ‘civil’ sociability and ‘socio-cultural capital’ (i.e. new cultural options, social experience and networks) indicates an enterprising, optimizing response to the oppressive circumstances induced by various modes of British and Afrikaans colonialism. At one level, this suggests that social groups often manufacture a sense of social cohesion precisely in the face of economic, political and ideological pressures. These pressures seek to tear them apart, especially, I suspect, when there is little or no agreement about the modes of social cohesion and solidarity through which a broad sense of
collective identity can be manifested and regulated over time. More specifically, these nodes of collective social action strongly suggest that in Africa, received “colonial dichotomies of ruler and ruled, white and black, colonizer and colonized only reflect... part of the reality in which people lived,” for the “meanings of institutions, bureaucratic habits, and cultural styles set up in the colonial era were continually being reshaped” (Cooper and Stoler, 1997: 34, 33; see also Cooper, 1997: 406-35).

On another level entirely, I maintain that most earlier debates on the construction of social identity and selfhood in South Africa have too frequently, and all too restrictively, been grounded on reductive articulations of the colonial situation and the subsequent modernization of Africa. These discussions seem to have promoted a unilateral view of power and domination in (South) Africa and a wrongful disregard for historical manifestations of human agency in specifically African contexts. Perhaps this is because “the colonial state ... created a system vulnerable to challenges in precisely those areas they did not want to think about” (Cooper, 1997: 411).

Following both Cooper (1997) and Bayart (1986), then, I believe many intellectuals and scholars, both Western and non-Western alike, have failed to identify as legitimate and adequately historicize a whole range of practices and idioms that do not always meet declared Western ideals of ‘acceptable’ social practice. As manifestations of African social experience, many of these practices fall outside ‘universalistic’ principles of egalitarian social organization and received understandings of the procedures entailed in processes of democratization. The apparent disregard, largely on behalf of non-Africans, for manifestations of human agency in African societies may even be an extension of the anxiety manifested by colonial officials who failed to discern, let alone consider, “social categories that fell outside their boundaries” (Cooper, 1997: 410). Most intellectual engagements with colonial power tend to focus almost exclusively on categories derived more or less directly from the repertoire of colonial politics; hence, they often ignore, or choose to denigrate, how indigenous social autonomy and stratification may be articulated among African elites and individuals through establishing, and maintaining over time, new and/or alternative socio-cultural figurations and options. These may include deliberate constructions of dependency and social stratification, the valid institutionalization of African urban elites, often formulated in terms of a “politics of the belly” (Bayart, 1986) and manifested in the accumulation of wealth, conspicuous access to possibilities of social mobility, and the exercise of power through alternatively regulated social relations, such as intimacy (e.g. mistresses), nepotism (perceived as a sign of “corruption”), witchcraft and sorcery (Bayart, 1993: xviii; see also Geschiere, 1997; cf. Geschiere and Nyamnjoh, 1998: 69-91).

It is also worth noting that received views of the South African media in terms of a political economy correspond with, and often confirm as self-evident, conventional understandings of South African history. In so doing they frequently echo the ‘official’ story of South African history in general, and
represent an ‘official’ history of the South African media in particular. Attempting to tease out the tensions between the political economy of the South African media and the socio-semiotic complexities of a cultural economy of consumption, consumption patterns, and consumer practices, promises to denaturalize this ‘official’ story. This will give voice to ‘unofficial’ versions of South Africa’s modern-day socio-cultural history that may well be no less valid and/or relevant. However, it is important to note that ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ versions of South African history are by no means mutually exclusive; quite the contrary – they are discerned here as frequently overlapping sites of investigation which promise to cross-fertilize one another. Thus, teasing out the similarities and tensions between political, economic, and cultural factors and agencies, and examining how these are brought to bear on the everyday lives of media consumers, readerships and audiences, promises to facilitate new understandings and cross-analyses of a distinctively South African cultural idiom and its diverse, often strategic, manifestations in the media.

In order to overcome our limited, unilateral understanding of African social entities we must at all times (a) take into account the dynamic intercultural dependencies between Western and non-Western cultures in contact, and (b) remember that although the tenets of Western culture, like democratization itself, are perceived as paradigmatic, they are themselves cultural constructions, and hence in no way universal. Only then can we seriously begin to understand African societies as both (1) socio-cultural entities in their own right, with their own concerns, interests, and distinctive terms of reference, and (2) as relatively autonomous social entities that both draw on, and themselves impact on, aspects of the broader global arena. Finally, we ought reflexively to reconsider some of the social practices that fail to meet, and frequently lie outside, Western ideas of those universalistic principles officially regarded by many Western-oriented intellectuals as the only socially appropriate, and hence morally justifiable, codes of social conduct and organization. Further, we would do well to objectify and critically scrutinize our own viewpoints as Western-oriented intellectuals, so that we may more adequately reassess the valid institutionalization of cultural practices that do not always meet Western standards of social appropriateness.

My earlier endorsement of a cultural economy approach to the South African print media is methodologically grounded on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and American anthropologist James Carrier. Telling correspondences between the metaphorical notions of a political economy vis a vis a cultural economy may be drawn from (1) Bourdieu’s grasp of the convergences obtaining between the economic and symbolic orders, whereby the logic that orders each is the logic of ‘capital’, and (2) Carrier’s problematization of the market model as an adequate representation of Western economy (Carrier, 1997). Bourdieu’s argument goes roughly like this: fields of cultural production where economic capital is produced are always oriented toward, even as they seem antithetical to, symbolic capital; at the same time, fields where intellectual and/or artistic capital are produced always strive to conceal their underlying market motivations (Bourdieu, 1984: 1992). That is to say, although all
enterprises of production seek to keep market values and symbolic values relatively separate and independent of one other, it cannot be denied that these two seemingly inverse “economic logics” are strongly linked. Both are based on an accumulation, by people and/or objects, of the “capital of consecration,” (ibid.: 1992: 148), which bestows value upon them and enables them to make profits. What distinguishes them is the “objective and subjective distance of enterprises of cultural production with respect to the market and to expressed or tacit demand” (Bourdieu, 1992: 141-46), or, in other words, the changing ways in which their agents, semiotic markers and practices are apprehended and distinguished by various cultural agencies. Economic capital necessarily includes both material objects, many of which have symbolic value, and intangible attributes and properties, such as prestige, status and authority (i.e. symbolic capital), and cultural capital (culturally-valued taste and consumption patterns) (see Bourdieu, 1985). As pointed out in Harker et al (1990: 26), “for Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange”, so that the term relates to all material and symbolic goods which are perceived as worth aspiring to or are indeed sought after in particular social situations. Crucial here is the way Bourdieu (1992: 207) extends “the use of the term ‘economic’ and its correlate ‘capital’ to include the exchange of anything of value”, so that the power dimensions of cultural, symbolic and economic capital are relatively interchangeble, although not always equally so in all directions (that is, cultural resources and social networks might be forms of capital, but they are not always equivalent to money and/or property). Nonetheless, the notions of culture and access to cultural production as capital paves the way for establishing structural homologies or analogies between cultural and economic forms of capital and cultural production, while perceiving symbolic capital as a particular instance or exemplification of economic capital. No less significant is Bourdieu’s reconceptualization of fields of cultural production to include the notion of ‘habitus’, the matrix of preferred cultural dispositions which enables us to reassess how human agency impacts on the ways social reality is constructed both practically and intellectually.

On another level, Carrier (1997) postulates that it is important to distinguish between understandings of Western economy produced by formal economists (frequently replicated, I might add, by politicians), and those commonly held by non-specialist members of the entities this economy purports to organize and describe (Carrier, 1997: 1-67; 129-57). Carrier points out the complex relationship between what he calls the “Market model” and the ways people actually think about and go about conducting their economic lives. Further, he usefully argues that the model of the market is “as much concerned with defining the difference between self and other as it is with its putative purpose of describing a form of socio-economic activity” (ibid.: 32). Carrier goes on to interrogate essentialized associations of the market model with constructions of the modern West (most notably with America), advocating an unpacking of the socio-cultural underpinnings of the socio-economic patterns and practices entailed in and affiliated with a capitalist market-driven economy. In these
constructions, the market is reductively construed as analogous with "impersonality, self-regard and calculation" (ibid.), and market actors are typically perceived as autonomous individuals looking out primarily for their own best interests, at all times seeking "to avoid pain and seek pleasure" (ibid.: 34). Carrier stresses the need to investigate instances in which the market model may be manifested as a collective social enterprise in which choice and autonomy culminate in forms of social constraint, and which is often grounded in the very socio-cultural interdependencies and values market model adherents would seek to deny. Finally, then, both Bourdieu and Carrier seem to be urging us to critically and reflexively question, or objectify, our own prior knowledge of South Africa’s economico-political past, and it is to this task I now turn in the hope of providing a more nuanced analysis of cultural change in contemporary South Africa.

**Consumer Magazines for Black South Africans: A Socio-Semiotic Approach**

This essay draws on a broader examination of seven consumer magazines published primarily, though not exclusively, in English, intended for and consumed largely by black South Africans. These include *Drum* (first issued 1951), *Bona* (first issued 1956), *Pace* (first issued 1978), *True Love* (first issued 1975), *Thandi* (first issued 1985, re-emerged with *Bona* 1999, withdrawn soon after), *Tribute* (first issued 1986), and *Ebony South Africa* (Nov. 1995 - July 2000). In what follows I point out that consumer magazines for black South Africans nicely illustrate the way "not all economic action arises out of what are traditionally thought of as economic motives" (Fukuyama, 1995: 18). For the ongoing, systemic publication (from 1951 on) of these magazines cannot readily be accounted for, nor fully explained, in purely economic terms of supply and demand, nor in political economical terms relating to the ownership and control of their producers and/or publishers. Further, the cultural ‘work’ performed by these magazines cannot adequately be described by neoclassical economic perceptions of human agency as motivated solely by self-interest, utility, and actual material gain.

The magazine-form is typically presumed to mark the emergence of modern social formations that are recognizably literate and bourgeois, and inherently grounded in eighteenth century notions that harness Western capitalist economy to the articulation of social mobility, the rise of consumer culture, and transformations in lifestyle choices and socio-cultural taste. How, then, does it come to be a viable print commodity for black South Africans whose access to the workings of Western capitalist economy, literacy and literate culture, universal suffrage and civil rights, regulated patterns of production, consumption, and urbanization, ownership of property, status and urban ‘middle-class’ dispositions, has been severely curbed? Why, moreover, should consumer magazines be culturally relevant or meaningful to a black South African readership, given the high rates of illiteracy among them, the high cost of the magazines relative to the earnings of many black South Africans, and the fact
that consumer magazines are typically held to promote a range of lifestyle options and commodities that for all intents and purposes seem to lie well beyond the reach of most of their target readership? And further, why should magazines published specifically for black South Africans be produced primarily in English?

These and related questions are considered here in an attempt to assess some of the ways consumer magazines for black South Africans function seminally as "cultural tools" (see Swidler, 1986; Even-Zohar, 1994, 1997) through which specifically urban, middle-class repertoires are codified, disseminated and legitimized for and by black South Africans living in urban(izing) environments. The magazines are themselves stratified, and can be ranked in terms of their codifying strategies: linguistic register, verbal and visual sophistication, print technology, quality of paper and correlative cost, and content, which ranges from routine domestic practices to refined and trendy lifestyle choices, and addresses private and collective interests in both apolitical, non-partisan topics and conspicuously political issues. At the same time, following Silverstone, Hirsch and Morely (1992: 15-31), we would do well to remember that the incorporation of magazines into the routines and patterns of peoples' lives may take place on different levels, and may be visible in different ways. Like other objects and forms of technology, magazines may have many functions, some of which are far removed from the declared intentions of their inventors and marketers. In this sense, the overall function of consumer magazines is best perceived as a form of social reordering and reorganization: their functional capacities are diffuse and dynamic, for some may be overtly contradictory, others may shift over time and/or disappear altogether. In other words, the actual purchase of a magazine does not mean it will necessarily be 'used' or even 'read' in the ways that can be assumed: it may be purchased, perused and studied in various ways (silently, by a single individual or read out aloud to others) and to different ends (browsed in or paged through for visual rather than verbal gratification), set aside for deferred reading sometime in the future, displayed for show in various social environments (at home or in public places), etc. (for a more detailed account of some of the unintended meanings thrust onto manufactured goods in Africa, especially in Zimbabwe, see Burke 1996: 161-63; 206). In the case of magazines for black South Africans, there is, for instance, a large 'pass-on' readership, the ratio of which has been estimated at 1:10.1 Although I will not present here conclusive parameters for the market growth of the magazines in question (see the All Media Publishing Survey [AMPS] 1997), the very durability of those established several decades ago (Drum 1951, Bona 1956, True Love 1975, Pace 1978), and the launch and ongoing production of new ones (Tribute 1986, Ebony South Africa 1995), attests to some measure of their 'success'. (Publication of Thandi ceased in 1999, while Ebony South Africa came to a standstill in August 2000; however, a detailed discussion of their demise lies beyond the scope of this article.)

That is to say, against arguments that would reduce the magazine-form among black South Africans to a mechanism of cultural imperialism, and in partial
response to some of the questions raised above, I believe the socio-semiotic ‘work’ of magazines extends way beyond their immediate or most apparent use-value.

Moreover, although inferring a readership’s outlook from their reading material is by no means automatic, for, as rightly stated by book historian Natalie Zemon Davis many years ago, people do not necessarily always agree with or promote the values and ideas in the material they read (Davis, 1975: 191), it is helpful, also following Davis, to consider printed artifacts not simply as sources for ideas and images, but as both indicators of and contributors to social relationships. Hence, I maintain that unconsciously, these magazines make perceptible middle-class ideals and values that have long since become what Clifford Geertz calls ‘local knowledge’, that is, tacit knowledge shared by virtually everyone in a given culture, whose process of acceptance is no longer recalled. Further, because they enable us to trace practices that by now are part of a social unconscious, in the South African juncture consumer magazines provide us with greater insight into the workings of socio-cultural entities than, let’s say, overtly subversive political publications. In other words, it is precisely the priority they seem to grant to ‘aspired to’, not necessarily ‘given’ states of affairs, which should alert scholars to their hitherto unexplored cogency as historical meaningful documents. It follows, then that magazines render meaningfully, without necessarily always putting into action, a shared repertoire of everyday experiences, lifestyle options, and social practices best described, from a Western or European standpoint, as typically ‘middle-class’ or ‘bourgeois’.

It should further be stressed that the circulation and consumption of consumer magazines is in no way enforced or imposed on their readers any more than their layout and subject matter are dictated by the publishing houses that own them. In the case of magazines for black South Africans, all the publications in question, with the exception of one (Ebony South Africa was owned jointly by the African-American publisher John H. Johnson and a South African partnership comprising Keith Sandile Kunene, Hugh Masekela and Welcome Msomi), were initially owned by white publishers, yet the trajectories of their ownerships and the ways in which their readerships have been constructed, maintained or discontinued over time, have been further complicated by recent organizational reshuffling and shifts in corporate holdings and distributions of ‘white’ and ‘black’ capital (see Tomaselli, 1997, 1998; Hawthorne, 1997: 31). Further, the said magazines are mediated by black as well as white editors, journalists and advertisers; this attests both to the social stratification of black print media officials as cultural agents, and to the fact that the magazines themselves are an embodiment of this agency. Many black media personalities are social celebrities, and use their cultural prestige actively to promote their magazines and the images they convey as a means of reinforcing their own status as established members of an elite stratum. Like other social celebrities, they inspire in their reading public individual and
collective aspirations by suggesting and endorsing new models for social conduct. This is done both overtly, albeit seemingly by chance, by regularly supplying the public with glimpses of their own lifestyles, experiences, and personalities, and covertly, through their strategic decision-making procedures concerning the content and layout of the magazines. As role models they stimulate the reading public’s desire for new knowledge, self-perceptions, and glamorous lifestyle practices, even as they authorize the marketing of new material commodities, including the magazines themselves.

Significantly, then, consumer magazines comprise seminal ways of formulating new cultural repertoires, functioning as modeling-apparatuses that inspire cultural reordering and revitalization (see Even-Zohar, 1994, 1997, 1999, and Shefy, 1997). Given the extreme cultural diversity of South Africa’s peoples, it is highly profitable to examine the formation of new repertoires through the conceptual filters of intercultural contacts and cultural interference (see Even-Zohar, 1990: 53-55; 93-96), and as integral to the rise of a prevailing consumer culture in South Africa. Accordingly, magazines are best perceived as cultural tools that comprise both material commodities in themselves and vehicles for the dissemination of a range of other cultural commodities, practices, and beliefs (Beetham, 1996: 2). For the purposes of this article, consumer culture and matters pertaining to the culture of consumption are best understood in terms of devising new ways of doing things in life, and accessing new resources and sets of strategies directed at the social (as well as individual) production of selfhood. Moreover, as Robert Foster (1999) recently points out in regard to print advertisements, acts of consumption admit us to what Orvar Lofgren (1996) calls “the microphysics of learning to belong”, whereby routine practices, including those relating to mundane daily routines of consumption, produce a sense of shared identity and belonging. In particular, I argue that roughly from the 1930s on, black South Africans have grasped consumption and consumer practices as viable ways of reorganizing their social, political, economic, and cultural lives.

Historically, the regulation of the print media directed at black South Africans marks the onset of a new phase in South African urban cultural economy, in which black South Africans are provided with vital tools to devise and access new options and legitimate existing ones, and in so doing, exercise social mobility by imagining, and strategically prefiguring, new senses of individual and collective identity. However, it is crucial to note that even as consumer magazines are strategic mechanisms for devising new cultural practices and new forms of social organization, and afford us crucial insight into leading processes and procedures of cultural change, they are no less significantly carriers of continuity and/or stability, as attested by their fairly conservative, at times even stereotypical representations. In addition, as I have noted elsewhere, it would
appear that the relatively ‘low’ cultural position of magazines in Western cultures as seemingly non-committal artifacts, perceived as trivial and frivolous, designed to evoke pleasure and enjoyment and relaxation rather than to provide ‘serious’ reading matter, may be precisely what ensures the endless regeneration of their appeal and facilitates their endless reproduction (see Laden, 1997: 125-26).

It is crucial to clarify that the socio-cultural motivations for the production, dissemination, and uses to which magazines are put, are by no means perceived here as limited to whether or not people have ‘real’ access to the options they evoke, or whether they are able to afford them (see Lury, 1996; Williams, 1982). Indeed, as suggested earlier, their cultural force lies in their organizational or motivational/aspirational cogency, i.e. in the ways they strategically prefigure and engender new social options for vast numbers of people. At the same time, examining magazines for black South Africans is viewed as an attempt to fathom some of the ways people think about, and come to make, material decisions. In this respect, the rhetorical dispositions of the editors and journalists involved in their production may be considered as evidence of the ways choices are made and repertoric options patterned into specific social practices, so long as these are supplemented by evidence about other ways in which magazines may be ‘used’ in social contexts.

In particular, the social position of black print media practitioners is discerned as a determining factor in negotiating social mobility and access to resources, and choice-making procedures are perceived as components of more or less conscious strategic mechanisms, both rational or irrational. This correlates with linguist Carol Myers-Scotton’s understanding of the way, generally speaking, within the given constraints of possible options, people will select for themselves “the ‘best’ choice,” that is, the most feasible choice that is not simply available and accessible (on the distinction between them see Even-Zohar, 1990: 53-55) but deemed most advantageous (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 9). It almost goes without saying that the regularity with which people appear to wish to optimize gain and/or ensure survival does not imply that their choices are indeed always successful.

**Urban Public Spheres in Southern Africa: New ‘Economies’ for Old?**

Before we begin to probe specific consumer magazines as ‘cultural tools’ (see Swidler, 1986; Even-Zohar, 1994, 1997), I would like to analyze a different yet related, in some ways analogous, example of the way South Africa’s recent (re)admission into the global arena has been facilitated by attempts to engender a ‘cultural economy’. I refer in particular to more or less formal attempts to model the new South Africa along the lines of what might be called a ‘rainbow nation’ repertoire that proudly attempts to celebrate South Africa’s ‘unity in diversity’. Among other things, this repertoire has been emblematized by the central role played by Nelson Mandela as an international symbol of national reconciliation ever since his historic release from Robben Island in February 1990, through various stages of negotiated settlement with President F.W. de Klerk and the
National Party, South Africa’s first democratic elections and Mandela’s swearing in as president of the Republic of South Africa (27-28th April and 10th May) respectively, and intermittently throughout Mandela’s presidency. Given the ways the National Party historically enacted and authorized its own agenda, whereby South Africa was experienced as the literal embodiment of segmentation and difference, the present government’s decision to represent South Africa as a ‘rainbow nation’ manifesting a ‘liberal’ ideology of nonracial inclusiveness is quite understandable, though not beyond interrogation. Significantly, however, this synthesized version of the new South Africa through a ‘rainbow nation’ discourse has been favorably embraced and reproduced in the popular imagination(s) of many people-in-the-culture both within South Africa and abroad. I might add that although it is currently critiqued by a number of intellectuals, the scope and strategic effectiveness of the ‘rainbow nation’ synthesis and corresponding (re)constructions of ‘Ubuntu’, how these are actually put into practice, and the cultural significance(s) of their concrete manifestations – are only beginning to be assessed (see, for example, Laden 1997; Prinsloo, 1998; Kamwanga Malulu, 1999; Blankenberg, 1999).

Let us take a closer look at two of the strategic uses to which components of the so-called rainbow nation repertoire have recently been put, namely (1) the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and, in this context, (2) the strategic transformation of Shoeshoza, the Zulu theme song unofficially chosen and unanimously sung by all South Africans (black, white, coloured and Asian) in support of the national Springbok team, representing, as it were, a new unified South Africa during the World Cup events held in 1995. The prominence of the 1995 Rugby World Cup tournament is particularly interesting, for rugby has long since been perceived as a leading disseminator of ‘indigenous’ Afrikaans nationalist sensibilities (see Grundlingh, Odendaal and Spies, 1995: 90-105, 106-131; Shepperson and Tomaselli, 1996; for a more comprehensive history of white [British and Afrikaans] and black rugby in South Africa, see Black and Nauright, 1998), and integral to white popular culture. Nonetheless, the Rugby World Cup is an extremely important international sporting event among television viewers the world over, rated the world’s fourth largest, and as such created a problem for “the marketing of the new South African globally” (Nauright, 1997: 177), and choosing to host this series of events was no doubt motivated by a strategic decision on behalf of the South African government and media to use this opportunity to optimize capital gain and international prestige in the name of the ‘South African nation’ (whatever this might mean), public and private organization, and individual South African persons. Further, it was genuinely hoped that the Rugby World Cup would signify South Africa’s re-entry into the market of world sport, and that this re-entry would in turn mark the start of a new era in marketing South African sport and sportsmen throughout South Africa and abroad, and perhaps even usher in the Olympic Games (which, as noted by Nauright, Cape Town had hoped to host in the year 2004). Prior to the event, then, President Mandela “pledged full support for the national team and the event, with the concession that the Springbok team to play in the tournament
would be the last nearly all-white rugby team to represent the country in a World Cup” (Nauright, 1997:177). Bearing this in mind, the official decision to market the new South Africa ‘globally’, as it were, as “the nation and the world in union” (Nauright, 1997:177), suggests a commitment to what Igor Kopytoff has termed entrepreneurship in an African context, which is “devoted to achieving independence or favorable terms of dependence, acquiring adherents, and making alliances” (Kopytoff, 1986: 40). The decision could also be said to dovetail with a sense of social organization grounded less in logically coherent existing social norms, than in the range of potentially operational actions intended to maximize the sense of well being and material gain facilitated by South Africa’s diverse, coexisting social networks (Nauright, 1997:177). However, it should be perceived not as a direct reflection of existing social cooperation directed toward accessing symbolic and material gain, but rather as a collective commitment toward motivating and activating such synergy (see Shepperson, 1996).

Further exemplifying how social conduct adopted by black (and other) South Africans is determined not only by their memberships in particular social groups, or by the nature of given social events or situations, is the ‘unofficial’ transformation of Shosholoza into a national sporting anthem for the new South Africa. Originally a mineworkers’ song sung by miners on their way from Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) to work in South Africa’s gold mines, Shosholoza became a religious anthem sung by black Lutheran students in the 1960s and 1970s, and following South Africa’s victory against the New Zealand All-Black team in the 1995 Rugby World Cup, assumed a new socio-semiotic role as the new South Africa’s main sporting anthem (see Nauright, 1997: 174). Recorded by radio celebrity Dan Moyane, Shosholoza was widely distributed throughout South Africa and sung at various types of gatherings by South Africans of all creeds and color in celebration of the South African team’s victory over their All-Black opponents (attested by the presence of this author at the time). Finally, through the hordes of foreign spectators who visited South Africa for the 1995 Rugby World Cup, Shosholoza was inscribed in the ‘global imaginary’ as part of the conciliatory image of the new South Africa. The song continues to be nationally and internationally representative, and has recently been proclaimed a “traditional South African song” by Joseph Shabalala, leader of the well-established, internationally acclaimed group of South African black vocalists, Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Harmony, 1999). Reconfirming and further refining Shosholoza’s representational cogency, the musical arrangement included in the 1999 album Harmony (Gallo Record Company, RSA) tellingly fuses the song in a musical mix with Nkosi Sikelel’i Afrika, South Africa’s current national anthem.

Significantly, however, I believe the extent to which an inclusivists ‘rainbow nation’ synthesis is actually being implemented in South Africa is less important than the ways in which specific perceptions of this synthesis are strategically utilized at various points in time (a further analogy may be drawn here, I might add, with aspects of the African Renaissance discourse). In other words, the ‘rainbow nation’ discourse advocating ‘unity in diversity’ is seen here as a means
of prefiguring new repertoiric options for successfully managing South Africa’s cultural diversity, not as an authentic move to construct genuine cultural synergy in South Africa. More significantly, it marks the strategic establishment of a new South African cultural repertoire negotiated through joint action, and motivated by the promise of what large numbers of South African persons believe they stand to gain in both symbolic and material terms. Survival, I would venture, more than authenticity, is at stake here. Hence, the ‘rainbow nation’ repertoire may be viewed as a means for generating and activating the cultural principles of collective solidarity and interdependence through new and/or newly-transformed cultural options. Let us now consider the extent to which consumer magazines can be said to function along similar lines.

Since a detailed assessment of the seven magazines examined in my research lies beyond the scope of this paper, I touch briefly on the historical impact of the magazine-form for black South Africans and on some of the primary socio-cultural significances of individual titles and magazine sections analyzed from a formal and discursive/rhetorical perspective. Elsewhere I have ascribed two primary dispositions to all seven magazines under investigation, the first didactic and the second aspirational (Laden, 1997), so in what follows I will briefly summarize these points. From a didactic standpoint, many of the magazines in question function as informal educational apparatuses targeted on the very reading skills and methods of comprehension required to access and retain the shared knowledge they wish to impart. To this end, they combine pictorial and visual modes of representation with verbal skills, in, say, photo-story and comic form, word games, puzzles, advertisements, competitions for adults and children, and educational supplements. Assuming the combined role of primers and modern-day civility manuals, these magazines also manifest a firm didactic stance in many of their features, departments, and advertisements at the level of content. On the aspirational front, feature articles, readers letters, advice columns and short stories are intended to educate and inform by (a) expressing views designed to establish standards of social correctness for a community of readers, and (b) promoting role models and celebrities who adhere to these views and associated practices.

For instance, medical columns instruct readers on the most basic matters of health and hygiene, elementary first aid and safety around the home and workplace, family planning and protection against sexually-transmitted diseases; practical advice columns instruct readers regarding parenting and marriage guidance for monogamous, single-household families, efficient housekeeping and business practices, legal matters, home economics and thrifty consumerism, food preparation, domestic and household chores such as sewing, mending, household repairs, home-decoration, social hospitality and entertaining. The aspirational disposition of these magazines is manifest in the ways they seek to promote role models and express views designed to establish standards of ‘social correctness’ for their community of readers, attesting, for example, to the invaluability of the nuclear family vs. the traditional, extended family, denounce teenage pregnancies, abortion, and the widespread practice of childbearing out of
wedlock. There are articles that repeatedly affirm the social merit of education, sanction religion and religious practices, promote honesty, truthfulness and sincerity in individual and social relationships, and advocate respect for one’s elders (especially important in African societies), while still others confirm the social stigma of impotence, infertility, and childlessness. Assuming the combined roles of primers and modern-day civility manuals, these magazines also provide commentary on political and domestic issues, legitimize and institutionalize new socio-linguistic usages, debate what comprises ‘proper’ social conduct, air views about traditional customs vs. modern practices, and more.

Less overtly, these didactic and aspirational motivations are harnessed to yet another prevalent mechanism conspicuous throughout the magazines, a self-promotional, consumer-oriented strategy exemplified in advertising contests, competitions, and word puzzles. More specifically, since the nineteenth century, publishers and producers of print culture in general, and consumer magazines in particular, have displayed similar attempts to harness and legitimize public, at times playful, understandings of competitiveness to different market-driven ends (see especially Garvey, 1996: 51-79; Beetham, 1996: 118, 138). Among other things, this has been done through advertising contests, which in our case seek to ensure cultural approval for new consumerist practices among black consumers by linking, for instance, educational material to commercial strategies, and vice versa. Advertising competitions, contests and word puzzles are thus intended largely to “structure readers’ imaginative interaction with advertising” (Garvey, 1996: 52), to ‘train’ magazine readers to become consumers, and to bring to their attention and render accessible to them, by enhancing their educational skills, a whole new range of marketable goods, products and brand-names. However, while the primary motivation of most advertising competitions may well be market-driven and commercial, intended to profit advertisers, and although ethnographic inquiry into readers’ own perception of their reading benefits is still pending, in the said magazines the secondary functions of advertising contents promise to be more directly profitable for the readers themselves. In particular, they comprise informal educational channels for basic literacy and numeracy skills, and impart a miscellany of basic information, since their readers’ familiarity with many of the products and commodities advertisers seek to promote cannot be taken for granted.

Historically, the workings of advertising competitions through which the social involvement and collaborative participation of disparate individuals are both recruited and enacted, may be historically traced to oral performances and public contests/competitions which traditionally took place in the kgotla, the principal and legal public sphere for assembly and debate, where Africans traditionally participated in and negotiated shared social agendas, systems of order, prestige and value (I am indebted here to an earlier draft of David Kerr’s article in this volume, which addresses the history of the kgotla in Botswana (Kerr, 2002)). Despite being a pre-colonial figuration and predating modern concepts of power and social distinction such as class, the kgotla appears to have had considerable effect on peoples’ collective and personal sense of identity. Among other things,
the autochthonous social space of the *kgotla* was central to people’s competitive disposition and operational competence, and united them in “a common excitation over the display of individual prowess in social accomplishment” (Coplan, 1994: 204). As a social forum which provided a sense of social orientation for its participants, where social conduct was both generated and hierarchized, the *kgotla* was no doubt central in defining and conveying the cultural markers, practices and dispositions internalized both by participants and their non-participant kin (especially women and children), infused in them the means to identify and differentiate their relative positions within the larger community. Thus, although neither the social functions of *kgotla* nor the rhetorical skills it authorized were accessible to women (see Shapera, 1938: 28; Ngcongco, 1989: 42-47; cf. Preston-White, 1974: 210; Hofmeyr, 1993: 78-102 and Coplan, 1994: 38), the *kgotla* may nonetheless be viewed as space in which people were able to forge alternative forms of sociability and cooperation, and to rehearse new notions of collective identity, while selecting alternative attitudes to and sources of authority. Moreover, although the physical space of the *kgotla* has disappeared, I suspect at least some of its social functions have been relocated, filtered and transformed within, say, the textual space of the magazine form directed at black South African readers in urban environments. I therefore recommend teasing out correlations between the social and discursive functions of the *kgotla* and those ascribed to the magazine form, for both provide a more or less public participatory forum for a collaborative collectivity of people, in which literal exchanges take place, whether orally or in writing (see Laden (2001).

Advertising goods, brand names, reading practices and the magazines themselves as desirable commodities, competitions and contests continue to promote among black magazine readers various kinds of social involvement, reading and writing practices, providing them with new modes of self-display. Prizes and awards are offered for ‘winning’ letters, and individual and group photographs sent in by readers are frequently published. *Drum, Pace,* and *Tribute* all offer cash prizes for winning letters; *True Love* awards a R100 prize for the “letter of the month” and a *True Love* T-shirt and cap, and invites readers to send in ideas for stories or personal experiences they would like to share; if these are used and developed into a feature, the editors promise to pay R250. *Drum* offers R500 for every ‘newsworthy true story’ from readers that is published, and R250 for every published picture/photograph. Competitions abound in all the magazines: a recent issue of *Pace,* for instance (December/January 1998), features three: the *Pace* Super Bonanza, in which readers are requested to answer a question relating to the number of faces appearing on the Mngosi gossip column page (discussed in detail later), a R1,000 Crossword Competition, and the Queen women’s section offers ‘competitive,’ achievement-oriented readers free membership in the Ladies Club for Finance Planning and Marketing. The April 1992 issue of *Tribute* offers “A Week in the Cape for Life” as a means of promoting a timesharing vacation scheme; the January 1996 edition of *True Love* features a subscription promotion in which 60 readers can win a watch; *True Love* and Kwela Books are giving away 10 free copies of *Common Hunger* to
Sing, a book paying tribute to South Africa’s black women singers who have made significant contributions to urban black culture; a bridal competition sponsored jointly by True Love and American Swiss Jewelers offers prizes worth more than R250,000; and True Love, Fedics Food Services and HI Africa (an electrical appliance distributions company) are sponsoring a Traditional Recipe Competition in which three readers stand to win appliances or cash prizes. These competitions clearly both exemplify and seek to contribute to a middle-class urban repertoire comprising lifestyles which are both transnational or ‘global’ (i.e. the bridal, financial planning, and jewelry competitions, the timeshare vacation), and locally South African (i.e. the book of South African women singers and the Traditional Recipe Competition); the subscription promotion is, of course, a self-advertising strategy for True Love.

Unlike magazines for ‘white’ readers, these magazines do not take for granted their readers’ familiarity with the range of cultural products and practices they address and seek to promote. Particularly telling in this regard is the Bona Word Puzzle, a regular monthly feature in which readers are encouraged to improve their English vocabulary, and are advised in an intimate, personal tone, that if they don’t know a word, they should ask a friend what it means, or look in a dictionary. “You’ll be amazed at how your English will get better and better. And what’s more, you could earn lot’s of MONEY!” (Bona, August 1989, October 1993, April 2000). Correct entries stand to win considerable sums of money: R20,000 in August 1989, R25,000 in October 1993, R30,000 in April 2000; if there is no completely correct entry, entries with the fewest mistakes stand to win R4,000, R5,000, and R6,000, respectively. Strikingly, from 1989 to the present day the sentences used in the Word Puzzle have hardly changed, nor have its rules and instructions, or even the promotional text surrounding the competition. Each word puzzle comprises three or four puzzles, each made up of 20 sentences, with two or three words appearing in brackets somewhere in each sentence. Readers are asked to select the most appropriate word for each sentence from the set of brackets and inscribe it into the spaces next to each sentence. Explicit instructions are given to write “in one letter to each block,” and readers are encouraged to fill in multiple entries; this of course costs them more but gives them a better chance of winning.

Both the Word Puzzle itself and the accompanying instructions function as mnemonic devices, repeated verbatim month after month for over a decade. Intended as an exercise in practising literacy, numeracy, and basic contextual skills, these instructions further illustrate that even the most basic contextual knowledge is not presumed where black readers are concerned. This text, conspicuously printed in larger typeface than other sections of the Word Puzzle, reads as follows:
SENDING YOUR ENTRIES
Let’s say you have filled out five entries. That means you will have to buy a postal order worth R3. (Remember, 60c per entry). Now, write your name and address on the coupon at the bottom of the last three entries over the page, and fill in the number of your postal order as well. Now – and this is VERY IMPORTANT
TEAR THE WHOLE PAGE CAREFULLY OUT OF THE MAGAZINE.
DO NOT CUT OUT ANY OF THE ENTRIES
Now, make your postal order payable to: Bona People’s Fund, and put your page from Bona and your postal order into an envelope and send it to: Bona Word Puzzle, Box 32046, Mobeni, 4060. Do not register your entries, rather use that money to fill out extra entries, and make sure you post your entries well before the closing date of this competition.....

While the condescending tone of these instructions may well be objectionable to literate readers familiar with such mundane procedures as using a postal service, filling in forms, addressing coupons and envelopes, such routines are by no means taken here for granted, nor is the literacy they involve. This text exemplifies spoken discourse in written form, assuming the immediacy of a performed text being read and experienced simultaneously, ‘in real time,’ as it were. As is often the case in oral narrative situations, the reader is addressed as though she/he were physically present and actually benefiting from the instructive experience.

The ‘Pace’ of Change: From ‘Zonk’ to ‘True Love’
The first successful mass-circulation magazine produced for a black readership in South Africa was Zonk (1949-1964), a non-political entertainment magazine that upheld a policy ban on overt political comment (see Manoim, 1983). The significance of Zonk is twofold: first, it marks a seminal moment in inscribing and authorizing the membership of black South Africans in new urban social networks, introducing a newly viable print-commodity format combining the verbal medium with the visual, into South Africa’s commercial black press. As a photomagazine modeled on the American black publication Ebony (issued 1945), Zonk was the first black magazine in South Africa to feature four-color comic strips, full-color advertising on inside pages, full-color covers, lots of pictures and bold lettering. In other words, Zonk played a central role in disseminating new image technologies that are multi-modal in the sense that they concurrently make use of devices from more than one semiotic mode of communication. Hence, the magazine page becomes a distinct spatial unit in which visually organized graphic modes of representation (printed words and pictorial material) are both combined and converged. This enables us to conceptualize the magazine page as an integrative representational unit that itself incorporates operative suggestions for the effective retrieval of some of its combined elements as statements or knowledge about the world.
The prime impact of introducing visual modes of representation alongside blocks of relatively uninterrupted text in Zonk (and later in Drum, Bona, True Love, Pace, and Thandi, though less markedly so in Tribute and Ebony South Africa), lies in the way this marks an important stage in the history of urban culture in South Africa, whereby we begin to witness a more or less regulated integration of traditional thought-patterns with newly-emerging urban ‘ways of knowing’. Through this still-evolving integration, new modes of intelligibility and a diverse range of meanings for rural, migrant, and urban black South Africans, whether illiterate, semi-literate or literate, begin to suggest new ways for black South Africans to make sense of their changing circumstances. On a different level, combining strategies for reducing data and relationships from a multitude of domains in the natural world to graphic modes of representation or visible patterns via the use of contemporary print technologies, pictorial materials (i.e. illustrations, photographs, technical drawing, printed pictures, and comic-strips), and color-techniques, alongside reproductions of the printed word and blocks of text, suggests that during the late 1940s, the mass-produced magazine for black South Africans was assigned a new socio-semiotic function through which it at once assumed, and itself enhanced, the internalization, organization, and reconceptualization through visualization of a new repertoire of cultural goods, experiences, and practices in the process of coming-into-being among black South Africans at the time. Hence, mass-produced magazines for black South Africans introduced in the late 1940s comprised an important and complex node of verbal/textual and visual information, perceived images, and schemas that embodied a synoptic network of cultural models. Particularly useful to persons in various stages of demographic mobility and cultural transition, these models provide readers with implied instructions for regulating new modes of social action, which they are likely to internalize and follow ‘naturally’, consciously or not.

Drum, Bona, True Love and Pace were also central in facilitating the historical transformation of oral traditions into literate modes of print-culture, although they cannot all be addressed here. While the transmission of oral traditions into patterns of literate culture is by no means straightforward, it can be shown that the multi-modal composition of certain sections of the magazines listed above marks the integration of traditional codes of oral storytelling into new, urban ways-of-knowing. An interesting example in this respect is the “Mngosi” gossip column comprising the opening page in Pace. A regular feature of Pace since 1985, “Mngosi” is written jointly by editor-in chief Force Kashane, assistant editor Joe Khumalo, current assistant editor and two-time winner of the Mondi award for outstanding journalism in South Africa, and a variety of Pace journalists and feature editors. The writers of “Mngosi” seek to re-legitimize and enhance the participatory nature of oral culture and performance, among other things, by reinstating the practice of storytelling as a received source of African ‘cultural capital’, enhanced by technologies of print culture.

“Mngosi’s” tone is informal and chatty, as befits a gossip column, and although it seems to focus largely on what appears to be ‘idle chatter’, it is
replete with anecdotes about public figures, from politicians to film stars, media personalities, leading businessmen/women and sports figures. As noted by literary critic Patricia Meyer Spacks (1986), in its most banal form as “distilled malice,” gossip toys with reputations, generates truths, half-truths and falsehoods about the actions, intentions, and emotions of others (Spacks, 1986: 4-5). However, while at face value gossipers often seem to be intent on furthering their own social or political ambitions, in our case there is perhaps more to a gossip column than meets the eye. Indeed, Spacks also points to another more ‘serious’ side of gossip, whereby “its participants use talk about others to reflect about themselves, to express wonder and uncertainty and to locate certainties, to enlarge their knowledge of one another” (ibid.). In this sense, gossip is also an important mode of self-expression and a form of instilling social solidarity. “Mngosi”, I would argue, uses the ‘maliciousness’ of gossip to more ‘serious’, or even benevolent social ends.

There is also a salient presence throughout “Mngosi” columns of a combined discourse entailing one or more narratorial voices, and a foregrounded simulation of spoken discourse. This suggests that what might be at stake here is a form of the narrative mode defined by Russian Formalist Boris Eikhenbaum as skaz, later clarified by Bakhtin as the often parodic relationship between double-voiced utterances. Eikhenbaum notes that skaz is not a simple mode of narration, “but tends to reproduce words in mimic and articulation, while sentences are not only selected and linked according to the principle of logical speech, but even more according to the principle of expressive speech, in which articulation, mimic, sound gestures, etc. play a special role…” (Maguire, 1974: 272-73).

Irony and parody render “Mngosi” a form of parodic “skaz” in which the writers’ storyteller traits are clearly differentiated from their professional personas, as, let’s say, Force Kashane, editor-in-chief of Pace magazine, and Joe Khumalo, award winning journalist. Parodistic “skaz” is exemplified, for instance, in the predominance in “Mngosi” of anecdotes/accounts that call attention to the speakers’ position toward the story-cum-anecdotes they are about to construct: “Listen to this juicy one” (Pace, July 1992); “You guys out there had better watch out” (ibid.); “Jislaaik! [Afrikaans vulgarization of ‘Jesus!’] if you ain’t heard this one, you ain’t heard nuthin’, man!” (Pace, Dec/Jan 1992); “Shh...come hither, Iona bondaba [you with everyone – Zulu] and get it straight from the gossip factory” (ibid.) “Hela wena ([hey you – Zulu], jy praat te veel [you talk too much – Afrikaans] (Pace, April 1997).

From its inception in 1985 until mid-1996, the full-page spread of “Mngosi” was printed in color. Framed in red, its texts, comprising between five to seven brief anecdotal narratives or accounts, were printed against a bright yellow background. Above the title was a series of passport-like photographs of the authors themselves, topped by the onomatopoeic PSSSSST, clearly intended to herald the gossip-like, secretive, semi-sensationalist tone of the subsequent
accounts, and in so doing stimulate the readers’ inquisitiveness and evoke their
delight at being made party to previously unshared knowledge, even if this
knowledge was clearly being made public before their very eyes. From 1985 to
mid-1996, the column’s title “Mngosi with the Pace Gang”, bore a subtitle:
“Sondela Wena Ndbazabantu” (Zulu), roughly translated as “Come everyone
who wants to hear about everyone elses’ affairs.” Following Myers-Scotton
(1998: 84-86; 90-91), it would appear that when the column debuted in 1985,
choosing a subtitle in Zulu represented a marked choice intended largely to
function as a neutralizing strategy designed to encode solidarity among Pace’s
predominantly urban readers (who presumably reside in and around
Johannesburg, where Zulu is considered the most prevalent African variety),
confirming that the attitudes and expectations of the column’s producers and those
of its readers were on a par. However, by mid-1996 it seems that the neutral
solidarity conveyed by the column’s vernacular subtitle was no longer considered
to be a priority; for by then the producers of Pace assumed that “readers were
familiar with the column and removing the subtitle would do no harm: (January
1998, pers. Com. with Force Kashane, editor), Since the middle of 1996
“Mngosi” has appeared sans subtitle, on a more subdued black and white full-
page spread, with the title appearing in black typeface, except for the word
“Mngosi”, which appears in bold, brightly colored typeface. Photographs of
“Mngosi’s” writers have always been integral to the headline, although the team
of writers, and their number, have always been open to change. Further, although
“Mngosi” has always been represented as a collaborative effort, it has never
featured a group photograph of its writers, preferring instead to focus
individually on each collaborative writer, as attested by their individual
photographs. Until 1996 these photographs were displayed in a horizontal line,
yet in “Mngosi’s” new multi-modal layout they are portrayed as part of the
headline, enclosed in a pale blue comic-like bubble whose vector points overtly
to the letter “I” in the word “Mngosi”. This multi-modal combination of color
imagery, black and colored typeface, and photography, with a comic-strip
convention, may well be inspired by the availability of new image technology,
yet it also seems to testify to the ironic self-perception of “Mngosi’s” writers.
Other forms of authorial distancing are made manifest in a comparative
analysis of the title and subtitle of “Mngosi”. To begin with, placed in the initial
position of the opening column of Pace, the column’s title and subtitle comprise
what might be called a multi-modal headline, a kind of ‘hook’ intended to attract
attention and lure readers into reading the column and then the entire magazine
(much like the instrumental opening in a rock song). While all headline writers
tend to make use, among other things, of the potential effects of sound (in texts
designed for reading), this headline is more complex: it is multi-modal in the
sense that it involves a complex interaction of visual elements and verbal English
presented to the eye, over and above contextual and background knowledge
(Goodman, 1996: 69). Prefiguring the overall tone of the column as a whole, the
multi-modality established by the headline and its writers simulates an informal,
conversational right alongside, and augmented by, visual devices and sound
gestures such as onomatopoeia. While the informal, chatty tone of “Mngosi” may in fact be a strategic attempt to introduce magazine-reading as a new literacy pattern, it also pays homage to traditional notions of the way black South Africans are known to delight in humor and conversation, even as these are interspersed in written, not spoken forms of gossip (cf. Tiyo Soga, 1892, cited in Couzens, 1984: 3-5). By resorting to a stylized use of English that is clearly multi-modal (i.e. using devices from more than one semiotic mode of communication at the same time), highlighting their own linguistic diversity, “Mngosi’s” writers clearly perceive themselves, and are in turn perceived by their readers, as cultural enablers who enhance their own professional and social status. By flaunting their ability to switch from one linguistic code to another they show off their linguistic prowess and present themselves as multidimensional individuals (see Myers-Scotton, 1998: 26).

Take the following example from another recent issue of Pace dated March 1996:

If you are famous please do not go around making other people miserable. Maybe I should say if you are famous don’t think everybody in this sunny rainbow country has to know you. This ex-soccer star, or should I say soccer legend, visited some bundle somewhere in KwaZulu. He went to a supermarket to grab a few nyana things. At the till he did not want to wait in the queue, so he went upfront. One angry lady asked: “Hey, mister, what’s wrong with you – can’t you see the others in the queue?” “Don’t you know who I am?” he retorted arrogantly. “Yewena bhuti wekhandha elikhulu – I don’t care a hoot ukuthi uwaubani; get in the queue.” Uyezwake fame or no fame nayo iqueue. (Pace, March 1996).

I have deliberately chosen a somewhat trivial, non-specific, anecdotal account which at face value seems to have little narrative point, since I believe it is symptomatically expressive of the kind of social commentary and authorial distancing regularly enacted in the column. Presented in what appears to be a didactic, fable-like format, which reads almost like an aphorism, the combined speakers seem to be addressing the reader directly, using the first person singular. However, the mundane description of the deliberately nameless ex-soccer star indicates that his identity is presumed to be common knowledge among those socially ‘in the know’, i.e. writers and readers alike, and invokes an analogy between the soccer star and his alleged fans, the readers. Many readers, including myself, who are ‘not in the know’, have little or no chance of being welcomed into the circle, and are hence knowingly, if not ironically, left out. Interspersing uses of the vernacular into the overall English medium through code-switching, the columnists seem to position themselves ambiguously, at once alongside their readers and a cut above them, but their final remark seems equally fitting on both counts: “know your place, brother, even if you are a soccer legend, you too must queue.”
On another level entirely, the way "Mngosi’s" writers’ allude to themselves as "the Pace Gang" may seem trite and insignificant, yet in the context of black urban history in South Africa it is noteworthy in at least two respects. First, in view of the historical centrality of criminal 'gangs' (themselves modeled on imported American prototypes) in the structuring and organization of South African township life, especially during the 1940s and 1950s, the allusion is by no means coincidental, nor does it seem to be neutral (see Sampson, 1956; Coplan, 1985; Bonner and Segal 1988; Nicol, 1991: 42-74). It may be argued that members of "the Pace Gang" wish to distance themselves from the (ambiguous) historical representations of township criminal 'gangs', and in so doing foreground their own authority and education, even as they encode greater social distance from their readers and increase their own social status.

Lastly, but by no means least significantly, let us take a look at True Love, the only surviving magazine for black South African women (since Thandi remerged with Bona and was later withdrawn in 1999). True Love's past, like its name, is steeped in irony. Although today it is clearly a women's magazine, True Love's origins are quite paradoxical — it was conceived as a soft-porn publication targeted at a male readership of migrant laborers, many of whom worked on the mines. In 1975, following Drum's declining sales due to steady competition from Bona, Drum editor Jim Bailey decided to issue a 'sister' publication which he named True Love. Modeled largely on the photo-comic magazine introduced into South Africa via Zonk (in 1962), True Love focused mainly on sex scandal stories, and its name was merely a cover-up for a publication that bore no likeness whatsoever to a women's magazine. Presumably aware of a similar attempt by an editor of Ebony USA who used the 'girlie magazine' option as a means of boosting Ebony's sales (see Wolesley, 1971), Bailey clearly hoped a magazine based on this model would be successful enough to offset losses incurred by Drum. This version of True Love worked well for several years, but when Bailey was forced to succumb to censorship and forgo the sex scandals, True Love lost tens of thousands of readers, and Bailey finally sold Drum and True Love to the Afrikaans publishing house Nationale Pers in Cape Town (1992 personal interview with Barney Cohen, executive editor of Drum and True Love). Nationale's proprietors sought "to tap the growth market of black print-media readers" (Chapman, 1989: 217) and decided to recast True Love as a women's magazine; up until then, magazines for black readers in South Africa had targeted a predominantly male readership (e.g. Zonk, Drum, Bona, and Pace) although they all also addressed women, as indeed do Tribute and Ebony South Africa. Needless to say, though, by 1984 there was already a thriving market for magazines targeting white South African women. The new women's magazine format of True Love published by Nationale soon prompted the Argus group, Nationale's main rival, to launch a second magazine for black South African women, and in 1985 Thandi, sister publication to Bona, was born. The new women's format of True Love was given an expanded title, True Love & Family, and a slogan: For the Woman Who Loves Life. Coupling the Western romantic notion of 'true love' with an idealized notion of the single-family household unit
identified with Western modernity, while targeting black South African readers who frequently did not subscribe to either notion, this version of True Love was once again revamped in July 1995, just over a year after South Africa’s first democratic elections (April, 1994). Targeting younger black South African women “determined to make every aspect of their lives a success” (July 1996, editorial, Khayani Dhlomo-Mkhize), this new, updated version of True Love is still printed on glossy paper with chrome plates, high-tech layout, typeset and design, has had the & Family appendix removed, and bears the new, still current slogan All a Woman Needs. Like the previous slogan, albeit somewhat differently, this slogan is also non-specific and apolitical, a catch-all phrase which purposely avoids identifying its readership in any exclusivist way. But the blanket universality of this slogan cannot simply be collapsed into that of the earlier one, since each was coined at a very different historical moment.

While the earlier 1984 slogan was probably conceived with the idea of fashioning an entirely new readership of black middle-class women from a heterogeneity of people from vastly different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the 1995 slogan was targeted at members of an already-existing, socially stratified black middle-class readership spanning roughly two generations of black middle-class magazine readers.

Most significantly, as the only surviving general interest magazine for black South African women, True Love provides a benchmark for assessing some of the ways consumer magazines for black South Africans have effected changes in the socio-cultural dynamics of contemporary South Africa, and legitimized the social mobility of black South Africans residing in urban environments. At the same time, as the only magazine for black South African women still in circulation, it also urges us to question homogenizing Western presumptions that have long since perceived women as the ‘ideal’ and most accessible consuming subjects the world over.

By focusing on the experiences of urban black women as wives, housewives, homemakers, mothers, and working women in a variety of professional and other occupations, True Love has secured a new, predominantly female readership, even as it is responsible for recasting, through the domestic domain, the roles played by women in a new, informal public sphere where shifting social responsibilities have been (re)negotiated and gradually institutionalized. In so doing, True Love confirms and places beyond question the urban status of South Africa’s black middle-class, endorsing the roles and social standing of black women within it. Here I believe the magazine’s producers have been committed (albeit not always consciously) less to a feminist program than to a broader agenda of socio-semiotic change in South Africa.

More specifically, True Love articulates many of the routine, trite, yet often representative uses black South African women make of goods, experiences, practices and beliefs while organizing their individual and collective identities and everyday lives. These pertain to changes in traditional, rural vs. modern, urban patterns and social positions concerning, for instance, rights of women, marital and sexual relationships, notions of sexuality, rites of courtship and
sexual attraction, the ‘nuclear’ vs. the traditional extended family, kinship relations, access to contemporary modes of household economy and household utility services (running water, sanitation, and electricity), new work options, careers and occupations, media options (such as public service broadcasting - radio and TV), patterns of reproduction and contraception, gendered roles within the family, the kitchen (as a concretized space in its own right), changing systems of provision and patterns of consumption (foods such as maize, potatoes, corn, eggs), procedures of food preparation, eating and drinking as social activities, changing physiognomies and uses of the body, body images and gestures, bodily attributes and deportment, standards of beauty, and more. These topicalities are negotiated both in a variety of magazine departments (editorial copy, feature articles, and/or regular columns) and in a wide range of advertisements.

Finally, an interesting question is begged here, namely, what makes the women mentioned above continue to read True Love, when they have the option of selecting any one of the variety of women’s magazines available in South Africa today? But the differences between magazines intended for black and white women in South Africa, the different motivations of their producers and readers, and the extent to which these differences are likely to be upheld, will have to wait for another article.

ENDNOTES

1 As noted in Norval (1996), the Wiehahn reforms were concerned primarily with “the status of urban blacks and their residence rights in ‘white’ urban areas” (Norval, 1996: 229). Committed to depoliticizing the economic order by claiming to support a liberal market economy that rejected the previous exclusion of the black/African workforce, the Wiehahn report advocated the inclusion, or ‘co-optation’ of the trade unions into a regulated framework based on premises of ‘labor democracy’ (the right to work, to free association, to collective bargaining, to strike, to protection and to development). The Rieckert Commission, by distinguishing between ‘urban insiders’ and ‘rural outsiders’, for the first time recognized the rights of a limited number of Africans to reside permanently in SA cities, and inadvertently initiated a set of urbanization strategies which ultimately came to undermine the territorial dimension of apartheid (see Davenport, 1989: 440-45 and Norval, 1996: 228-9).

2 Following Bourdieu (1984: 230-1 and passim; 1985: 724-34), my use of the term ‘middle-class’ refers here to the upwardly mobile lifestyle preferences and social practices manifested by increasing numbers of black South Africans who may not necessarily qualify statistically for admission to this socio-economic stratum. For although in terms of economic capital and/or production, many of those I would ascribe to South Africa’s black middle-class may best be classified as belonging to the working class or petit bourgeoisie, through many of the cultural practices they engage in they tend to affiliate themselves, and are in turn affiliated, with the relative sense of ease, respectability and belonging typically attributed to those occupying the middle position (situated, let’s say, between the working class and the upper class). In this sense, they conform to accepted views of the middle-classes as people who seek to distance themselves from necessity and basic material considerations as primary concerns, striving overtly for cultural capital (knowledge, culture and education) and social esteem...
Bourdieu, 1984 *passim*; Wilkes, 1990: 121), often manifesting a keen interest in style itself (Lury, 1996; Swartz, 1997), and at all times aspiring for ways of life that “speak of a world better than they have” (Wilkes, 1990: 128).

Even-Zohar’s notion of cultural interference suggests ways to account for discrepancies between recent ideological notions and specific cultural practices: it urges us to acknowledge the importance of accessing new social and cultural resources, and enables us to problematize received unilateral, often distorted views of cultural hegemony and social hierarchy. Moreover, it allows us to reassess the ambiguous standing of ‘white’ South African culture, which on the one hand provides a structural and aspirational yardstick for the social practices of South Africa’s black urban dwellers, while providing a no less significant point of departure for accessing new resources and generating new socio-cultural formations in which elements from indigenous, European, Asian, and African-American culture converge and undergo transformation.

They function as material goods on at least three different levels: (1) as products of the print industry; (2) as sites which advertise and promote the consumption of other commodities; and (3) as part of the cultural production of collective meanings in which they also construct a range of identity options for communities of individual readers.

On the relevance of historical gossip to the dynamic process of oral traditions in Africa, see Vansina (1985: 17), for a broader account of the dynamics of oral historical narrative in the changing environments and everyday lives of indigenous South Africans, see Hofmeyr (1993).

Kashane’s role as a multi-faceted cultural mediator is especially telling. In a 1992 interview with the present author, he recounted that he joined the magazine in 1979 as sports editor. Unlike previous editors of *Pace*, Lucas Molete and Vusi Khumalo, who were practising jazz musicians as well as journalists, Kashane had planned to be a professional soccer star, but took up journalism when a car accident put paid to his hopes for a sporting career. Interestingly, however, Kashane is at once a practising sangoma (diviner and traditional healer), who serves his ancestors in true African tradition, and a preacher at The Lion of Judah’s Apostolic Church in Soweto, where practising sangomas and imangas (herbalists) are allowed to hold key positions. Moreover, in keeping with the musical talents of *Pace’s* past editors, Kashane recently became a choir leader at the church, and earlier this year recorded an album of religious music entitled Masibambaneni, dedicated, under the banner of *Ditau Tsa Judah* (Lion of Judah) to the people of Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng who “have yet to see peace” (*Pace*, July 2000: 59). In this respect Kashane exemplifies some of the complexities entailed in the ways individual cultural agents are currently negotiating newly-composite social personas in the changing socio-cultural context of South Africa today.

**ENDNOTES**


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ISSUES OF RACE AND GENDER IN THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS, 1994-2000

FARHANA GOGA

After 1994, the new democratically elected African National Congress-led government passed legislation to effect changes in racial and gender profiles in the workplace. The Equity Act (1998) stipulated the steps and regulations to be implemented with regard to companies employing 50 or more staff. Prior to 1994, only two studies on personnel distribution within two different companies had been conducted (Manhando, 1994; Jackman, 1998). A national UNESCO-sponsored research project conducted by the Graduate Program for Cultural and Media Studies (CMS) examined 13 national media companies in the late 1990s (Goga, 2000).

Internationally, UNESCO has funded projects exploring the distribution of women in the media. These studies found that women are under-represented in decision-making positions and that they earn less than do men (Gallagher, 1981 & 1995; Joshi, 1987; UNESCO, 1987). The purpose of the project was to provide an understanding of the state of the media in the initial stage of transformation. It also assessed the daily professional experience of personnel employed within media institutions. This chapter presents a summary of the longer report. The research was conducted in consultation with the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) and other industry bodies.

The significance of this research within the framework of political economy relates to the issue of allocative and operational control within industries. Allocative control refers to the power to define overall control and goals, including policy, strategy, expansion and financial. Operational control refers to the effective use of the resources already allocated. Who gets to make which decisions relating to whom? (See Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 2001). Where do women and people of color fit into the picture and how does this distribution of staffers stratified by color and gender affect the way things are done? These issues are important as they relate to the media, which is regarded as a potent force in social, cultural and political terms given the potential impact of its messages and images. However, the extent and exact link between the social consciousness and the media is debatable (Gallagher, 1982). The distribution of staff within an organization is a crucial form of allocative control that intersects with the operational control element of how messages are portrayed. It is evident therefore that in any media organization the state, shareholders, staff and audience provide the constant changing context and struggle for different levels of control and meaning (Gallagher, 1982).
This research explores the changing nature of operational control as brought about through the new state and hence the policies of the organizations (allocative control). One can only speculate about audience reactions if change and transformation within the organizations are not evident in the output. The results provide insights into the demographic changes and struggles as well as the experiences of staff within this context of transformation and change.

Methodology

A questionnaire exploring the demographic and salary distribution of staff was sent to all 26 profit-making print and broadcasting organizations which were identified. Thirteen were completed and returned. The list of companies and their respective total number of staff follows. Except for the ones specifically mentioned, the organizations have branches in all 3 provinces: Kwa-Zulu Natal, Gauteng and the Cape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e-Tv</td>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>Independent Newspapers Natal</td>
<td>KZN</td>
<td>2712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail and Guardian New Africa/Sowetan</td>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Witness Penta Publishing</td>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsy, Son and Parker South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)</td>
<td>Cape</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times Media Ltd Umafrica</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>3324</td>
<td>South African Press Association (SAPA)</td>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kwa Zulu Natal</td>
<td>1571</td>
<td>Touchline Media</td>
<td>Cape</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = total number of employees

The data collection occurred between February 1999 and July 1999. Meetings with human resource managers highlighted the participatory nature of the research methodology, and our desire to work with, rather than against the media.²

Personal interviews were then conducted with members of staff (males and females of all races in management, journalism, administrative and technical positions). These were supposed to be volunteers from each organization, which granted permission, but more often than not, staff were told to attend the interview and did not really know what it was about. The aim of the interview was to explore the quotidian experiences of staff in terms of issues of gender and
racial sensitivity. The issues discussed through open-ended questions were: understanding of affirmative action; conditions of employment; allocation of assignments; relationships with managers and colleagues; and issues of harassment.

Following the completion of the report, gender sensitivity workshops, which took place from February to March 2000, in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town, with members of staff of the media, were conducted. The aim of these was to educate staff on gender issues and report back the findings. Further information was obtained from these.

Some limitations of the study must be declared. The size of the sample is limited to the thirteen organizations that responded. While this is fairly representative of the range of organizations in the industry, the study does not pretend to be exhaustive of this range. Secondly, as the fieldwork was carried out in 1999, some changes would have occurred within the respondent organizations since then. As companies provided the information requested by the questionnaire in various forms, no test for significance could be made. The information was used to generate graphs and observations made on these. The interviews were analyzed to explore common themes and areas of concern to staff.

Definitions

Race
Race is not a biological reality but rather an ideological mechanism used to construct and understand social relations. The concept has been (and continues to be) instrumental in establishing beliefs, attitudes and behavior in social relations, both between individuals and between countries (Miles, 1989:71). For the purposes of this study, the term, people of color shall be used to represent African blacks, Indians and coloreds, which were the categories used in the Apartheid era.

Gender
Whereas sex identifies the biological difference between men and women, gender identifies social relations between them. Embedded in gender and social relations are issues of dominance, power and rule. Gender is therefore a category of analysis, a social process and is relational. It enters and partly constitutes all other social relations and categories from which it cannot be separated, such as class, race and religion. (Flax, 1989; Malson et al, 1989; Mannathoko, 1990; Meena, 1992; Mbilinyi, 1992; Tsikata, 1992).

Equality
Equality is “both a goal and a means whereby individuals are accorded equal treatment under the law and equal opportunities to enjoy their rights and to develop their potential talents and skills” (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990:46). Equity is “treating people fairly as opposed to treating them equally, as if they had the same needs and background. It allows treating people unequally to obtain the
goal of fairness” (Hicks, 1997:24). In the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, the majority of blacks and women held jobs in the manual, unskilled and semi-skilled sectors of economy as a whole. In contrast, an over-representation of whites and males in white collar, managerial and professional occupations was found (Sikhosana, 1996). Cultural, institutional, behavioral and attitudinal discrimination denied rights to people of color in general and women in particular. These previously disadvantaged groups viewed equality as the realization of their rights (Manhando, 1994:108). The attempt to achieve this type of equality formed the basis of the Employment Equity Act. This Act is just one of many, which together constitutes the “employment law” (see Government Gazette, 19 October 1998, No. 19370, Act No. 55, 1998:8). The Act encompasses four items: the first (commission for employment equity) and the fourth (government procurement systems), deal with the overall operation of the Act. The second (unfair discrimination) and the third (affirmative action) deal with the specific objectives of the Act. The Act stipulates that people of color, women and the disabled should benefit from affirmative action laws.

Affirmative Action: The Concept

In South Africa, two stages of affirmative action were discernable. The first occurred in 1992. It was thus firmly located in the political transition from apartheid to democracy. Affirmative action is specifically geared to address past discrimination and is generally a part of transformation away from apartheid, poverty and exploitation towards a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic nation in which the socio-economic conditions of the majority, that is, black working women and men, are substantially transformed in a manner that is empowering (Schreiner, 1996:80).

De-racialization and equalization of economic opportunity would not automatically occur with the abolition of apartheid laws (Sikhosana, 1993). Thus, the redressing of past discrimination via social measures was considered necessary. The mindset of both blacks and whites had to be changed (Nkuthu, 1993). Hence, affirmative action was conceptualized as a way of bringing about a changing set of social relations in the transition to democracy.

Definitions of affirmative action by trade unions and management vary. Unions viewed affirmative action as a comprehensive strategy to overcome imbalances caused by apartheid and racism. As collective empowerment, the aim was to balance long-term deficits. In terms of this understanding, affirmative action needed to address wide-ranging goals of workplace equality rather than simply developing a small number of management trainees. Further, unions, unlike management, targeted gender as well as racial discrimination. In contrast, management considered affirmative action as any action undertaken specifically to overcome the results of past discriminatory practices (Albrecht and Hall, in Hugo, 1986:55), and as a process of “identifying, recruiting and promoting blacks (and less often women) into junior management positions” (Alperson, 1993a: 120). Thus, they focus on individual empowerment.
The UNESCO study (Goga, 2000) indicated that the general understanding was that affirmative action was about providing opportunities for previously disadvantaged people. Managerial and editorial staff focused on individual empowerment and were thus more in keeping with the ‘managerial’ viewpoint above. Journalists however focused on collective empowerment. They were thus more inclined to support the trade union definition of affirmative action.

The interviewees indicated different perceptions of who qualifies for affirmative action. Generally, white and older males suggested that it applied to race alone while females and younger males, both usually of color, insisted that it applied to both race and gender. People of color and women were accordingly identified as the beneficiaries.

All interviewees agreed that affirmative action was necessary.

A Brief Critique of the Concept

Affirmative action was criticized in theory and by some of the respondents for the following reasons: a) being a form of discrimination in reverse; b) having a quota system; c) having a negative impact on the free market system; c) ensuring the development on a middle and elitist class with no real upliftment for the general population (Human, 1993; Sikhosana, 1993; Singh, 1996). Specific to this study, respondents criticized affirmative action as e) affecting feelings of marginalization by Indians and coloreds; f) generating feelings of entitlement by blacks (as expressed by white male managers) and hence there was a need expressed to reassure whites of their jobs (Goga, 2000).

The benefits of affirmative action were that it: a) redresses past discrimination; b) combats structural racism; c) combats racial inequality; d) elevates the status of the perpetual underclass; and e) restores equal access to the benefits of society in general (Degenaar, 1980). These are not always clear or understood by staff within organizations.

Past research has shown that affirmative action is an effective way of addressing the imbalances of the past (Mandaza, 1996; Sikhosana, 1993; Straw, 1989). It does however, increase the class divisions through the establishment of a petty bourgeoisie within the targeted group. Affirmative action is therefore just one small step in the process towards addressing political, economic and social imbalances. As a process, it should be continuously examined, assessed/evaluated and modified on a general level, as well as in terms of its implications and reactions and should be expanded to include gender. With the government changes and policy, both allocative and operational control are brought into consideration, and changes and transformation affecting both occur within the organization.

An investigation into the effectiveness of affirmative action (as a form of transformation for operative and allocative control) needs to take quantitative and qualitative information into consideration. Two different viewpoints on this matter were extracted in this research, firstly that the implementation of affirmative action is effective and secondly, that it is not.
Evaluating Affirmative Action

If affirmative action is defined in terms of management, that is, in relation to policies and individual empowerment, it becomes an investigation into the overall distribution and the changes that have been made in each job category since 1994 and is working effectively. If affirmative action is defined in terms of trade unions and staff (usually other than managers), that is, in terms of overcoming imbalances, it becomes an investigation into economic power and operational and allocative control, and the outcome is that it is not working effectively. Affirmative action viewed in this light is effective.

Affirmative action is effective

Overall Distribution

Graph 1. The demographic distribution of media organizations in the research sample for all job categories was:

1.1 Race and Gender

There are more males of color than any other group in the sample.

![Race and Gender Distribution Graph]

1.2 Race

There are more people of color than whites in the industry.

![Race Distribution Graph]

These two results would appear to be reflective of the employed population in South Africa. The problem is in the present race and gender distribution across job categories, discussed below.
1.3 Gender

There are more males than females in the industry.

![Current Gender Distribution of Sample](chart)

If one examines the national figures that the country consists of 54% females, then there is an under-representation of women in the media industry, although managers may feel that women are doing “well”.

**Perceptions that affirmative action is effective**

Respondents who accepted a management view of affirmative action, and those who believed that they benefited from affirmative action, also believed that affirmative action was working in the South African media industry. Their emphasis was a focus on promotions. A white male editor stated that affirmative action was most effective in *top and senior management* positions rather than *middle management*, and offered the following explanation: Affirmative action has been implemented very effectively in various senior positions but there haven’t been a lot of middle management moves on affirmative action for a number of reasons: “government pressure on proprietors put black editors in charge...there aren’t a lot of senior highly qualified black journalists on the market, and those who are, have a damn good shot at those very senior positions.”

**Changes within each job category since 1994: quantitative data showing that affirmative action is effective**

A comparison between 1994 and 1999 race and gender distribution within each grade also provided evidence that the implementation of affirmative action was effective. The number of women and people of color increased in the higher grades, while the number of white males decreased, often due to retrenchment and emigration. The situation was also affected by some top and senior managers moving into consultancy positions. The consultants then returned to the companies in this new position. A more or less equal distribution in the category of skilled labor, showed a change from 1994.
Table 1: The grades are based on the Patterson scales and include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Job Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top and Senior Management</td>
<td>Executives, chairpersons/group managing directors, general managers, senior managers, editors-in-chief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(TSM)</td>
<td>Group Managers, engineers, production managers, managers, accountants, editors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Management (MM)</td>
<td>This was a specific category in some companies and refers to a new post to develop affirmative action appointees into the management stream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Management (JM)</td>
<td>Senior section leaders, foremen, senior technicians, artisans, bookkeepers, journalists, photographers, scanner operators, sub-editors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Labor</td>
<td>Section leaders, interns or trainees, receptionists, secretaries, drivers, junior clerks, filing clerks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi and Unskilled Labor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What follows is the change in distribution across race and gender within each job category since 1994.

Graph 2.1 Top and Senior Management
Between 1994 and 1999, there was a 9% reduction in the number of jobs held by white males in the 13 organizations that participated in the study. There was no real change in the employment of white women. A 4% increase in the number of jobs held by males of color occurred. In 1994, there were no females of color employed. In 1999, change occurred as females of color held 6% of the positions.
**Graph 2.2 Middle Management**

In 1999, white males held most jobs. This figure was however 12% less than that in 1994. There was a 4% increase in the number of jobs held by white women. The jobs held by males of color increased by 10%, whereas those held by females of color decreased by 2%. This decrease was due to the promotions to top and senior management.

**Graph 2.3 Junior Management**

A 10% decrease in the number of jobs held by white males occurred in 1999. A 5% reduction in those held by white females was noted. A 6% and 9% increase in those held by males and females of color respectively, is also evident. Reduction of white females in this category might have been due to promotion to middle management.

**Graph 2.4 Skilled Labor**

An 11% decrease in the number of jobs held by white males, a 2% reduction in those held by white females, and a 2% increase in those held by males of color occurred between 1994 and 1999. The above changes in this grade served to level the distribution between the groups.

In 1999, an increase of 11% in the number of jobs held by females of color occurred. The difference settled at 5% (as opposed to 15% to the next group in 1994) between them and the number of jobs held by the next two groups.
Graph 2.5 Semi and Unskilled Labor
The number of jobs held by males of color increased in 1999 by 7%, while those held by white males decreased by 9%. The number of jobs held by white females increased by 2%. The number of jobs held by females of color remained the same at 40%. It is possible that the decrease in white males was due to retrenchment.

Thus, statistically, from 1994 to 1999, it would appear that a slight change took place and that companies were implementing affirmative action. In particular, assuming that operational control rests at the level of management (top and senior, middle and junior), the race and gender distribution show an important shift at these levels since 1994.

**Affirmative Action is NOT Effective**
Evidence that affirmative action is not effective is noted in perceptions, salary distribution and the 1999 overall distribution within the industry across job categories. The country is populated by a majority of blacks and yet in the industry, whites dominant decision making powers, including operational and allocative control.

**Perceptions that Affirmative Action is not effective**
People who felt that affirmative action was NOT effective responded with anger, disillusionment and sadness. These included journalists and administrative staff of color. They acknowledged that the policy was in place but that in terms of them really benefiting, no real changes on personal or professional levels had come about. Women reported that women in senior positions were there as
"tokens". Interviewees suggested that policies were "words reduced to paper"; and journalists reported that no real changes were made to the editing of stories and content of the paper.

**Affirmative Action as Economic Power: Affirmative Action is not effective**

If affirmative action means spreading economic benefits, then it was not effective across both race and gender. In all categories except *semi and unskilled labor* and *junior management*, males earned about 11-12% more than females. In the category of *junior management* women earned more than did men.

**Table 2.1 Average Salaries in Rands by Gender And Grade in 1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TSM</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>JM</th>
<th>Skilled</th>
<th>Semi/Unskilled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>258 007</td>
<td>174 065</td>
<td>129 401</td>
<td>91 346</td>
<td>48 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>229 231</td>
<td>153 276</td>
<td>140 401</td>
<td>81 924</td>
<td>53 013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The poor representation of women in top positions and their relatively poor pay packages is an international trend. In general, women are regarded predominantly as wives and mothers and not breadwinners (Dyer, 1989; Gallagher, 1981; Gallagher, 1995; Hersch, 1993; Johnson, 1989; Joshi, 1987; Manhando, 1994; Smith *et al.*, 1989; UNESCO, 1987). Women earned more than did men in *semi and unskilled labor*. The highest paying job in that category (receptionists) was held predominantly by women. In South Africa, the emphasis was to redress race discrepancies rather than those of gender.

**Race**

The South African trend was that whites earned more than did people of color (POC). The data from the questionnaire revealed this, except for the new affirmative action positions of *junior management* for which the reverse was true.
Table 2.2 Average Salaries in Rands by Race And Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TSM</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>JM</th>
<th>Skilled</th>
<th>Semi/ Unskilled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>262 237</td>
<td>165 990</td>
<td>131 802</td>
<td>93 705</td>
<td>53 509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POC</td>
<td>237 933</td>
<td>163 256</td>
<td>143 663</td>
<td>82 083</td>
<td>50 388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites 10% more than POC</td>
<td>Whites 2% more than POC</td>
<td>POC 9% more than Whites</td>
<td>Whites 14% more than POC</td>
<td>Whites 6% more than POC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The highest discrepancy was in skilled labor, with whites earning 14% more than people of color. The lowest discrepancy was in middle management; here, whites earned 2% more than did people of color.

Generally, whites earned more than people of color and males earned more than females. The salary discrepancy in terms of race was less than of gender. Perhaps in the context of affirmative action, there was more pressure on companies in relation to redressing racial imbalances rather than those of gender. In addition, in junior management positions, people of color and women earned more. Junior Management was a new category for creating well-paid affirmative action positions. It also sought to ensure that these individuals remained with the company.

There was a slight increase in the number of women and people of color in the higher job categories within the industry. This took the form of shifts, in terms of employment within and between the job categories in the company, with a general decrease of white male employees, possibly due to retrenchment. This was a reflection of companies’ attempts to address the past imbalances. The resultant debate was how staffers experienced these changes and whether companies focussed on gender, race or both. The establishment of the new positions was in keeping with the belief, by management, and hence through issues of allocative control, that affirmative action is a process of “identifying, recruiting, training and promoting an individual into a junior management position” (Alpser, 1993a: 120). Ultimately however, the real issue of control rests with people in higher positions, where the status and distribution, although changed, may not be of a significant level for them and the company to feel an impact. This discrepancy of operational power and the subsequent experience of staff as being disillusioned may be further explored through the analysis of distribution across job categories.

**Distribution of Power: quantitative evidence that Affirmative Action is not effective**

Trade Unions and Schreiner (1996) defined affirmative action implementation as collective empowerment. Empirically, the best reflection of power is through the analysis of job categorization. This section investigates the distribution of each group across sectors/grades of the industry.
In a study on women broadcasters and affirmative action at the SABC in the early 1990s, Susan Manhando (1994) found that the SABC was not reflective of demographic distribution (in terms of race and gender) of the population as a whole. Through interviews conducted with staff, she found that discrimination based on race and gender existed. While men held most senior positions, white women were in those few posts held by women. In general, promotion of women referred to white women, and women had to work twice as hard as men to show that they could do the job.

A study on women journalists and career advancement at Independent Newspapers in Durban between 1994 and 1998 found that more males, especially white males, than females were employed in top and senior positions (Jackman, 1998). Treatment of leaders differed based on gender. Women had to work harder than did men in the same positions. Staff felt that the affirmative action policy merely played lip service to women and was not effective in ensuring real change. Racial issues dominated gender issues, and interviewees observed that affirmative action applied specifically to black men.

**Graph 3.1 Distribution of Race and Gender by Grade - 1999**

More males of color, than any other group, were employed in the media industry. The distribution across grade however, shows that most white males (38%) held top and senior management positions. Most males of color (36%) worked as semi and unskilled labor. An approximately even number of white females and females of color were employed, however, 45% of females of color held semi and unskilled jobs. White females were equally concentrated among middle management, junior management and skilled labor.
Graph 3.2. Distribution of Race by Grade in 1999
The semi/unskilled sector employed 40% of the total number of people of color, and 6% of the total number of whites in the industry. Whites were concentrated in the top and senior management positions. More people of color than whites were employed as skilled laborers. Thus, whites dominated the higher categories in the industry and people of color, the lower ones.

Graph 3.3. Distribution of Gender by Grade in 1999
Males were concentrated in top and senior management and middle management positions, with a steady and gradual reduction of the number of males in the lower grades. The opposite was true for females who were concentrated in the lower grades with a gradual decrease to top and senior management.

The race and gender distribution and general trends reflect the historical legacy of the country. Some groups (Indians, coloreds and Africans) were excluded (strategically and structurally) from job mobility and thus from being able to advance within the corporate structure (Innes, 1993; Kraak, 1996; Sikhosana, 1993). This occurred via legislation to inhibit economic growth, including ownership and access to facilities of certain groups, making it very difficult for blacks, in particular, to penetrate the centers of power in this country. This also explains the salary discrimination in terms of race (Innes, 1993; Kraak, 1996;

**Summary: Evaluating Affirmative Action**

People of color predominated in media industry employment, of which 42% were women. A comparison between 1994 and 1999 reveals that race and gender distributions within each grade began to change. However, in examining the distribution (race and gender, race, gender) across grades, the experiences of staff and the economic distribution, the conclusion drawn would be that affirmative action was not working. Furthermore, it was not effective as inequality persisted in the power relations. Even if one examined the new junior management positions, white males continued to dominate.

Management nevertheless suggested that the implementation of affirmative action was effective, while journalists and administrative staff generally felt that it was “window dressing”. Thus, although change is being made on an allocative level, in terms of policies, this appears to be controlled, without any real change being made at the level of operational control, leading staff to feel disillusioned. The results of the slow change and its subsequent effect is seen through the informal discrimination that occurs. Hence, while some policies are in place, the experience of staff does not always concur with them, as managers would intend.
Possibilities for Informal Discrimination

Some of the concerns and experiences of staff at the time of the interviews and workshops (which took place from February – March 2000) are as follows:

Obstacles for women

- Women expressed that they experienced a lack of opportunity: they felt that they did not receive the same training as men did for leadership positions.
- The organization was male dominated with a male corporate culture, which informally hindered the advancement of women.
- Women had to work harder than men did for the same recognition.
- Women were undermined, usually by men, when they were in management positions, as they were not taken seriously.
- Biological, social and maternal constraints, that is, the multiple roles that women play and responsibilities that they have were not accommodated within the industry.
- Job allocation, where certain jobs were seen to be best suited to certain sexes and women do not apply for the ‘male’ jobs, example, editor-in-chief.

Sexual harassment

An under-reporting of sexual harassment was found. In keeping with international research, the interviews revealed that members of staff within the organization and across all levels were not always aware of what constitutes sexual harassment.

The allocation of assignments

Journalists complained that editors allocated assignments based on culture/language. Blacks reported that they have to report on their own communities, the broader community and have to help whites in black communities, and often whites were not assigned to black communities. Black journalists argued that this ensured continuation of stereotypes.

Black staff reported that when white staffers were sent into areas considered dangerous, they were in constant contact with the company, while black staff did not experience the same level of communication.

Although the allocation of assignments based on gender was not an issue in terms of the interviewees, it was brought up at a workshop. A colored female journalist, who was then supported by a black female journalist, stated that there was a discrepancy based on gender. She stated that women were given “softer” stories and were not taken seriously when they discussed politics and wanted to explore stories in that field. The black journalist also stated that when it was a high profile job, women were not allocated the assignment. To illustrate the point, she said that when she had to report on funerals of important people she was sent to the memorial service, but at the actual funerals, when there were dignitaries, a man was sent.
They both also stated that when papers had a woman’s section, topical issues such as the Domestic Violence Act were not addressed. Rather, there was a concentration on hair, makeup and recipes, which trivialized women and their role in society. Only females were expected to write stories relating to women.

**Relationships in the organization**

Our respondents argued that tension results within firms as staff did not understand the different cultures in the organization and often treated each other with unintentional disrespect. Men complained that although they wished to take a greater responsibility at home and in their children’s lives, they could not as they were not afforded the time and opportunity by their employment contracts.

**Problems experienced by Unions**

There was a general commitment by unions to improve working conditions of staff. Union representatives however, found a lack of time to attend to union matters. Furthermore, while they were committed to training, they feared that demands on companies to increase training would mean that they, the unions, lost out on the skills as the member progressed. Staff who were not aware of these dilemmas stated that unions were not doing enough to improve the conditions and transformation in the organization for individual staff.

**Training**

Training was identified as an important issue in transformation as it provides the opportunity for staff to develop. It would therefore help staff to be prepared for promotion and hence be more effective once they are promoted. Policies need to be in place, which both allow training and offer guidelines for the subsequent development and movement of staff within the organization. Three levels of training were identified: general training; training for affirmative action appointees and tertiary education. Regarding general training, staff stated that when they did receive training, they were not promoted and were told that they lacked experience.

**Training of affirmative action appointees**

Training was important in affirmative action to level the playing fields and to redress the past discrimination in terms of access to education. It was also a way to educate staff about their changing environment.

Generally, journalists and administrative staff did not think that training was working, nor that it was done for the benefit of the individual and the group. Management, in contrast, saw no difficulties.

A black journalist at a workshop also stated that affirmative action appointees who were groomed and now were quite successful were also reluctant to train new people.
Training and Tertiary education

Regarding tertiary education, there was a discrepancy in the education offered and the demands of the job. Women reported that they should be trained on what to expect from a male dominated environment, and also how to deal with being in this environment. Based on these concerns, several issues were identified for priority attention by the industry.

Training is a dynamic situation that provides an example of the interaction between all levels of control that affects organizations and people. It illustrates the link between the state and included in this, education, operational and allocative control. It is a point where effective changes can be made, through the establishment of laws, the acknowledgement of the role of education in a developing country, policies within the organization and the promotion of staff to fulfil the changing needs in both the media sector and wider society.

Conclusion

The full report offers organizations some ideas on how to take these findings forward within their organization.

This research attempted to answer some of the questions around race, gender and equality in the process of transformation in the South African media industry. The specific focus was on the demographic representation of groups in the industry and different job categories, training, benefits and salaries, allocation of assignments, treatment by management and issues of sexual harassment and discrimination. Differences in the demographic distribution and salaries existed. Racial and gender differences existed, as did differences in the attitudes towards training, job allocation and treatment.

Very little had changed after the studies by Manhando (1994) and Jackman (1998). The ‘glass ceiling effect’ continued. Redressing of race discrimination received greater preference than that of gender discrimination, with affirmative action perceived mainly as applying to black males. The disregard for the multiple roles that women play at home and in the workplace and for the more active roles that some men wish to play in the home continued. Coloureds and Indians continued to feel marginalized. Salary discrimination based on race and gender continued.

Apartheid laws and their residual effects may explain racial discrepancies, while social practices, attitudes and beliefs may explain gender discrimination. Within companies, managers tend to think and evaluate affirmative action implementation more in terms of the institution, and they focus on policies and overall development. As a way of evaluating policy implementation, staff, however, focus on their individual achievement, advancement, recognition within the institution and on the content produced.

Thus, if changes in overall political-economic structures are to be effected, then it is necessary to relate intra-institutional structures, experiences and practices to previously imposed external structuration.
ENDNOTES
The research was conducted between January 1999 and June 2000. The research team consisted of: Keyan G. Tomaselli and Ruth Teer-Tomaselli as project leaders; Farhana Goga as research manager and researcher; and Anthea Simoes as research assistant.

From the outset, the CMS research team aimed to secure the voluntary co-operation of the industry and its professional bodies as a means of catalysing change from within the industry.

REFERENCES


Chapter 12

WHO IS THE ‘COMMUNITY’ IN COMMUNITY RADIO: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL.

RUTH TEER-TOMASELLI

The major objectives of community radio are to “encourage widespread community participation in broadcasting, provide an opportunity for horizontal communication between individuals and groups in the community, stimulate more free and open debate of community issues and reflect the cultural and social diversity of the community” (White, 1990:4). Taken together, these are onerous aspirations, and few community radio stations worldwide have been able to achieve them in their entirety. The present chapter focuses on three community radio stations in the greater Durban and Pietermaritzburg metropolitan regions of KwaZulu-Natal: Radio Kwezi; Durban Youth Radio and Radio Phoenix. Radio Kwezi is located at the KwaSizabantu Lutheran Mission, Kranzkop, and broadcasts in Zulu, English and German. Most of the 82,000 audience are adherents of various shades of Christian Protestant faith. Durban Youth Radio, based on the campus of the University of Natal in Durban, boasts an audience of between 84,000 and 100,000, depending on different audience measurement readings through the period 1999-2000. The listenership is made up of both university students and youth within the neighboring areas, particularly the Cato Manor-Chesterville complex. Finally, Radio Phoenix, situated in Newslands East with an estimated audience of about 111,000 listeners, focusses on the needs of people of Indian origin within the Greater Durban area. The material for the project was gathered between 1999 and 2000, and changes in all three stations have already occurred. However, the purpose of the research is the exploration of the linkages between the stations and their relevant ‘communities’, and while the precise empirical details may change, the general theoretical understandings remain in place. Against the background of a critical outline of what is expected in the ‘ideal type’ of community radio broadcasting, the material will be organized in a thematic series of comparative analyses, covering areas of

- ethos, representativity and governance;
- staffing and institutional organization;
- programming production and community participation; and
- funding and sustainability.

The ultimate purpose of the project is to explore the radio stations’ relation to,
and representation of, the audiences they define as their communities. This community is seen by the station as a coherent body of listeners, donors and potential Board members. Definitions and abstractions of who precisely makes up the imagined construct labeled 'community' are notoriously difficult to pin down, and in part, this paper is a consideration of the process of identifying the 'community' in the phrase 'community radio'.

The identification of an abstract listening community is more concretely expressed as a perception of the radio stations’ audiences, expressed in a complex configuration of demographics: age, language, locality, aesthetic and musical taste, consumer buying power. The theoretical, and often philosophical, position taken by advocates of community radio as a mechanism of participatory media interaction will be examined and critiqued in the light of empirical experiences within the three radio stations under examination. Towards this end, research was undertaken to explore the structure and ethos of the stations and to begin to identify some of the dynamics operating in each. While all three are licensed as 'community radio stations', there are a number of key differences in the way they operate, as well as elements which are remarkably similar. The research was conducted by three Masters candidates - two of whom have subsequently been awarded their degrees - and written up by the principal researcher, who will take this project forward.

What do we Mean by Community Radio?
The definition of community radio provides a conceptual frame for characteristics used to describe the 'ideal type' of community radio, as well as an explanatory model of actual, empirical examples of community radios internationally. The two serve as the context within which the case studies in question can be examined.

Community radio is usually considered complementary to traditional media operations and as a participatory model for media management and production. Community radio stations are tasked with the provision of local programming and the encouragement of maximum participation by the community in this programming, as well as in the ownership, management, and control of the radio station (see White, R., 1990; White, S., 1994; IBA, 1997; Booth & Lewis, 1998). In reviewing the state of international media in the face of the challenge posed by globalization and the 'new technologies', UNESCO's World Communication Report notes that the extension of large-scale media, concentrated in ever-fewer hands, has done much to reduce the diversity of information and the access to expressive opportunities (UNESCO, 1997). In the light of this, localized, community-based media, take on greater importance in the fostering of a culture of civic responsibility and empowerment. The word 'community' in this sense is used in its geographical and sociological sense, designating the basic unit for horizontal social organization. Community radio stations are designed to encourage participation by a large representative sample of the various socio-economic levels, organizations and minority groups within a given community (UNESCO, 1997:148).
Community radio is one such localized initiative, and much is made of the empowerment and democratic potential of community radio. The UNESCO document states that the purpose of community radio stations is to facilitate the free flow of information by encouraging freedom of speech, and by enhancing dialogue within the communities concerned in order to promote better participation by their populations (UNESCO, 1997:147). The South African NGO concerned with networking and support for community radios, the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF), has stated that “Community media emerged as the voice of the oppressed and played a significant role in informing and mobilizing communities, at grassroots level, against apartheid” (NCRF, 1999:2). Other theorists make even stronger claims. Indeed, Michel Delorme (1990:3), past President of the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC), states that community radio is neither the expression of political power nor the expression of capital. It is the expression of the population. It is a third voice between state radio and private commercial radio. Community radio is an act of participation in the process of community creation.

These definitions have strong normative and idealist overtones to them. In assessing whether real-life community radio stations fulfil their participatory, democratizing potential, the researcher is faced with a dual problem:

- the relationships with the ‘community’ from which they supposedly spring, and which they represent on air, are oft-times tenuous and contradictory;
- and secondly, their style of operation, in terms of civic responsibility, financial responsibility, staffing and technical capacity, frequently is unstable.

**History of Community Radio in South Africa**

The history of community radio in South Africa originated in the grassroots politics of the political and cultural struggle of the 1980s. The prevalent ‘paradigm’ in the internal liberation movement, the United Democratic Front, was that of the ‘community’, with its street committees and community based structures. Community media in general was seen as a potential for the ‘voice of the oppressed’ to play a ‘significant role in informing and mobilizing communities against apartheid’ (NCRF, 1999). At a discursive level at least, this fitted well with the international concept of community radio as amplified by organizations such as the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC), to which members of the ANC in exile had been exposed. Organizations as diverse as the Film and Allied Workers Organization (FAWO, now Open Window Network), South African Students’ Press Unions (SASPU), Congress of South African trade Union (COSATU), The Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA), South African National Civic Organization (SANCO) and the like, played a key role in contributing to the debate on the of future broadcast policy in the heady days of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Rama and Louw, 1993). A particularly important marker in this
campaign was the ‘Jubulani! Freedom of the Airwaves’ Conference hosted by Radio Freedom (the ANC radio in exile) and the Dutch group ‘Omroep van Radio Freedom’, held in Doorn, Netherlands, August 1991 (Jabulani 1991). At this conference, the most important outlines of the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act were conceptualized. The Conference recommendations, which are echoed in the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (No. 153 of 1993) made provision for a three tier broadcasting system:

- Public Service broadcasting
- Commercial broadcasting
- Community broadcasting.

Following the post-apartheid government of 1994, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) was established with the purpose of regulating broadcasting in the public interest, ensuring fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing South African society. The historic ‘Community Media 2000’ conference was convened in Cape Town in May 1995, in order to launch the NCRF. The conference took the position that ‘freedom of expression’ would not be realized by the majority of South Africans unless concrete steps were taken to redress the imbalances many communities had in relation to access to the media. Since that year, the NCRF has established itself as an important focus of the community media sector. The IBA issued the first temporary one year licences in 1997. These licences have been renewed twice since, and the first full-time four-year licenses were due to be issued in the course of the year 2001 or 2002.

Quoting from the IBA Act, the Authority’s Position Paper on Four Year Licenses for Community Sound Broadcasting Services (IBA, 1997), a community broadcasting service is defined as one which

- is fully controlled by a non-profit entity and carried on for non-profit purposes;
- serves a particular community;
- encourages members of the community served by it or persons associated with or promoting the interests of such community to participate in the selection and provision of programs to be broadcast in the course of such broadcasting service; and
- may be funded by donations, grants, sponsorships, advertising or membership fees, or by any combination of the aforementioned.

Again, the definitions provided are empirically slippy, not to say tautologous, since they propose that a community radio station is one which serves a particular community, while begging the question of what constitutes a community. In attempting to give some clarity on the latter point, the Act further provides for a community broadcasting service to cater either for a geographic community, or a community of interest. In a geographic community, the broadcasting service caters to persons or a community whose commonality is
determined principally by their residing in a particular geographic area. With respect to a community of interest, the test is that the community served has a specific ascertainable common interest, and its common interest is the distinctive feature of this kind of broadcasting service. ‘Common interest’ in this sense is relatively narrow, and the Act makes provision for three types of community of interest radio stations: those which serve ‘Institutional communities’, ‘religious communities’, and ‘cultural communities’. An institutional community is primarily designed to meet the needs of persons directly associated with an institution of learning, labor or indeed, any other institutional formations. Religious community stations cater for the religious needs of a specific community whose common interest is based on a religion or belief. The final type of community of interest station, the cultural community station, is designed to meet the cultural needs of a defined ‘community group’.

The three radio stations surveyed in the present study are all ‘community of interest’ stations, rather than geographic community radio stations. **Durban Youth Radio** is a campus radio station, classified as an ‘institutional community’; **Radio Phoenix** is a ‘cultural community’ station, identified as serving the greater Durban community of South Africans of Indian descent; while **Radio Khwezi** is a religious radio station, run under the auspices of the Lutheran Church in South Africa.

**Durban Case Study**

**Durban Youth Radio**¹ (DYR) is a community of interest station with the legal persona of a project of the students of the University of Natal, Durban campus (UND). It is run under the auspices of the Student Representative Council and is subject to the control of the university (*DYR Constitution*, 1998a). The radio station has also forged a number of nascent partnerships with surrounding communities, and sees itself as serving the interests of these communities. The station emerged as a student project in 1991, but first broadcast on the 6th October, 1995. In terms of the application lodged with the IBA, the station described itself as a community broadcasting [station] developed into a tool for community development, DYR positioned itself as a radio for youth empowerment and entertainment for communities of the greater Durban metro area. (*DYR Licence Application, 98/99, 1998b:1*). The station broadcasts 18 hours a day, Tuesday to Thursday, from 06h00 to 24h00, while from Friday to Monday the station operates 24 hours. It is currently broadcasting on its third successive one-year licence, pending the granting of a four year licence by the independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) later in the year 2000.

From its inception, there has been an unstated ambiguity about who is considered as the core ‘community’ for DYR. Although its IBA application stated that DYR would be a student project, in the three years of broadcast it has functioned as radio station for off-campus youth, with very little interaction with
UND students. In a recent strategic planning exercise, the emphasis has moved from the external community to an internal (student) community. The station’s core target audience is the youth of Durban between the ages of 16 and 24 years of age, although it picks up on a peripheral audience in the 24 and 35 age bracket. The target group’s Living Standards Measurement\(^2\) is 4, 5 and 6. The Radio Audience Measurement Survey (RAMS)\(^3\) for June-September, 1999 stipulates an average audience for DYR of 84,000 per week. A “rough demographic breakdown of its listeners reflects an audience that is 80 percent African, 15 percent ‘coloured’, 4 percent Indian and 1 percent white” (Mayoni, 1998:1). These figures indicate that the audience reflects the external township ‘communities’ more closely than they do the demographics of the university student population, indicating that of the two competing ‘sectors’ of the audience, the external listenership is the greater.

Radio Phoenix\(^4\) is a community broadcasting station founded in mid-1996 by Francis Naidoo, who began broadcasting illegally from his home in the Phoenix area. Despite being closed as a pirate station, the interest in the concept of a radio station in which the listeners were involved as producers was aroused among the residents of Phoenix. Taking advantage of the moment in which the concept of ‘community radio’ was being popularised, Naidoo advocated for the formal establishment of the service. The IBA required, as part of its licensing procedure, that a general meeting be convened, which would democratically elect a governing board for the aspirant station. When this meeting was held, a vote of ‘no confidence’ was recorded against Francis Naidoo, although some of his organizing team were among the final nine members of the Steering Committee mandated with the task of applying for a broadcast licence. Mr Dinesh Maharaj was elected chairman, a portfolio he holds to the time of writing in April, 2000.

Despite being established with the objective of serving a geographic community, i.e. Phoenix, Radio Phoenix was granted a ‘community of interest’ license. Although it continued to target mainly the residents of ‘Phoenix’, the station was relocated to Newlands East. The reception area extends 50 kilometres from Newlands, from Stanger in the north to Umkomaas in the south. The Radio Phoenix community is made up of the South African ‘Indian Community’, i.e. South Africans of Indian descent. Most of the listenership live in traditionally ‘Indian areas’ as defined under the now defunct Group Areas Act, such as Chatsworth, Phoenix, Reservoir Hills and Isipingo. The major home language is English, although there is a strong affiliation to the culture, particularly the musical culture, inherited from earlier generations, which is arranged around the Indian languages of Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, Telegu and Urdu. The RAMS measured listenership for June to September 1999 was 111,000 per week, the
highest recorded audience among all the community stations in KwaZulu-Natal SAARF, 1999).

Initially the station was permitted to broadcast from 04h30 to 21h00. The first broadcast was on the 5th April, 1996, from 18h00 to 21h00, which was gradually increased by stages, until after about a year of broadcasting, it was able to broadcast on a 24 hour a day basis.

Radio Khwezi\(^5\) began life through the vision of a single person, the Reverend P. Stephen, whose first project was to broadcast a series of sermons over Radio Pulpit and other religious broadcasters. With the inception of the IBA, Reverend Stephen applied for a licence under the auspices of the KwaSizabantu Lutheran Mission, Kranzkop. As the station is classified as a ‘religious broadcaster’, the licence was granted as a ‘community of interest’. The first transmission was aired on September 2, 1995. The languages broadcast are English, Zulu, Afrikaans and German. The use of German reflects the Lutheran Mission background to the station, and is the result of a substantial number of German immigrants settling the area around Greytown from 1848 onwards.

Radio Khwezi now broadcasts over two 10 Kw transmitters, on FM bandwidth 90.5 MHZ from Greytown, with an additional Sentech 1 Kw booster at Eshowe on FM 107.7 Mz. For the past four years, these two frequencies have reached 14 major rural towns, and the station’s slogan: “The heart of the KwaZulu-Natal beats at 90.5 and 107.7 FM” is well known in the region. The RAMS measured listenership for the period June-September, 1999 was 82,000 per week (SAARF, 1999).

Governance, Management and Staffing

Control and material support for Durban Youth Radio’s activities resides with the University of Natal. The Board of Control, is a committee of the University and is responsible to the University for the proper management of DYR. The Board, is responsible for overseeing the expenditures of the station, and the Station Manager’s performance of his/her duties, and for the continued viability of the station, which, according to a University directive, needs to be self-supporting. At the present time, the entire structure of governance and Constitution of the station is under revision. The account which follows is a reflection of the present situation, which may well change in its details in time. Eighty percent of the Board members are from the University, while 20% are from the outside community into which DYR broadcasts, selected from a broad Stakeholder’s Forum. The Board meets once every month to consider all matters relating to the running of DYR.

The ‘worker’s committee’ makes up the second level in the DYR management which is responsible for the daily running of the station, and consists of 10 members under the leadership of the Station Manager. Each person has a particular portfolio; news, publicity, educational programming, advertising and
sales, and so on. The structure of this second level reflects the genesis of the station as a ‘club’ under the auspices of the Student’s Representative Council. Volunteers are referred to as ‘members’, and a membership fee is stipulated in the constitution, though in practice it is not paid, and the management committee, referred to as a ‘Worker’s committee’, is elected at the Annual General Meeting of the station. Members of the committee can hold office for a period of one year, and are eligible for re-election.

The **Durban Youth Radio** management structure is completed by a Stakeholder’s Forum and a Disciplinary Committee, once again illustrating its hybrid nature as both a ‘community’ and a ‘student’ structure. The Stakeholder’s Forum is convened annually, and this acts as an annual general meeting. Along with members of the public, designated community based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs are represented at the meeting, although it is presently unclear to the researchers whether these groups have any particular privileges or responsibilities.

**Durban Youth Radio** is currently staffed by 50 community volunteers, 35 of whom are men. This corps of volunteers is responsible for DYR’s abundance of daily activities, chief of which are programming, presentation, production, research and general listener service. Some of the station’s volunteers work as ‘stringers’ who provide information and news to the station. The station is in the process of recruiting more ‘stringers’ from different localities within its footprint. Advertising sales are becoming an important part of this portfolio, as will be elaborated on later in this paper. Most of the volunteers come from the communities into which the station broadcasts, rather than from the University itself, although this situation has changed somewhat in the year 2000. Until 1999, a tiny minority of volunteers were media students from UND and surrounding tertiary institutions.

The Station Manager holds the only post which is paid a salary. None of the volunteers are paid a wage, but are provided with stipends or reimbursements to cover travelling and meal allowances. There is also a 20 percent incentive for the newly formed marketing team, whose responsibility it is to increase the station’s revenue by tapping into potential local revenue sources.

**Radio Phoenix** management structures are headed by a Board of Directors, which is the pre-eminent level within community radio, and the chairperson is the nominal head of the station. In **Radio Phoenix**, the Chair has been occupied by the same person since the station’s inception. The management committee, headed by the station manager and made up of a Programs and Advertising Manager, is answerable to the Board.

At its inception, the station comprised of 15 voluntary presenters, one paid receptionist, a technician and the ‘steering committee’. At the time of establishment, the primary aim of the station was to remain on air, and its secondary objective was to broadcast informational and educational programs. Since the presenters were unskilled in the field of broadcasting, it was a learning curve for all of them. Today the station boasts more than 40 voluntary presenters, a ‘management committee’ of seven people, and a Board of Directors.
The recruitment process for a job as a voluntary presenter or producer starts with the advertising of the vacancy by the Board members through the medium of the radio itself, as well as by word of mouth. Interested applicants send their curriculum vitae and a demo tape, following which a short list is drawn up, and the management committee interviews the applicant.

Based on a questionnaire administered in 1999, the organizational culture of the station is best characterized as a ‘clan culture’, in which the commitment of organizational members is ensured through participation and organizational cohesiveness. Personal satisfaction, and a sense of community service, are rated more highly than financial or market share objectives. Volunteers within the station vouch for the ethos in which “everyone is like a big family, and the relationship between the managers and the subordinates is like a parental one” (Kaihar, 1999). Radio Phoenix is characterized by a participatory /democratic style of leadership, with a distinctly horizontal management ethos. This is reflected in the amount of freedom given to the presenters to use their creative abilities and strengths to produce their shows in a distinct style. According to those who work there, the management follows a hands-off approach, prescribing only general guidelines for what is acceptable and what is not. Motivation towards presenters is generally in the form of encouragement, the highest order of which is to promote them to ‘prime time slots’, or by increasing their amount of airtime. Management is receptive to suggestions emanating from producers and presenters, and incorporates these into the station workings. Meetings between the management committee, the Board of Directors and the staff are held at regular intervals of six to eight weeks, a frequency which is dictated by the fact that presenters are drawn from all over the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

At Radio Khwezi, the Board of Directors is made up of missionary staff and people drawn from the surrounding listener-community. As with the other two stations, the Board meets approximately once a month. Radio Khwezi has the widest volunteer base, with approximately 150 volunteers who push knobs, wind reels, catalogue CD’s and make programs. Management procedures include regular departmental staff meetings, covering all aspects of station operation, from marketing to audience penetration and program development, and are held four days a week. On Monday the station management meet to analyze and discuss general issues. Program controllers (editors) meet on Tuesdays, while Wednesday morning is reserved for a general staff meeting with prayers and devotions. The Afrikaans language department meets on Thursday, while other language producers (English, German and Zulu)

Assessment of the Workings of the Stations in the Case-study
The survey of Durban Youth Radio presents a more stable picture than is actually the case. Over the three years of operation, numerous disruptions within the volunteer workforce have taken place, and these need to be fully investigated in order to be able to assess whether they are incidental, or endemic, to the structural organization of the station. At the root of the problems (which include financial mismanagement, personal enrichment and inter-personal aggression),
appears to be the lack of a culture of commitment to a community good, while at the same time, the unpaid status of the workers makes the enforcement of corporate discipline difficult. Since the volunteers for the most part are not students, the Disciplinary Committee has little jurisdiction over them, and the rules of the station are difficult to enforce.

The relatively horizontal system management which marks out Radio Phoenix is able to work because of the tight-knit structure of the community served by the radio station. ‘Feedback’ is plentiful: listeners are quick to respond by both telephone and mail to aspects of the radio station which they wish to praise or criticize. As is common with all phone-in responses, criticism makes up the majority of non-solicited responses to the radio station, while praise frequently comes in the form of requests for certain musical tracks to be played for friends or family, a popular form of interaction called dedications. The radio station also has a strong relationship with community and national newspapers serving the South African Indian community. Following this line of argument, an area for further investigation would need to be whether the listener-community of Radio Phoenix is more ‘cohesive’ than that of Durban Youth Radio. In the latter station, listener response appears to be confined to requests for specific music pieces and very little feedback is received in terms of news or educational programs, for instance.

The radio station which shows the greatest degree of order appears to be Radio Khwezi, a circumstance which may be attributed to the missionary ethos of the station. While it is true that the managerial staff are not paid a ‘salary’, they do receive a stipend from the mission, and most of the managerial staff live on the premises, and are integrated into the inner-community life of a larger mission project: the children attend pre-primary school within the compound, daily facilities such as a clinic and convenience shop are provided, all of which add up to a cohesive sense of ‘belonging’. This is further enhanced by the informal but strong practice of discipline and commitment evidenced in the daily management meetings, and business-like approach to broadcasting.

Funding for Community Radio
Community radios are non-profit broadcasting institutions which survive financially through donations, grants, sponsorships and advertising. The Independent Broadcasting Authority stipulates that the financial requirements with which a community radio station must comply are that it: must prove to have sufficient funds in hand to enable it to operate for at least three months after it has come on air. It must also have evidence that:

- further funds would be forthcoming to enable it to survive for a further three months;
- it has to remain the object of interest to the community; and
- it intends to apply its profits (if any) back into the community.

The latter provision envisages that surplus funds generated from the radio station,
above and above the capital reinvested into the station, be used for community projects. So far, this has not materialized in any of the stations surveyed in this paper; indeed, the communities supporting them act as net donors rather than recipients.

The University of Natal is no longer the main funder of Durban Youth Radio, at least not in a direct sense, although it is responsible for the radio station’s assets. The most important source of funding has been advertising revenue raised through the national sales of Studentwise, an organization which sells airtime on campus radios across the country. More recently, the percentage of local sales through the establishment of the newly formed marketing team.

Advertising is also the main source of income for Radio Phoenix, but the station faces many problems in getting large organizations to advertise. As a direct result of being granted a license as a ‘community of interest’ broadcaster, and not a ‘geographic broadcaster’, the management of Radio Phoenix feels that the station is at a disadvantage, arguing that advertising is not easy to sell when the audience is as dispersed as that of Radio Phoenix. The station does accept donations, but finds it difficult to raise large amounts of money. Some music-driven programs, particularly those over weekends, are sponsored. A third line of financing is fund-raising activities, including fee-charging events at dance clubs, although the money raised from these activities is minimal.

Radio Khwezi also sells advertising as its primary source of income. As with the other two stations surveyed, the money raised in this way is insufficient for the station’s needs. A substantial (although undisclosed) portion of the income is sourced directly through the Lutheran Mission. All three stations are in a precarious financial position. All face the difficulty of attempting to be financially self-sufficient, which demands the sale of advertising space, which in turn demands the availability of audiences with strong consumer power. This is difficult, and indeed may be inimical, to their role as community broadcasters providing a service to their identified constituency. A further difficulty arises from the small absolute size of the audiences. In order to overcome this problem, a number of agencies have been established which amalgamate audiences from various stations, and sell them en masse to national advertisers. Studentwise, employed by Durban Youth Radio, is one such agency, and Network Radio Service is another. However, without some form of donations, or some institution to support the infrastructural needs of the station, it is difficult to see how a community radio station can thrive.

**Programming**

Remembering that community radio stations are tasked with the provision of local programming and the encouragement of maximum participation by the community in this programming, (IBA, 1997), it is instructive to examine the broadcast content on the three stations in order to gauge, at least initially, the
extent to which they fulfil the spirit of the law regarding community radio.

**Durban Youth Radio**

The programming on **Durban Youth Radio** is dominated by music. In its report to the IBA, DYR contends that Music fills 50% of the station’s programs, however, experiential research suggests that the music content was far higher than this. According to the **DYR Licence Hearing Application** to the IBA in 1998, local music made up 60% of the music content, with foreign filling the remaining 40%. Again, this information appears to be unreliable, as the music play-sheet logs submitted to the monitoring department of the IBA consistently have shown a local content of closer to 40%, which is nevertheless twice as high as the 20% required by the licence stipulations. Most of the content of the music can be characterised as contemporary black urban genres, which include R&B, rap/hip hop, Kwaito and its variants - Swaiko and Gong - Masekani, Reggae and to a lesser extent, Gospel. This music selection leaves out a number of genres enjoyed by white and Indian youth, groups who are well represented in the University population.

Talk shows account for 40% of **Durban Youth Radio** non-music programs while news and current affairs constitute 60%. The content of the station’s output varies through the day, providing talk shows, current affairs, topics of interest, development programs, educational programs, entertainment, request lines and news. Much of the ‘talk’ component is fairly ad hoc, with little direct connection to community based organizations. For instance, while there have been attempts at integrating educational programs, these have been done on a haphazard basis. An initiative is presently underway which will integrate an extension-learning scheme, aimed at providing support for curriculum based education for high school students, into the regular programming. In the area of informal education, a development-based intervention is being planned in conjunction with a neighbouring Community-based organization with the help of European Union Funding. On the above point, an observation made by the IBA’s **Annual Monitoring Report** in 1998 is telling:

> Though without educational programming in a formal sense the concept, DYR’s programs such current affairs programs, legal talk and health programs, may be regarded as an exercise in informing the community about issues of importance. Concern, however, should be expressed with the fact that DYR, though a medium for academics, is dominated by music (IBA, 1998:6).

In theory, the language breakdown is 60% English, and 40% Zulu. There is no clear policy in terms of implementing the language ratios at the station. In some shows, English and Zulu are alternated, while in others one or other language is used exclusively. In practice, no objective measurement of the time devoted to each language is recorded, and the stated ratio must therefore be taken with some
Durban Youth Radio presenters, producers and desk co-ordinators are given wide latitude in terms of the content of their programming. However there are some parameters: firstly, they are bound by the contract signed between the station and volunteers, the IBA Act of 1993, the Advertising Standards Authority and the University rules and regulations. They are required to be apolitical while within the DYR premises, and to be sensitive to local community needs at all times, and not to infringe on any of the University’s rules and regulations.

News makes up a very important part of programming of any radio station, and the IBA insists on a significant proportion of news daily, with an emphasis on ‘local’ news. As previously mentioned, DYR has a network of ‘stringers’ in various localities who provide the station with news. Until the end of 1999, however, the bulk of news content was supplied by Network Radio Service (NRS), a news agency set up specifically to service the news needs of community radios in South Africa. DYR news was relayed directly from NRS via satellite to the station as a subscriber. The satellite dish and installation remained the property of NRS, but it was permissible to use it to download audio material from other sources, a provision which DYR was not sufficiently organized enough to capitalize on. The economics of the project worked in two ways: DYR paid a small fee for the delivery of news, but most of the reimbursement came in the guise of a trade swap for airtime which NRS was able to consolidate with airtime from its other clients, and to market nationally. The service was discontinued towards the end of 1999, since it was felt that most of the NRS was national and international in nature, and discontinuing the service would force the contributors to the radio station to find more local news. The success of this hypothesis is still to be tested.

Radio Phoenix

Since community broadcasters are required to serve the language needs of their communities, Radio Phoenix is challenged with providing programming in five languages, each representing the different cultural backgrounds of its listeners, as well as English, which services as the overall ‘common’ language. In attempting to fulfil this mandate, the station claims to have looked to Radio Lotus, part of the SABC radio portfolio, as its model. Radio Lotus serves much the same audience, although on a national, rather than metropolitan, scale. Research undertaken for the latter station indicated that the ideal balance would be a 45% split between Tamil and Hindi, with the balance of the airtime devoted to English and the other three Indian languages found in South Africa: Gujarati, Telegu and Urdu. Radio Phoenix settled on a formula of providing an hour a week to each of the five languages, in programs which cover general discussions and inserts, together with music specifically from those language-traditions. The station also airs seven hours a week of Western (occidental) music, thus catering across musical tastes.

In addition to the linguistically based programs, the station also hosts hour-long ‘talk-shows’ five days a week. These shows are conducted in English, a
recognition of the home language status of the listenership. The issues discussed are usually community driven, as well as those of national importance, and listeners are encouraged to telephone-in in order to share their views, which happens to a smaller extent than the station would like. A further five hours per week (i.e. one hour per weekday from 15h00 to 16h00) caters for teenage interests. The program, entitled Teen Vibes, is characterised as an ‘edutainment’ format, making educational topics attractive and palatable to a young audience by using on-air quizzes covering general knowledge, movies, music, and sports, all accompanied by ‘the hottest tunes around’ (according to the station manager).

As with DYR, most of the programming content is music driven. In terms of the musical content of the station, the bulk of the broadcast airtime is divided equally between Hindi and Tamil, with a Hindi song followed by a Tamil number. In an effort to integrate the audience as far as possible, ‘block’ language programming has been eschewed in the greater part of the schedule, in which music is interspersed with continuity and discussion. Interactivity within the music programs is encouraged, with ‘dedication’ and request programs showing an unusually high level of popularity. More than twelve hours a week are dedicated to playing listener’s choice, which are often accompanied by dedications and messages to third parties. In its paper on local content in music, the IBA (1997) states:

Taking into account that South African music regulations are intended to ensure the development of local music and talent and the development of the local music industry, all sound broadcasting systems dedicating more than 15 percent of their airtime schedules to the broadcasting of music are required to ensure that at least 20 percent of the music broadcast by them is of South African origin. One of the criteria used to determine whether a musical work qualifies as South African music is that it must be principally performed by musicians who are South African citizens.

Radio Phoenix far exceeds the IBA requirement of 20% local music. Besides playing local tracks in their everyday programs, the station also airs an hour a week concentrating on local talent. The program, Local Focus, features a live interview with a local artiste in the studio, during which songs are played from their repertoire. Interactivity with listeners is encouraged in the form of call-ins with questions and responses. The interview usually concentrates on the background of the artiste, her/his exposure to the music industry, incidentals such as education, sources of creativity and role models, as well as music albums currently being recorded for future release. This program educates listeners about home grown talent, and serves as a source of inspiration and information for aspiring artistes. At outside broadcasts too, the station features performances by local bands and artistes such as Geet Milan, Ramesh Hassan, Kumair Ambigay and Ashok Ramchunder, the so-called ‘king of chutney’, a distinctive
Durban variant of Indian music. These local artists not only perform covers of popular Hindi and Tamil songs, but also compose original scores and lyrics as well. The community response to local talent has been strong, and *Radio Phoenix* takes some of the credit for encouraging a following for South African interpretations of Indian-inspired music.

News bulletins are an essential part of the program-mix as the IBA Act requires all community radio stations to broadcast bulletins regularly. *Radio Phoenix* has its own news department which comprises students of journalism and communications from various universities and technikons in the area, who prepare the community news on the basis of what is deemed to be of relevance to the listenership. Local news bulletins compiled and presented by student-volunteers are broadcast three times daily on weekdays at 11h00, 13h00 and 17h00. Apart from their own reporting, they collate faxes and letters from local organizations and individuals in order to prepare a ‘community news diary’ reflecting up-coming events. This ‘diary’ is aired twice daily during the course of the week on the two prime-time slots, i.e. the weekday *Breakfast Show* (at 08h30), and the *Drive Show* at 17h30. Over the weekends, the community diary is aired on the Saturday breakfast slot around 06h45.

For news on the national, international and regional level, the station crosses over to the Network News in Johannesburg, which has been alluded to in the discussion of *Durban Youth Radio*. *Radio Phoenix* broadcasts Network Radio News on the hour between 06h00-09h00; 12h00-014h00; and 16h00-18h00. *Sport* is featured on the *Breakfast* and *Drive* times through the Network Radio Sports update, and the Saturday breakfast show often features interviews with personalities from local sports organizations. The station extensively covered the 1999 national elections during which the leaders of different parties, including the then Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, were interviewed in the studio and gave their views and opinions on various issues of local and national importance.

**Radio Khwezi**

*Radio Khwezi* is based on the premises, and acts under the guiding influence, of the Lutheran Mission fellowship. It is to be expected then, that it is structured as a Christian radio station serving a broadly ecumenical community in the mainstream (as opposed to charismatic) tradition. Religious and developmental programs form the backbone of the station’s output. More than 60% of the station’s programs cover development topics. A majority of the listeners during daylight hours comprise women, many of whom are subsistence farmers, or resident in poverty-stricken informal areas. Their situation is compounded by the large number of women who are single parents, often widowed as a result of the internecine political violence that has plagued much of the region since the early 1980s, or those menfolk are employed as migrant labourers. Widely followed programs like *Ezomame* (Mother’s Desk) reach these women with inserts that provide information and assistance about how to make the best of their situation, which apart from offering advice on the usual ‘feminised’ pursuits: cooking methods, vegetable production and the like, also
deals with strategies for handling domestic violence, small business management and a variety of other topics.

Radio Khwezi's producers are able to pitch programs at the local communities because they themselves come from these communities. They speak the language and understand the culture, both vital characteristics for community radio producers. This experience and knowledge allows producers to address many of the real educational needs within communities. The daily program, Greetings for the Sick, is a feature which attracts a high listenership. Programs are offered in conjunction with a local Adult Literacy School providing its expertise. At a higher level, local high school teachers are invited to teach subjects for the national matriculation examination on the program Cosh 'Ulwazi, which runs four evenings a week, a move designed to contribute to the redress of the poor quality of education available to students in the severely disadvantaged rural areas. Language lessons in English and Zulu have also been popular within the community. Libunjwa Lieseva, a youth program offering life-skills for those preparing to enter the world of work, is also very popular. Programs aimed at those owning, or wanting to begin small businesses, cover advice on establishing small-capital operations like coffee shops, home cultivation and spazas. This service is sponsored by a small-scale finance company, which in turn gains an advantage by attracting listeners seeking assistance in starting their new ventures. Finally, the station also produces drama programs based on the lives of people in the communities it serves. Because both the authors and the producers of these programs come from the audience communities, the stories have found resonance with the audience.

News is an important element in the programming whole of the station, with news bulletins broadcast throughout the day, frequently with a local flavour. As an avowedly community broadcaster, Radio Khwezi makes of a point of collecting news items from school functions, council meetings and other local gatherings. In the provision of news, Radio Khwezi illustrates the interaction between the very local, the national and the global. In interviews, the management showed themselves to be keenly aware of the challenge of providing for the needs arising from the disparate cultural and informational needs of its audience. In this spirit, it provides news about the world beyond its broadcast footprint, using direct satellite links negotiated with the British Broadcasting Corporation, Deutsche Welle and the National Radio Service, the electronic arm of the South African Press association. Radio Khwezi was the first community station in South Africa with full satellite connection to international news and other programs. German language listeners receive news e-mailed to the station direct from correspondents in Germany. The station also offers sports coverage through its Friday Live Sports Update. The station also conducts live on-air telephone interviews with top sports personalities and leading sports administrators, both local and foreign.

Radio Khwezi also has music programs, and is faced with the difficulty of providing a relatively diverse listenership with music which accords with their cultural heritage. Programs covering German, Afrikaans and English music are
provided in dedicated slots. However, the radio station envisages its task as providing for a major outlet for local talent. Between 26 and 40 percent of the music on any day is sourced from local performers. Many of these artists have been ‘discovered’ on the station’s popular weekly choir slot, *Woza Nendlebe*, a reflection of the popularity of Zulu choral and gospel music. In addition, the station offers free recording facilities for local groups. This service has resulted in the recording of several hundred musical pieces in the past two and a half years, and has provided regular exposure for previously unheard-of choirs and groups, leading to invitations to tour, and to the publication of their performances on CD.

**Assessment of Programming**

In each of the radio stations surveyed, the mandate of community broadcasting was catered for in slightly different ways. Both *Durban Youth Radio* and *Radio Phoenix* have music-driven formats, accommodating talk shows as a secondary element. The reasons for this appear to be twofold: the enormously difficult logistics and expense involved in talk-show production when compared to musical formats; and the strong identification with a specific musical genre and tradition among the targeted listener-community. *Radio Khwezi*, on the other hand, has a stronger organizational basis from which to draw, and is better able to produce talk-shows of directly local interest. The quality (as opposed to the quantity) of talk-components appear to be a direct measure of community cohesion, with both *Radio Phoenix* and *Radio Khwezi* being able to draw on locally-based contributors, and serving a well-defined ‘need’ for these programs. *Durban Youth Radio* has struggled to find a niche in which to broadcast talk-shows, and more importantly, the resources and will, to produce them well. These conclusions are relatively tenuous, and further research needs to be carried out in order to explore the dynamics of programming properly.

In terms of music programming, the three stations each show a strongly distinctive style, which distinguishes them not only from each other, but from other public service and commercial radio stations as well. *Durban Youth Radio*’s playlist and formatting is restricted to black urban chic, a format which is attractive to the large numbers of black youth in the township and greater metropolitan region, but which specifically excludes Indian and white youth, who make up a large proportion of the enrolment of the University of Natal. This alone throws into question the potential involvement of the wider student body, and defines the audience as being predominantly off-campus. *Phoenix Radio* showcases music aimed directly at fulfilling the cultural needs of Durban-based Indian-descendants, a task made more difficult by the multiplicity of languages. *Radio Khwezi* caters for a rural and conservative audience, whose likes run to traditional Zulu music as well as choral and religious genres.

The promotion of local content is an important consideration in community radio, and all three stations surveyed pay careful attention to this. Both *Radio Phoenix* and *Radio Khwezi* go beyond the requirement of simply airing local artistes, they actually contribute to the corpus of homegrown music through their
own recordings. Durban Youth Radio and Radio Phoenix both promote local music through organizing ‘events’ and ‘promotions’ at which live audiences participate in on-stage performances.

Turning to news, all three stations provide both local and national/international news. With regard to local news the reciprocal access of the station to the community, and the community to the station, is crucial. Durban Youth Radio uses ‘stringers’ from both the campus and the surrounding communities to put together news; Radio Phoenix employs student-journalists and encourages organizations and individuals actively to send in news and notifications of forthcoming events; Radio Khwezi does the same, while having a network of community members collecting news.

All three stations rely on outside organizations to provide international, national and regional news. Radio Phoenix - and until recently - Durban Youth Radio use Network Radio News based in Johannesburg, and Radio Khwezi avails itself of the BBC, Deutsche Welle and National Radio Service. The news product from each of these is delivered via satellites which belong to the news agent, and is ‘paid’ for through reciprocal arrangements of airtime bartering: National Radio Service and Network Radio News barter in exchange for airtime which is sold-on as advertising spots to national clients; while the BBC and Deutsche Welle require airtime to broadcast their own programming. The reliance on external partners for the provision of news is a clear indication that community radio stations, given their present level of resources and capacity, cannot ‘go it alone’ entirely.

While community radio stations are organized very differently from commercial or public service stations, it is possible to identify some overlap in the programming formats, overlaps between which indicate a possible set of competitions within the broader broadcasting ecology. Expressed both as target audience-segments, and programming formats, similarities can be drawn between DYR with a listenership of 84,000 (SAARF, 1999) and Radio Metro, a nationally-broadcast urban format music station aimed at black youth with 2,063 million listeners (SAARF, 1999); and to a lesser extent, East Coast Radio, a hit-music-driven station catering across racial divides to an 18-25 year old audience covering the 6-8 LSM categories, which attracts 849,000 listeners per week (SAARF, 1999). Competition for Radio Phoenix (listenership 111,000 – SAARF, 1999) comes from the SABC’s Radio Lotus, which provides a similar musical format, diluted with national news and with a less ‘local’ flavour. Radio Lotus recorded a listenership of 404,000 per week during the RAMS measurement period from June-September 1999 (SAARF) Radio Ukhozi, a nationally-broadcast Zulu-language radio station with one of the highest listenerships in the world at 3.37 million listeners per day (SAARF, 1999), provides stiff competition for Radio Khwezi with a listenership of 82,000. Seen in this light, the strength of the community stations must be in their on-going connections with the local, the particular and the matters, music and interaction which are specific to their immediate surroundings. Problematically, this needs to be achieved while at the same time economic concerns dictate that they attract large numbers of ‘viable’-
read financially well off consumers - as their audiences.

All three stations surveyed attested to the strong interest on the part of their listener-communities to ‘phone, write or fax personal messages, often as ‘dedications’ to accompany chosen musical tracks. However, there was less enthusiasm for articulating political positions, or to take strong views on social issues within the communities in which they lived. In an interview, the station manager of Radio Phoenix expressed the wish that the community would gather the courage to ‘speak-up’ about their views and opinions and contribute more openly on talk shows. This may well be because community radio is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa, and for many people the tradition of expressing their thoughts and feelings in such a public manner has not yet been well established. Radio Phoenix is closely aligned to the listener-community it serves. The public is welcome to visit the studios, and significant numbers of people write, telephone or even fax the station with opinions and suggestions. However, another indicator of the involvement of the community, that is, presence at the Annual General Meeting of the radio station, is less positive. According to an interview with the station manager, on occasions when the station has held its general meetings and has desired the presence of the community, there has been a failure of the public to attend these meetings.

Activities within the community include the support of community based organizations, notably old age and children’s homes. The Aryan Benevolent Home Fair has been heavily promoted on the radio station, with Radio Phoenix broadcasting live from the show site for five days at a time. Indeed, outside broadcasts are an important vehicle for community interaction. A popular format is a ‘bhangra’ performance, usually held in conjunction with a nightclub or other organization, which attracts wide audiences. The Radio Phoenix Community News Diary is an important way not only of keeping listeners abreast with events taking place within the South African Indian community in KwaZulu-Natal, but also a way of building a sense of cohesion within that community.

**Conclusion**

In this initial survey we have concentrated on four areas of community radio: structure, personnel, programming output and interaction with the community.

Each of these areas is a critical indicator of the success of the community radio project. If a community radio is to fulfil its mandate effectively, it has to be responsible to the citizens within the ‘community’ it has identified, whether that is defined along geographic or ‘community of interest’ lines. The present work is an exploratory study towards a larger project, with the objective of developing a set of indicators which will be able to provide a preliminary ‘map’ of the degree to which the community radios under investigation have been able to fulfil the requirements of a ‘civic culture’ (Putman, 1994). By extension, the schema developed here can be developed, modified and applied to other radio stations elsewhere in the country in later research. The project will test the thesis that community radios which have stable and representative governing bodies; adopt their budgets on time; spend their money as planned, and fulfil the requirements
set down by the IBA, are for the most part the same radio stations with strong community ties, effective ‘development programming’, sustainable fundin situations and high listenership levels.

ENDNOTES

1 Information on Durban Youth Radio was researched by Musa Ndlovu (1999) and Ruth Teer-Tomaselli.

2 ‘Living Standards Measure’ is a measurement of affluence and lifestyle, ranging from 1-8. The parameters are drawn up by the national market and advertising research body the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF), and is used to target advertisers to particular niche markets.

3 Radio Audience Measurement (RAMS) is a measurement instrument conducted by SAARF, dedicated to quantification of radio audiences through means of media diaries. It is accepted as the most ‘objective’ measure of audiences for radio, and the evaluation against which advertising time is bought and sold.

4 Information on Radio Phoenix was researched by Sunita Kaihar (1999).

5 Research on Radio Khwezi was undertaken by the Rev. K. Feyissa (1999).

6 These tertiary institutions include the ML Sultan and Natal Technikons, technical colleges in the city of Durban.

7 See section on programming, below, for further information regarding Network Radio Service.

8 A spaza is a small, informal trading store which supplies everyday items to the local shoppers. Bread, vegetables and fruit, maize meal, candles, cigarettes and lantern paraffin are typical wares. Ranging from a little shop in urban premises, the term can also include a make-shift stall on the side of the road.

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Part III

INDEGENIZING THEORY
Chapter 13

MEDIA DEMOCRACY IN BOTSWANA: THE KGOTLA AS MYTH, PRACTICE AND POST-COLONIAL COMMUNICATION PARADIGM

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This chapter seeks to identify an intangible, but recognizable group sensibility towards democratic discourse in Botswana. I seek its origins in the pre-colonial institution of the kgotla and trace its manifestations in various post-colonial arenas and media. This aim has drawn me into a rash eclecticism, drawing upon the disciplines of history, sociology, politics, cultural studies and, to no small degree, the purely personal and anecdotal. The slightly disreputable nature of this approach indicates the need for more focused and empirical research into the field.

My point of departure is indeed, anecdotal. When I first came to Botswana in 1992 it was after spending many years in Malawi, involved with theatre, media, rural development and human rights work. I was immediately struck (for example in my interaction with students and in such experiments as Forum Theatre) by the marked difference between Malawi and Botswana as communication contexts. Such impressions of cultural differences based on national or ethnic ‘traditions’ are common in the realm of ‘common-sense’ analysis, but are very difficult for scholars to discuss in respectable academic discourse, for fear of promoting ethnic or national stereotypes. Individual preconceptions and prejudices may indeed contribute to such impressions, but I would like to suggest, cannot account for them entirely. In the absence of any alternative, I have used the word ‘tradition’ throughout the paper, but with inverted commas, to indicate my dissatisfaction, indeed distrust of the term, owing to the slippage towards essentialism, which it often induces.

My first impression of Botswana is that it seemed to have a far less authoritarian approach to communication than was my normal experience in Malawi. Obviously, I was aware of the totally different institutional histories of the two nations – the brutal dictatorship of Malawi, contrasted with the multi-party democracy of Botswana. I came to realize, however, that institutions alone could not explain the difference. Since the establishment of multi-party democracy in Malawi in 1993, with the repealing of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) repressive laws, the establishment of human rights watch-dogs and the explosion of new newspapers and magazines, there are still many psycho-social factors which discourage democratic discourse in Malawi. These have their roots deep in historical practices and attitudes to authority. I wish to explore the socio/cultural rather than the institutional history of Botswana, which gives it a relatively more open forum for democratic discourse than, for example, Malawi.
Having said that, my starting-off point in Botswana is institutional. 

examine the principal forum for public debate and assembly during the pre 
colonial period among the Batswana, the kgotla. I am aware that there are man 
minority groups in Botswana, such as the Bakalanga, Bakgalagadi and the Sal 
who have made important contributions to patterns of discourse in Botswana. 
However, I feel that the dominance of the Batswana in the political economy 
of the country and their appropriation of post-colonial ideology, justifies m 
narrowing the focus in the historical section of this brief paper, to the kgotla. 
Nevertheless, the exclusion of the minority groups from both pre an 
postcolonial power structures needs to be an essential feature of any scholarl 
analysis of the subject.

I cursorily examine the development of the kgotla in the colonial and post 
colonial period, and then try to trace the impact of its discourse traditions o 
post-colonial communication media. From these rather speculative findings, 
attempt an even more reckless speculation: how might such communication 
traditions have impacted upon wider “structures of feeling” in Botswana in way 
that influence the total democratic environment?

The Kgotla in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Botswana

The word kgotla (plural dikgotla) has several uses. It can refer architecturally to 
a physical place of assembly, described by Ngongco (1989:44) as “a simple 
windbreak of stout poles”, in a village or ward, or it can refer to the institution o 
the assembly, that is the “body of people assembling there” (Schapera 1938: 22) 
Sometimes the word pitso is used for the assembly of people who are summoned 
to the kgotla (Schapera 1965: 37). The leader of the kgotla was the kgosi 
alternatively titled, mong wa kgotla. As a “tribe” (morafe) became bigger, more 
wards could be created, thus causing the need for the creation of more dikgotla, 
process Ngongco refers to as a “political tradition [which] emphasizes the 
devolution of governing authority to local political units.” (Ngongco 1989:44).

The function of the kgotla was sometimes to promulgate new laws, but more 
frequently it provided an opportunity for the kgosi “to advise or admonish his 
followers…[or] to impart information to them.” (Ngongco 1989: 44). In 
addition, the kgotla provided a legal forum where complaints could be heard and 
solved, restitution made to offended parties and punishments (fines or flogging) 
administered to offenders.

The kgosi was clearly seen as the leader of the kgotla, but there was a widely 
recognized system of checks on his power. Although, for example, the kgosi 
normally made the agenda, “ordinary members in the morafe could place items 
on the chief’s agenda by so requesting in the ward kgotlas.” (Ngongco 1989: 45- 
6). This access to the assembly meant that “theoretically all males had 
unrestricted right of speech at the kgotla… no-one could be debarred from 
voicing his opinion, no matter how unpopular” (Ngongco 1989: 46). Schapera 
makes a similar point: “much freedom of speech was allowed, and if it seemed 
necessary people could even criticize [the chief] or his advisors without fear of 
reprisal” (1965: 37). Participation by commoners could include cross-
examination of witnesses in a legal context, and at political assemblies, even youths were sometimes consulted in deference to the proverb “bothale ba phala botswa phalaneng” (roughly translated as the “wisdom of the old antelope comes from the young antelope”) (quoted in Ngcongco 1989: 47).

The relative tolerance, which the kgotla system encouraged, found parallels in cultural forms. For example, the praise poems, maboko, although primarily used to praise dikgosi and other prominent members of society, could also contain, through poetic devices such as metaphor or parallelism, veiled or semi-humorous criticism. Schapera gives an example of such ambiguity in Lectonyane Lekou’s leboko for Khama Sekgoma (1965: 205).

Nevertheless, there were some important exceptions to the pre-colonial Batswana tradition of tolerance and democracy. In particular, men from non-Batswana merafe were normally excluded from participation in (though not attendance at) dikgotla. A similar exclusion applies to women of any ethnic group. Schapera says, “the kgotla is normally inaccessible to women.” (Schapera 1938: 28), and Ngcongco that “women were treated like children...they did not participate in kgotla as a rule.” (46). Parsons, however, points out that among such merafe as the Bangwato, there is evidence from as far back as the 19th century, that royal women did participate in discussions (Oral testimony, Parsons, Gaborone 22/12/1999).

Ngcongco’s (1989:46) summary of the kgotla’s role in pre-colonial Botswana’s political discourse is that: “With the exception of...restrictions in terms of ethnicity and gender on free participation, the Tswana kgotla as a public assembly operated in a fairly democratic fashion...in...that it checked and restrained the powers of the leaders”. Although space does not allow me to explore it here, I would suggest that such restraints were not always a feature of authority systems found in other parts of pre-colonial Southern Africa.

The role of the kgotla became transformed in subtle ways during the long colonial period from 1895 to 1966. The fact that Bechuanaland was a protectorate rather than a directly ruled colony, meant that the British administration in Mafikeng (25 kilometers outside the protectorate) tried as far as possible to rule through existing Batswana institutions rather than by imposing their own. According to Mgadla and Campbell, “indirect rule...meant that the kgotla retained its democratic traditions...[with] relative autonomy” (Ngcongco 1989:50). However, the exigencies of colonial rule, even from a distance, inevitably had their impact. The time spent by dikgosi on issues raised by the British administration produced an erosion of free communication, which meant that “less consultation occurred between the merafe... and dikgosi” (Mgadla and Campbell 1989: 48). From 1926, with the establishment of Native Advisory Councils, British government intervention in the affairs of the kgotla became much more common. From the late 1930s there was a revival in the power of some major dikgotla, owing to the emergence of educated chiefs. Especially among the Bangwato, this became the center for the focusing of power on an indigenous Batswana elite, notably Seretse Khama, the Ngwato kgosi. Seretse Khama resigned from his chieftainship in 1956 in order to become vice-chairman
of the Bangwato Tribal Council. The Tribal Councils became a model for the evolution of the dikgotla into nationalistic institutions supporting the independence of Botswana, (Parsons 1982: 312-4) achieved when Seretse Khama became the first president of the Republic of Botswana in 1966.

This period was extremely important in that it allowed Khama and the Botswana Democratic Party to build up its legitimacy by linking the movement towards Botswana’s independence with BDP’s power base among the rural dikgosi. The kgotla’s ability to harmonize conflicts became a model, sometimes even a symbol, for consensus and problem solving at a national level. Non-Batswana groups, such as the Bakalanga, whose political allegiance tended to lie with the left-leaning Botswana People’s Party, made little electoral impact in the 1965 elections (the BPP winning only 3 seats). This allowed Khama to assume authority for the whole nation, ethnic Batswana and non-Batswana alike.

The position of the kgotla, therefore, in the post-independence period was ambiguous; it served to give the appearance of continuity with the past, while allowing opportunity for major transformation in power and communication strategies. To some observers, the institutions were indeed unchanged, as Odell (1995: 63) suggests, “the kgotla...operates today in all essential respects as it did in the pre-Christian...era”. The reality was much more complex, involving as it did a trade-off between prestige and power.

After independence, Khama tried to maintain a prominent position for dikgosi by establishing a House of Chiefs, the powers of which were intended to check those of parliament (rather like the House of Lords in the British system). Inevitably, however, power tended to pass to the modernizing elites in parliament and the civil service. This entailed some political sleight-of-hand whereby the rural dikgosi and their supporters were given a level of prestige, enough to assure their electoral loyalty, while real power transferred to the new urban elite. Dikgotla survived as institutions of ‘tribal’ government and local justice. Its latter function grew increasingly important, and in some respects rather conservative, as it became in the words of Botswana’s minister of Commerce and Industry, “a quick, transparent and inexpensive way of delivering justice” (George Kgoroba, quoted in Botswana Daily News, 29 June, 1997: 3).

The most important function of the kgotla, however, was not in the realm of local justice, or of national balances of power; it was that of sustaining electoral and political power for the ruling BDP. Holm observes:

The government’s persistent use of traditional structures, particularly the kgotla, to approve the implementation of new national policies in a local area makes a lot of sense in terms of mobilizing the acceptance of these traditional segments of the population (1993:100).

Successive BDP governments have been able to use patronage, ethnic networks and appeals to “tradition” to sustain a power base in the rural areas long after real economic and political power had moved to Gaborone.
The Kgottla and Face-to-Face Communication

So far I have discussed the relatively concrete issue of the kgottla as an institution of a rural, and for the most part homogeneous community. I now turn to a much more nebulous area - the influence which the kgottla and related forms of indigenous communication have had on modern post-colonial communication media, formal and non-formal, in a mainly urban, multi-ethnic context.

This is an appropriate point to return to some of the personal testimony with which I started this paper. In Malawi, one of my most protracted struggles as a teacher had been to initiate an atmosphere of free, friendly and democratic debate. In the classroom students seemed to want an authoritarian, top-down approach which mirrored the authoritarian nature of Malawi’s political economy. The reasons for lack of trust and openness became clear when students who did trust me, let me know that there were police agents planted in the classes. Authoritarian pedagogy was one way students could comfortably deal with such a situation. Eventually, even in Malawi, through informal organizations like the Writers’ Workshop and the Traveling Theatre, I realized that more open, though still cautious, democratic forms of discourse were possible.

In Botswana, by contrast, it was possible to establish a very open, democratic classroom atmosphere from much earlier in my relationship with students. This, of course, may well be to do with the long tradition of civil liberties in Botswana. There is a complex chain of cause and effect, however. These liberties themselves are not unconnected to and are indeed protected by a confident “tradition” of democratic debate in the wider community. That is, liberties are practices as well as rights.

I found it impressive in a different way that when the students came to revise for tests and exams, the favorite method was not individual study as in Malawi, but a collective one. Groups of six to ten students, without any encouragement from lecturers, would take chairs and sit in a circle under the shade of a tree. The circular shape of the kgottla would be re-enacted, though, from my observation, without any domination by men. In these brainstorming sessions, a vigorous and lively debate characterizes the proceedings, with a chairperson sometimes, but by no means always, identifiable.

Similarly, in my work on forum theatre techniques (a method derived from the work of Augusto Boal, designed to stimulate audience participation), I found that in Malawi, only monosyllabic responses were normally elicited, unless the audiences were so small that they totally trusted each other. In Botswana, a play which without participation would last only 20 minutes, could, using the Forum technique, extend to three hours, stimulating frank and often verbose dialogue about issues raised by the play.

A rather different face-to-face urban reprise of kgottla-inspired discourse can be found in the Gaborone phenomenon, popularly know as “Radio Mall”. This is basically an informal, all-male gossip group, which meets almost daily on weekdays, during workers’ lunch-break in the main (open-air) shopping mall in Gaborone, close to the enclave of government offices. Its function is similar to
that of the Francophone African equivalent, radio trottoir. However, the structure of “radio mall” is rather more formalized. This discussion group varies between about 10 to 30 men, depending on the time of the month and interest in the topics. The group stands in a circle to discuss current, especially political issues, with new entries and departures affecting but not upsetting the semi-formality of the discussions. Natural leaders emerge, but without the ritualized gravitas of a real kgosi. Debates are frequently hot, but joking techniques of defusing tension never allow verbal hostility to overspill into violence. The circular shape, the all-male gender composition and the relative tolerance towards alternative views seem too similar to the characteristics of the kgotla to be a coincidence.

Both academic/artistic and street examples of face-to-face interaction in Botswana indicate a tendency for democratic discussion, tension reduction and problem solving to be constantly reinvented in quite different environmental contexts. Obviously such modes of discourse ignore certain aspects of the kgotla, such as coercion, while endorsing others – the consensual and conflict resolving, but I believe the lineaments of continuity are visible.

**Multiple Media and the “Tradition” of Tolerance.**

One of the most important considerations about the Botswana media is their brief history and small size. Radio Botswana did not start until 1962. At independence it was only broadcasting for two hours a day in the evening (Zaffiro 1991: 37; 2000). There was a fairly rapid expansion, however, after independence. By 1998 there were about 400 full-time professionals working for Radio Botswana (Ziff 1998: 80) and the following year the government allowed two private radio stations to start operation. After many years without television, Botswana started its own broadcasts in mid-2000. A large television station was built in Gaborone, and about 500 workers trained. However, these developments are too recent to justify meaningful conclusions.

The situation of the press is, if anything, even more limited. There is only one daily paper, Dikgang tsu Gompieno/Daily News. This is a government owned newspaper given away free of charge, and with a circulation of about 50,000. The commercial newspapers only appear once a week, The Botswana Gazette and Midweek Sun on Wednesdays, The Botswana Guardian, The Voice and Mmegi on Fridays. Of the commercial papers, the highest readership is Mmegi with a circulation of 22000 in 1998. (All statistics from Africa South of the Sahara 1999: 210).

The main reason for the small scale of Botswana’s media is demographic. With a population of less than 2 million, the nation has difficulty in sustaining a national media network on the scale, for example, of Zimbabwe, with a population almost 10 times the size of Botswana. In addition, the easy access of both print and broadcast media from South Africa has acted as a deterrent to the development of Botswana media.

In a sense, the small scale of the Botswana media has encouraged continuity between pre-independence face-to-face communication and mediated modes.
There is little feeling of a star system in the media. The majority of journalists and broadcasters are very young, and to be found mixing with ordinary people in public places. Coverage of international affairs tends to rely almost entirely on syndicated sources like Reuters (Barret: 2000:1), so that energies go into domestic reporting, giving media coverage a local, sometimes even parochial emphasis. An advantage of the small scale and the accessibility of the reporters to the general public is that, as Article 19 (1991:13) puts it, “[s]ometimes the highly accurate reports of pavement radio can influence what is reported in the more formal media”. The informal, face-to-face discussion affects mediated forms of communication.

One of the striking features of Botswana media is their tolerant attitude, relative to media in other countries in the region. This tolerance is fore-grounded by James Zaffiro:

Rare in Africa today is the state in which national broadcasting criticizes Government policies, furnishes air time and coverage to members of functioning opposition parties, and serves the needs of rural listeners with programming in tune with their life problems (1991: 33).

Zaffiro points to the stable institutional democratic system in Botswana as the main factor in the emergence of this tolerance, particularly the dominance of the BDP. The party can afford to allow opposition parties access to the urban media because it knows elections in Botswana are won, not as they tend to be in Northern democracies, through manipulation of the multiple media. They are won through control of face-to-face communication systems, especially the so-called “kgotla circuit”, the long-standing, informal but powerful linkages between rural dikgosi and the BDP.

The benefits to the government of allowing opposition parties access to the media is that “the public views government and government media, as credible, proving the commitment to democracy and freedom of expression at a minimal political risk” (Zaffiro 1991: 67). This is a view which appears to make Botswana media replicate late capitalist, Northern media, achieving consensus not by enforced authority, but by a smothering insinuation of pluralistic tolerance. This comes out clearly in the following passage:

The major underlying factor accounting for Botswana’s exceptional media freedom remains the essentially democratic political culture which has shaped the post-independence character of political life. As mass media have moved closer to the center of the political arena they have gradually come to expect, even sometimes demand, the same access, respect, and tolerance which the government has allowed its backbenchers and opposition party challengers (Zaffiro, 1991: 86).
The analysis offered by Zaffiro seems similar to Stuart Hall’s (1977:345) conclusion about late capitalist northern democracies, where he identifies a “relative autonomy...of the State Apparatus” and notes that broadcasting “can not be commandeered by a single class or class party directly” as this “would immediately destroy the basis of their legitimacy”.

Zaffiro’s argument, however, is far subtler than a mere correlation between Botswana’s media policy and practice with late capitalist Northern democracy. He is aware of the widely observed deficiencies in the professional expertise of most Batswana media practitioners, especially in the press. He cites Paul Rantao (then mayor of Gaborone, later Botswana National Front MP): “Democracy without a free press is like a man without a tongue. Botswana democracy is always a bit of a contradiction: a celebrated democracy without a celebrated press” (Zaffiro, 1989: 58). Zaffiro attributes this press’s weakness in Botswana to “the generally low status accorded to media as a career, low salaries, lack of access to information sources and... (lack of) formal media training (2000:9).

In a consultancy report on Botswana media, Joyce Barret reiterates the problem of training in journalistic ethics and practice. She goes on to generalize, however, about the unwillingness of Botswana’s journalists to challenge authority: “[R]eporters on the whole are not critical thinkers and are timid, a characteristic observed elsewhere in the region. This is reflected in their stories as they fail to challenge those in authority (Barret, 2000:1-2).

Although certainly correct on the need for training, I believe Barret may be missing a cultural difference between a Northern, transatlantic concept of criticism and that found in Botswana. The pre-colonial African method of criticism, which often prefers cultural vehicles such as song or narrative to confrontational open discourse, seems to have influenced the media. Botswana journalists do challenge authority, but often the critiques are contained in humorous asides and proverbs (usually in Setswana), or in cartoons, which accompany the articles. Such artistic barbs are designed to disarm the offender, somewhat like the oblique criticism, which singers of maboko make of dikgosi through allusive, poetic referencing, or ordinary villagers hint at in the formal protocol-bound discourse of dikgotla.

Irene Pule has made an interesting study of cartoons in Botswana newspapers and magazines, which seems to bear this out. Having first established the popularity of cartoons among readers, Pule shows how they deal in a light-hearted way with important fault-lines in Botswana society, namely, corruption, party political conflict, class/employment, gender and health. She is at pains to emphasize the strong didactic content of the cartoons. For example, in a cartoon about a government minister’s involvement in a construction company’s corrupt tenders procedure, she describes how “the issue...sent ripples of anger and contempt throughout the country” (2000:10). She also shows how a cartoonist was able to create a more trenchant critique of the corrupt minister than authors of leader articles:
The cartoonist exposes a human frailty and hopes the situation will be a lesson to many others engaged in corrupt activities. This issue could...have been in the minds of various members of society. What was needed was someone to bring it out and lay it bare for all to see (2000:9).

Pule points to the Botswana ‘tradition’ of oblique and satirical criticism of authority, so that this tends to inform its media democracy rather than a Northern tradition of direct challenge. Both pre and post-colonial ‘traditions’ seem to serve similar functions of face-saving and tension reduction.

Another important difference between Botswana journalists’ approach to issues and that of Northern media practitioners is the tension observed by Zaffiro between the Northern values of truth/honesty associated with journalistic training and the “sense of mission” attached to nationalist and developmental aims. “Role conflicts”, he says of Botswana journalists, “quickly arise and intensify as individuals and news organizations struggle to balance western and developmental journalism values and standards” (1989/ 53).

The superficial resemblance between Botswana media tolerance and that of northern democratic media is deceptive. Zaffiro feels it is an artificial similarity based on BDP’s parliamentary domination (achieved largely without media influence) and Botswana’s diamond-driven prosperity. If either were seriously threatened, the media tolerance would also evaporate. John Holm (1993:106) makes a similar analysis. “Mass participation in Botswana’s democracy...rests on a fragile foundation”. In a 1989 article, written shortly after the South Africa commando raids on ANC targets in Gaborone, Zaffiro goes further to suggest that the assault on media tolerance in Botswana had already started. “When South Africa commandos hit Gaborone in June 1985 they ended for ever the atmosphere of widespread tolerance of difference which so fundamentally helped to preserve democracy and freedom of expression” (1989/ 70). History has proved Zaffiro’s prophecy wrong.

I am not sure, however, whether even at the time, Zaffiro’s concerns were totally justified. Although Botswana newspaper (both government and private) accounts of the 1985 raids display considerable concern for the need for enhanced security, there was a remarkable lack of hysteria. Journalists quoted members of the public who criticized the army, and there was much editorial debate about possible government policies in response to the raids. For example, in a response to calls from the Mayor of Gaborone for increased military security, a Mmegi editorial of 22nd June 1985 says: “We do not need more and more secret agents or any other kind of solution that threatens our democracy” (4). This is in sharp contrast to the (admittedly temporary) wave of xenophobia and hysteria reflected in the Zambian newspapers in the wake of Rhodesian commando raids on Chikumbi and other ZAPU camps inside Zambia in 1979.
Certainly in the year 2000, there was no sign of the erosion of the spirit of tolerance in the Botswana media. No doubt Zaffiro could justifiably point to the good fortune of the South African democratic settlement and the continued electoral success of the BDP as further artificially extending Botswana’s ‘tradition’ of media tolerance. I am not sure, however, that this tolerance can be attributed only to the absence of political, economic and military threats. I would assert that there is a positive ‘tradition’ within the arena of public and private discourse, which valorizes tolerance and peaceful modes of conflict-resolution.

**Botswana’s ‘Tradition’ of Democratic Discourse**

I am acutely aware that this argument is in danger of descending into essentialism. I am not advocating some unassailable Botswana national essence. The ‘tradition’ I have referred to is not a simple ‘given’ to be factored into the equation of Botswana communication. It is a field of social and ideological struggle. In the area of multiple media, for example, the BDP government has often in its history attempted to curb the freedom of the press, only to be met by public and journalistic resistance. As the former editor of *The Botswana Guardian*, Kgosinkwe Moesi, puts it:

> We need to be able to work with our government, but we are still faced with reluctance to confirm information, dispel rumors and explain events. The struggle for information is part of the struggle for national development (Cited in Zaffiro, 1989: 68).

This media struggle is thus an integral component of a broader resistance to threats against democratic freedoms.

The major sites of social struggle in Botswana are worth closer scrutiny. Some of them (corruption by government officers or conflicts between trade unions and private enterprise) are similar to those in neighboring countries. It is interesting, however, that several contemporary controversies reflect areas of latent conflict that I observed in the discussion of pre-colonial *dikgotla*, especially the marginalisation of non-Batswana ethnic groups, of women and of the youth. Such issues have tended to act as a kind of ‘unfinished business’ left over from the pre-colonial and colonial polity.

The struggle of non-Batswana peoples is a good example. The discourse of ethnic groups like the Bakalanga, Bakgalagadi, San and others used in their attempts to achieve political, economic and cultural rights is one which consistently refers back to the historical origins of Batswana domination (e.g. by the Bangwato over the Bakalanga). The political struggle is reflected in the struggle for a cultural and linguistic voice, in the media and other sites of communication.

The nature of such struggles over representation can be well illustrated by women’s groups. Women’s organizations such as Emang Basadi, Women in Law in Southern Africa and Mthahaetsile have used the media to proselytize for equal gender rights as enshrined in Botswana’s constitution. This struggle has
centered on such issues as maintenance of children, seduction laws, widow’s rights to property and the Citizenship Act. One interesting aspect of this debate has been the generally tolerant and good-humored nature of the public arguments used by women. It is as if they realize that harsh condemnation of conservative men would create stiff resistance from powerful sectors such as dikgosi, the Attorney General’s office and patriarchal members of parliament. Instead their discourse has tended to point, often with good humor, to the contradictions in the men’s appeal to tradition.

Part of this tolerance is dialectical; it arises from recognition by women’s groups that their attack is not only upon male prejudice, but also upon shibboleths which the founding fathers of Botswana’s democratic state have woven into the fabric of its political ideology. Like most African nations which attained independence in the 1960’s, Botswana used an appeal to ‘tradition’ as part of its attempt to create a national identity, even if this meant distorting and reifying certain aspects of that culture. Ashcroft et. al. describe this process: “Cultural essentialism, which is theoretically questionable, may be adapted as a strategic political position in the struggle against imperial powers (1998:21).

The kgotla and its associated institution played an important symbolic role in this revalorization of indigenous Botswana identity as part of an anti-colonial cultural and political struggle. When Botswana’s national sovereignty became well established, government ideologues continued to make essentialist appeals to tradition, overtly on anti-imperialist grounds, but in reality to obstruct human rights struggles of women and ethnic minorities. Consequently, women have had to struggle for their rights within a discursive paradigm, which makes it easy for men to brand them as ‘neo-colonialists’ or ‘brain-washed by Western feminists’. They have developed a women’s movement, which is forced constantly to reassess the concept of Botswana identity and its relationship to the past.

This interrogation by women of the whole notion of ‘tradition’ is a good support for my argument that tolerance in Botswana public discourse does not derive from any inner essence. The nature of Botswana’s traditions, especially with respect to gender, is an arena of prolonged and shifting debate. In a fierce but subtle attack on patriarchal appropriation of the notion of tradition, Leloba Molema, discussing the pre-colonial period writes:

Was tradition beyond critical interrogation even then? Was it static, bereft of intercourse and exchange with other traditions and cultures of the time? Were people ignorant of internal conflict, and hence of change? It is difficult to conceive of a society that questions neither itself nor its praxis. Unless, of course, we are talking about power (1994:9).
The sting in the last sentence is the implication that when African men attempt to recruit ‘tradition’ to marginalize women, they are indeed talking about power. By her very critique Molema is making the point that tradition is not a hallowed fixity, but a subject of continued interpretation and contestation.

The debate is by no means purely academic. It resonates in the world of politics and economics. One of the reasons for the BDP’s electoral success over the years has been its clever co-option of opposition electoral platforms, once the ruling party has observed their popularity in the public media. For example, after opposing changes to the discriminatory clauses in the Citizenship Act for years, it eventually made changes in 1997, following a sustained campaign by women’s movements and opposition parties through the news media. The same is true for the campaign to lower the voting age from 21 to 18, to which the BDP agreed with legislation to that effect, following a 1997 referendum.

**Conclusion**

I started this Chapter with doubts about achieving any substantial and empirically tested ‘truth’, but with hopes that it might lead to further research. One possible research strategy would be to examine the *kgotla* itself as a post-colonial Botswana institution and its links with *dikgosi*, rural populations and the wider polity of a modern nation state. More difficult would be empirical research to test my broader hypothesis about the continuity of a tradition of democratic debate and tolerance from the pre-colonial through to the colonial and post-colonial periods. This would require subtle instruments of media monitoring and socio-psychological attitude evaluation.

In the meantime and in the absence of such research, my main objective in this paper has been to assert an alternative to the commonly received notion that modern media can be divided into Northern democratic, pluralistic media on the one hand, and Southern, tendentious, authoritarian and government-controlled media on the other. A crude corollary of this division is that the latter need to be goaded or cajoled into accepting the values of the former, in order to function effectively in the modern world. Botswana seems to indicate an alternative model, one in which indigenous attitudes of public responsibility and control are tempered and even critiqued by a tradition of popular dissent. It is also one in which opposition sectors need to maintain a keen interest in and knowledge of historical forces and culture, in order to avoid being tarred by the brush of neo-colonialism. This is a model where authority is not imposed but is capable of negotiation in the wider process of achieving consensus.

My writing of this article has been helped considerably by Deirdre Donnelly’s (2002) reaction to the original conference paper, in which she ties my strategies to various theoretical models. She rightly links my general approach to a cultural studies orientation. However, I seem to detect in her contrast between “the contextual and the cultural” and “the macro social and economic emphasis of political economy” an implicit and rather disturbing hierarchy. It is as if Cultural Studies is a secondary approach, which can usefully fill in the gaps left by the primary and more legitimate approach of political economy. I agree that a major
lacuna in my article is a failure to address the macro-economic aspects of Botswana’s media infrastructure. In other ways, however, this is in the nature of my topic, which seeks to explore not only ‘mutabilities’ but also ‘continuities’ (Tomaselli & Shepperson, 2000:18). This is a task demanding a dialectical, interdisciplinary approach, for which cultural studies may, at least in the context of a brief paper, be better equipped than political economy.

I am well aware that in some ways, Botswana, with its large land mass, small population, unique colonial history, relatively unified linguistic and cultural background, economic prosperity and peaceful post-independence polity, is something of a special case. Its achievements are not easily replicated, especially in more obviously multi-cultural societies with histories of violence and sustained political conflict. Its very existence, however, is important as a challenge to commonly touted claims that Northern democracies have a monopoly of respect for free and plural communication systems.

One other thrust of this paper has been to foreground an area of communication theory not often given much attention, that is, indigenous attitudes to discourse, power and consensus. Naturally this is very relevant outside Botswana, though with applications which vary widely according to differing historical experiences. As Donnelly points out, Botswana’s own ‘traditions’ and explorations of media democracy cannot be isolated from those of the Southern African region. In particular, the already complex articulation of urban and rural values/tensions is further complicated by Botswana’s relative dependence upon South Africa in the sphere of mediated cultural capital. Regional attempts to disengage from Northern media hegemony are informed and interrogated both by indigenous ‘traditions’ of communication and by regional power relationships in the fields of politics, economics and technology.

Until recently the major directions of media/communication research in Africa have tended to follow American and European research agenda. One area is institutional research: examination of government and private control of the media through funding policies and practices, broadcast facilities, training and media practices – in short the power base of the producers. The second major area has been consumer-oriented research, analysis of media consumers’ psychosocial background and the complexity of their responses.

I certainly do not deny the important achievements of these approaches, and have, in other contexts, employed them myself. I am suggesting, however, that multiple media, which mostly developed in Africa during the colonial period, did not start scribbling on a tabula rasa. Indigenous cultures already had their own complex communication systems, with their own ways of imposing, testing and challenging authority. These systems continue to inform both the production and consumption of media in Africa, whether at a local, national or regional level.

The influence is not normally direct. It is reflected in the attitudes and sensibilities of society in general and media practitioners/consumers in particular, creating flexible, syncretic media structures, strategies and practices. It is emphatically not an unchangeable essence. It is more a set of attitudes matured over time, contested, transposed, traduced and sometimes almost destroyed. The
nature of such attitudinal influences, its potential for unifying or fissiparous tendencies and its openness to cultural enrichment or abuse, varies from nation to nation and community to community. Though intangible, it cannot be ignored.

References


Chapter 14

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN BOTSWANA: THE KGOTLA AND GLOBALIZATION

DEIDRE DONNELLY

In “Media Democracy in Botswana: The Kgolla as Myth, Practice and Post-Colonial Communication Paradigm”, David Kerr (2000) focuses on Botswana – acknowledged as being “something of a special case” – to provide an alternative model of media communication in Africa. The Botswanan model is intended to challenge the prevalent notion that “modern media can be divided into Northern democratic, pluralistic media on the one hand, and Southern, tendentious, authoritarian and government controlled media on the other”.

Kerr makes use of an eclectic approach, which includes the anecdotal, in order to describe the democratic context within which the Botswana national media industry operates. In so doing he collapses the traditional core-periphery dichotomy, which identifies the north as the democratic center and the south as the despotic periphery. The resulting analysis raises issues that require expansion on the broader themes which are relevant to any discussion of the media in Africa.

The case study offered by Kerr compares Botswana to Malawi. Through the inclusion of personal anecdotes, Botswana is observed to have a far less authoritarian approach to communication and a greater tendency toward democratic discourse. Although aware of the totally different institutional histories of the two nations, Kerr asserts that institutions alone cannot account for the differences between them using, as an example, the fact that democratic discourse is still discouraged in Malawi despite the establishment of democracy in 1993. In contrast to this, Kerr identifies in Botswana “an intangible but identifiable group sensibility towards democratic discourse” and recognizes an atmosphere of tolerance and participation within the Botswana society in general and, specifically, within the media.

The recognition of Botswana’s democratic media is supported by James Zaffiro (1991), who describes how Botswana’s national broadcaster criticizes government policies and allows airtime to members of opposition parties (1991:33). Zaffiro attributes this media tolerance to Botswana’s stable institutional democracy and economic stability. Kerr, however, is not sure that this tolerance is purely a result of the economic and political stability of the region and suggests that “there is a positive ‘tradition’... within the arena of public and private discourse which valorizes tolerance and peaceful modes of conflict resolution”. This ‘tradition’ is traced to the indigenous cultures as they existed in pre-colonial times and focuses specifically on the tribal administrative institution of the Batswana people – the Kgolla. The Kgolla was the forum
provided for all matters of public concern including the administration of justice, the making of announcements and, most importantly, public debate. What aligns the pre-colonial Kgотла to the concept of democracy is the level of participation and the amount of freedom of speech it allowed to the common tribesmen (Schapera, 1938). The power of the Kgотла chiefs (kgosi) was in this way restrained, allowing for a certain amount of accountability to operate. It must be remembered however, as Kerr rightly points out, that participation in the Kgотла proceedings was not allowed to women, non-Batswana people or, except on occasion, youth. The impact of this pre-colonial tradition on postcolonial communication media is then explored by Kerr.

The reasoning is that the tradition of democratic debate found in the indigenous communication system of the Kgотла can be traced from the pre-colonial times through the colonial era and is reflected in the post-colonial attitudes seen to influence the media. During the colonial era, Botswana – named Bechuanaland – was a British protectorate that was not subject to the same level of domination and administrative interference as was experienced by those African regions under direct colonial rule. This ensured that “the Kgотла retained it’s democratic traditions” (Mgadla & Campbell, 1989:50). In attempting to trace the influence of the Kgотла as manifested in post-colonial communication forms, Kerr makes use of personal anecdotes taken from his experience as a teacher and forum theatre practitioner together with the street examples of Radio Mall (2000:7) and the oblique criticisms of authority found in the Botswana media.

The Kgотла: Political Economy and Cultural Studies
Kerr’s study, with its focus on context and culture, is useful in bringing the political economy and cultural studies approaches into closer dialogue. Political economy is defined as “the study of social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources” (Mosco, 1996: 25). The political economy approach to communication derives from classical political economy, which combined the fields of economics, political science and policy studies in attempting to examine the relationship between political and economic phenomena scientifically (Mueller, 1995). Contemporary political economy concentrates on the macrosocial organization of power (Mosco, 1996) and examines the media in terms of structure. Political economy foregrounds the significance of media ownership and control, explores the implications of communication policy choices and focuses on media-state relations.

Clearly, Kerr’s approach departs from conventional political economy in several respects. Despite the fact that he examines the Kgотла as a pre-colonial institution, the emphasis of his approach is on the local and cultural rather than the macrosocial and structural. His study does not examine the media in Botswana from the perspective of political economy but, rather, it can be more comfortably situated within the cultural studies approach. Mosco defines cultural studies as “a broad-based intellectual movement which concentrates on the constitution of meaning in texts, defined broadly to include all forms of social
communication” (1996: 247). Cultural studies differs from political economy by recognizing power at the local level and by focusing on culture as “a product of everyday life” (Mosco, 1996: 250). It differs, in its foregrounding of the specific, the contextual and the cultural, from the macrosocial and economic emphasis of political economy. Kerr’s analysis of the Tswana kgotla and his use of personal anecdotes is validated by a comment made by Mosco in recognition of the possible contribution that the cultural studies approach could make to the field of political economy. Mosco states that “by reminding us that power is also local and intersubjective, and, as well, accessible through observational techniques, cultural studies enriches the political economic understanding of power” (1996: 253).

**Afro-centric / Euro-centric Approaches to the Study of African Media**

The kgotla study is reminiscent of Louise Bourgault’s *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1995) with parallels sufficient enough to make a comparison unavoidable. Bourgault examines the way in which the pre-colonial oral tradition and patterns of social and political organization have impacted upon modern mass communication in Africa. The central tenet underpinning Bourgault’s approach is the belief that: “Any study of modern mass communications in Africa must necessarily explore the political configurations, the communal organization patterns and styles, and the discourse systems into which these mass media were born” (1995: 2). Similarly, Kerr asserts that “multiple media...did not start scribbling on a tabula rasa. Indigenous cultures already had their own complex communication systems...”. Bourgault suggests that the media in Sub-Saharan Africa will reflect the effects of the pre-colonial era, colonial times and the modern transformation to democracy. Kerr’s historical overview of the kgotla prior to, during and after the colonial era demonstrates an agreement with such a suggestion.

The pre-colonial oral tradition – with its focus on group orientation, harmony and respect for leaders – helps facilitate self-censorship in the African news media and serves to inhibit what Bourgault terms a “critical spirit”. This corresponds to Kerr’s reference to Zaffiro’s recognition of the ‘role conflicts’ experienced by Botswanan journalists, referring specifically to the “tension between the northern values of truth and honesty associated with journalism training and the ‘sense of mission’ attached to nationalist and developmental aims”.

This tension between developmental and Western liberal demands and values is relevant to any wider discussion on media practice in Africa since the difficulty of a synthesis between African and Western approaches within the media is not unique to Botswana alone. In South Africa, for instance, the “tension between nation-building cultural-policies and market-based broadcasting reform” has been noted by Clive Barnett (2002). However, the significance of recognizing such conflicts within Botswana is connected to the understanding that Botswana is ‘a special case’ with respect to media freedom. It has been said that:
even in Botswana there is a tradition of self-censorship among journalists. Some information is withheld from the public because the editors feel responsible enough not to release such information. As one editor put it, “We are certainly free but that does not mean we have no responsibility for what we publish” (Kasoma, 1992:50).

Kerr’s framework points out the cultural difference between the Northern and Southern concepts of criticism by providing examples of the way in which criticism is directed at authority through indirect forms such as humorous asides, proverbs and cartoons. These examples, and the example provided of Radio Mall, correspond to Bourgault’s inclusion of three main forms through which self-censorship is resisted – parallel discourse, pavement radio and witchcraft.

Bourgault’s study – through its focus on the Sub-Saharan region as a whole – could be accused of generalization and essentialism. The likelihood of such a criticism being leveled against a study of this kind is anticipated by Kerr and is, to an extent, prevented through the modest tone he adopts and through his definition of tradition as being “a field of social and ideological struggle”. Any study which attempts to describe a group in terms of its ‘indigenous attitudes’ or to identify a ‘group sensibility’ is likely to be met with skepticism. Such an approach is likely to be seen as generalization and, when it relates to communication in Africa specifically, it seems dangerously reminiscent of the beliefs which informed the modernization period of development.

In the modernization approach to development, traditional behaviors and attitudes were seen as constraints to development (Melkote, 1991). Kerr’s study, however, is redeemed from similar disdain due to its focus on the pre-colonial presence of democracy, with all its credible and positive characteristics. So, for instance, by claiming that the institution of the kgotla functioned in a manner desirable to modern democracies, Kerr challenges the modernization theories in sociology of development which maintained that societies only become modern in nature through greater differentiation in their institutions (Melkote, 1991:41). Similarly, Kerr’s hypothesis disrupts some of the theories on individual psychological attributes developed according to the modernization paradigm. Alex Inkeles’ conceptual model, which lists nine attributes characterizing the modern person, identifies a ‘democratic orientation’ as the third psychological trait typical of a modern individual (Melkote, 1991:47).

**Education is Politics**

The inclusion of the anecdotal in attempting to describe Botswana’s mature democracy is taken from Kerr’s experiences as a teacher in both Malawi and Botswana. The difficulties experienced when attempting to “initiate an atmosphere of free, friendly and democratic debate” in Malawi in comparison to Botswana, make it necessary to refer to the philosophy of communication and education advanced by Paulo Freire. Freire recognized the political nature of the education system and the significance of educational institutions as agents of
socialization (Freire, 1972). Freire’s understanding of the importance of education validates Kerr’s reference to his teaching experiences to support his theory. Freire rejected what he termed ‘the banking method’ of teaching which refers to the traditional teacher-pupil dynamic, where teachers are revered and respected for their knowledge which is imparted to the pupils who passively accept their position (Freire, 1972). In this approach, the authority of the teacher is set against the freedom of the pupil (Arnowitz, 1993:4).

Freire’s approach, in contrast, encourages the teacher to give up this authoritarian control of the learning environment and, instead, engage in a dialogue with the students in an attempt to serve as agents of conscientization and liberation. The teaching pedagogy advanced by Freire is democratic, participatory and dialogic (Shor, 1993). Clearly, Kerr’s attempts to stimulate a dialogue as a teacher and his use of Forum Theatre techniques are proof of his commitment to a teaching method that follows similar aims. However, attempts to initiate such an approach to learning is often met by resistance from teachers and students alike: they have been trapped in a form of authority dependence; the internalization of the role appropriate behavior advanced by the ‘banking method’ results in a fear of freedom (Freire, 1972). This resistance has obvious similarities to the self-censorship which occurs at the level of media practice in Africa.

A criticism which could be directed at Kerr’s study is that many traditional societies exhibited a tendency toward democratic debate in their face-to-face communication; such debate is in no way unique to the African or Tswana past. The Habermasian notion of the public sphere is a classic example of how such debate existed within Europe (Habermas, 1984). With the advance of modernity and the concomitant rise of the mass media, the nature and role of this public sphere declined. Here, it is useful to remember Kerr’s aim to collapse the understanding of the north as the exemplar of democracy and the south as the domain of authoritarianism. The Botswana model is provided as an attempt to include Africa into understandings of the public sphere and civil society. Similar attempts, however, have often made the mistake of interpreting African society in terms of Western liberal conceptions of the public sphere and civil society. It has been argued, for instance, that:

In the quest for indigenous analogues, the liberal conception of civil society is naturalized: nonwestern modes of “political” practice and meaning are transformed into social “arenas”, “realms” or “spheres” – all implicitly bounded – in which “individuals” or “citizens” produce legitimacy and accountability from their “governments” (Garland, 1998:5).
The Importance of Context

By focusing on the context of Botswana specifically the paper avoids homogenizing Africa into a single entity, an accusation which could rightly be directed at Bourgault’s study of the Sub-Saharan region. As mentioned previously, Kerr acknowledges that “Botswana, with its large land mass, small population, unique colonial history, relatively unified linguistic and cultural background, economic prosperity and peaceful post-independence polity, is something of a special case”. Indeed, the fact that Botswana is one of the wealthiest African countries as a result of its mineral resources together with its political stability makes it perhaps the most stable country in the SADC region.

Kerr uses personal experience to compare the context of Botswana to Malawi, a comparison which might seem unwarranted due to the significantly dissimilar political histories of the two nations. The motivation for making such a comparison arose from a concern over the absence of democratic discourse in Malawi, where democracy was established in 1993. Moira Chimombo (2000) shares this concern in her article on freedom of expression in Malawi, which offers a more thorough investigation of the Malawian situation. Chimombo’s article describes the difficult transition from a dictatorship to a democracy and explores why freedom of expression has not been achieved in Malawi, proving that the theory and practice of democracy are, too often, too far apart. Chimombo quotes a study made by Eng (1998:31) into the media in Malaysia which she regards as being a suitable description of the situation in Malawi. The study states that:

The notion of journalists being public surrogates investigating public affairs is somewhat alien to them...There’s a deep cultural entrenchment in groupism and stiff hierarchy in social interaction. Malaysian (cf. Malawian) communication behaviour and thought patterns – right from within the family environment to the schools, the community and the government – were never built on a tradition of free expression or open discourse (Eng, 1998:31).

The above quote, connected to the notions of self-censorship and authority-dependence, supports Kerr’s belief in a historical and attitudinal basis necessary for democratic media functioning.

Democracy in Botswana

The case study clearly highlights the atmosphere of democratic tolerance in Botswana and refers to Botswana’s enviable media tolerance and freedom. The focus, however, does not fall specifically on the Botswana media which requires that a closer look at this so-called media freedom is required. The Botswana media is made up of a mixture of government owned and privately owned media and is reflective of the very open national information policy of the Botswana government (Kasoma, 1992). The government’s open policy on information
suggests that “the Government seems to be committed to the idea of people getting accurate information from any quarter, Government or non-Government” (Kasoma, 1992:29). As previously mentioned, airtime is given to opposition parties and the government attempts not to discriminate in favour of any one political party, but some political parties have been known to complain that they were not being given sufficient coverage (Kasoma, 1992). However, Kasoma’s study into the communications policy of Botswana revealed that “almost all the journalists interviewed agreed that the media in Botswana was free” with only one journalist being non-committal (1992:32).

Although Kerr recognizes the importance of minority group contributions to patterns of discourse in Botswana, he focuses instead on the Tswana majority and makes only brief reference to “the historical origins of Batswana domination”. The marginalization of non-Batswana groups is referred to as one of the areas of latent conflict observed in the pre-colonial kgotla and, more recently, “the political struggle is reflected in the struggle for a cultural and linguistic voice, in the media and other sites of communication”. Clearly, the issue of marginalization and peripheralization needs to be highlighted. The Gramscian concept of hegemony becomes relevant in terms of the dominance of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), specifically in terms of their deployment of the democratic principle of political tolerance which strengthens their legitimacy and maintains the status quo. Also, the role played by the newly educated dikgosi, representing the Tswana aristocracy, in support of the BDP’s election to power in 1966 can be read in terms of Gramsci’s concept of “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971).

Zaffiro (1991), for instance, is said to attribute Botswana’s media tolerance to the country’s stable institutional democracy and the dominance of the BDP (Kerr, 2000). This tolerance is said to be indicative of the BDP’s political confidence, since they represent the Tswana majority, and this tolerance in effect strengthens the BDP confidence through affording them a level of credibility and legitimacy. In this way, Zaffiro suggests that this tolerance is hegemonic in nature. Also, in terms of media ownership, it is interesting to note that the newspaper with the highest circulation in Botswana is the government owned Daily News which is, significantly, distributed free of charge (Kasoma, 1992).

At this point, the threat contained in the democratic concept of majority rule for minorities’ needs to be acknowledged. In Botswana, as the name suggests, the Tswana people make up the majority. This, however, was not always the case. The Khoisan people who were later displaced by the Bantu Tswana originally inhabited Botswana. The Khoisan were subordinated and classed as an undifferentiated and homogenous ethnic category under the label of Basarwa (Wilmsen, 1996). The marginalization of non-Tswana minority peoples has serious implications in terms of media access and democratic participation. It has been pointed out that in Botswana “the traditional desert people of Botswana, the Masarwa, are hardly referred to or touched by the Botswana media” (Kasoma, 1992:107). Although political opposition to the BDP is regarded as weak
(Kasoma, 1992), the Botswana National Front only recently began raising issues of ethnicity, often focusing specifically on the Basarwa (Wilmsen, 1996).

**Facts and Fears Surrounding the Discourse of Globalization**

Threats posed by globalization have led theorists to frame the topic of globalization in terms of imperialism. In order to understand why this is the case, the concept of globalization needs to be briefly clarified. Globalization is broadly understood as the worldwide economic, political and socio-cultural phenomenon that impacts on trade, finance and communication. An open international economy has resulted from the deregulation of trade and the ability of multinational and transnational/global corporations to move capital and organize production on a global scale. This ability is largely due to the time-space compression allowed by advances in information and communication technology. The effects of globalization are usually examined according to patterns of consumption and in terms of national cultures and personal identities.

The process of globalization, however, does not impact different communities in the same way or to the same degree. Any analysis of global patterns of consumption of the global distribution of wealth indicates the globalization process is far from fair or equal (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998). Challenging the dogma of financial liberalization which underpins the discourse of globalization, Hein Marais (1999:112) states that “in terms of their relevance in the global economy, whole regions have virtually dropped off the world map, notably sub-Saharan Africa, which remains linked to the world economy primarily through its heavy indebtedness” (p. 112). The term ‘uneven development’ expresses this acknowledgement of the contradictory effects of globalization (Mosco, 1996:207). The threat of economic marginalization posed by globalization results in the pressure to maintain liberal and deregulated markets for trade and finance. Marais states that “ideologically, free trade has become an almost sacred ingredient of the global economy” (1999:113).

The economic stability of Botswana means that the potential economic threats posed by globalization are not as much of a concern as is the case with other African regions. With respect to culture, however, the effects of globalization are of great concern. The development of an international communication and media industry has occurred alongside the economic process of globalization and, indeed, supports it. Evidence of the establishment of an international media culture has led, once again, to real fears centered on the homogenization of a worldwide culture as a result of the influence of the media (McQuail, 1994). The dominance of the US in the global media specifically has led to concerns about the ‘Americanization’ and ‘commoditization’ of culture worldwide. Terms such as ‘transnationalization’ and ‘cultural synchronization’ are used when referring to the large-scale adoption of Western consumerist values as a consequence of globalization. Critics of the internationalization of media and culture maintain that original cultures are increasingly being threatened by Western media-cultural imperialism.
In this view, the role of the media (and its effects on culture) is interpreted as (ideologically) akin to the project of Imperialism which means “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory” (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1998:122). Relationships between regions are read in terms of the core/periphery or center/margin binary opposition which defined the European and Western regions as the locus of power, culture, and civilization. The terms ‘cultural’ or ‘media’ imperialism, then, imply invasion and coercion (McQuail, 1994). Fears of cultural homogenization are central to theories of cultural imperialism. The influx of foreign commercial media is seen as a threat to existing social structures and national identities. With reference to broadcasting specifically, “the rapid shift from public to frequently foreign private ownership of television may be symptomatic of a broader re-colonization of Africa by American and European multinationals” (Patterson, 2000). The discourse of cultural imperialism is criticized, specifically, for its refusal to acknowledge the agency of colonized citizens in the reception of mass media messages. What globalization demonstrates is “the structure of world power relations which stands firm in the twentieth century as a legacy of Western imperialism” and “the transmutation of imperialism into the supra-national operations of economics, communication and culture” (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1998:112). But, since nation states are becoming less autonomous due to globalizing forces, some argue that the new cultural economy can no longer be read in terms of the core (dominant first world) /periphery (marginalized third world) model.

The common sense understanding of globalization refers to the world as a ‘global village’ – referring to the fact that information and communication technologies have resulted in a borderless world. However, as mentioned earlier, there are significant differences between regions. The process of globalization does not necessarily benefit all countries. There are, in fact, two contradictory processes at work – one towards cohesion (hence the idea of the ‘global village’) and the other towards fragmentation (referring to the fact that the rich countries are getting richer while the poor countries are getting poorer) (McQuail, 1994). Together with this is the fact that globalization also highlights differences within regions, often referring specifically to the gap between those who have access to information and media and those who increasingly do not. This is why the thesis of cultural imperialism has often been dismissed because it “presumes that worries about cultural survival are uniquely provoked by the policies of the major powers, and not equally by nation states against ethnic minorities within their own frontiers” (Downing, 1996:223). Hopeton Dunn (2002) expands on this issue in his chapter on the patterns of inequality which exist in terms of technology and globalization. Dunn argues that although communications technologies are available globally, they are not equally accessible to the whole global population and, in fact, only “constitute a patchwork across the globe with a high degree of disparity in access geographically and socially”. Dunn also
refers to the unacceptable internal inequalities which replicate the global imbalance in information flows.

One of the factors influencing media accessibility and participation is the size and concentration of a country's population. Botswana has a small population which is concentrated in the eastern strip of the country. Media development has consequently been focused on providing accessibility to the media in this heavily inhabited region (Kasoma, 1992). This poses a potential problem of access and participation for those communities situated in the more lightly populated peripheral regions such as the Bushmen (Basarwa). So, in Botswana, local hierarchies exist between those who have access to information and media and those who do not; these hierarchies also exacerbate inequalities already present in terms of ethnicity. In the northeastern part of the country, for instance, the Bakalanga people have complained about their peripheralization by the Botswana majority. This has been reflected in media policies which excluded broadcast and press in their languages for twenty-five years (Zaffiro, 1991:87). These complaints have been interpreted by the BDP as dangerous forms of tribalism which threaten the perception of Botswana as a homogenous and politically tolerant country (Zaffiro, 1991:87). This supports the understanding that the simplification of the fears of homogenization associated with globalization "can be exploited by nation-states in relation to their own minorities, by posing global commoditization (or capitalism, or some such other external enemy) as more real than the threat of its own hegemonic strategies" (Appadurai, 1990:328). Such differences within regions are significant because "when media accessibility is too skewed, it affects the general development of the country" (Kasoma, 1992:104).

All forms of South African mass media are readily available in Botswana. South African newspapers and magazines circulate freely and many Botswana residents have access to the SABC television channels and M-NET. Also, Botswana publications are printed in South Africa. In terms of the hegemonic status of South Africa in relation to the rest of Africa, this poses a problem to the development of the Botswana media (Patterson, 2000). Zaffiro, for instance, points to the possible threat of cultural pollution that this situation encourages. Clearly, fears of cultural homogenization are not only framed in terms of the traditional core-periphery model.

From a political economy standpoint, Kerr's investigation into the atmosphere of tolerance prevalent in Botswanan society reveals a need to expand on certain themes which are central to any study of the African media. Kerr's approach does, however, suggests that:

against the juggernaut of modernity and its tendency to homogenize difference in the name of progress, traditional forms of communication are a gentle reminder that true cultural democracy is forged in the interplay of difference (Thomas, 1995:153).
Such an approach strengthens the universal understanding of democracy by giving recognition to the specific and affirming authenticity in the particular (Thomas, 1995). This paper has expanded on Kerr’s qualitative and contextual study by highlighting the tension between Western and African influences on media performance and emphasizing the importance of minority concerns within democracies. By acknowledging positive and democratic values and characteristics, current approaches focusing on traditional and historical influences on attitudes in general and media practice in particular, depart from the modernization theories which were applied to Africa. However, there remains a need for further research which, as Kerr suggests, should be less qualitative in nature.

REFERENCES


Chapter 15

POROUS BORDERS AND THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHY OF SOCIAL RELATIONS: ENCOUNTERING THE ‘OTHER’

GIBSON MASHILO BOLOKA

This chapter examines the dynamics of space by analyzing the interplay between core and periphery. It uses Kenneth Thompson’s (1996) notion of these binary categories as a means of understanding the production and consumption of culture.

The ideas expressed here were triggered by the author’s encounter with the Bushman San communities at Ngwatle, Ghanzi and D’Kar, all in southeastern Botswana.¹ Our interaction with these three communities is partially a result of globalization, a process through which space and distance are overcome as geographical borders become less rigid through improvements in transportation, communication, increased trade, travel and tourism, via development strategies, and through migrant labor.

For Thompson, the binaries of core and periphery describe “a spatial metaphor in which the concentration of capitalist power and interests coincides with the nation-states of the West at the center of a system which simultaneously keeps the nation-states of the Third World on the periphery” (1996:140). In the context of this analysis, the interplay takes place between the author/visitor as representation of the ‘core’ on the one hand, and the Bushman as the ‘periphery’ on the other². The core/periphery dichotomy is interpreted within the context of remoteness that the Ngwatle Bushmen represent, eventually resulting in them being perceived as the ‘other’. As will be shown later, this remoteness which gives the Bushmen the status of the ‘other’ is taken to symbolize lack of change and cultural stagnation. On the contrary, the core is linked to continual movement and rapid change as represented by tourists moving from one space to the next.

Within the core/periphery model, the ‘other’ symbolizes the unfamiliar³ occupying spaces on the periphery. In this regard, the Ngwatle Bushmen seem to suit the description appropriately as demonstrated during the encounter. Besides the core/periphery, the concept of the ‘other’ carries with it another set of dichotomies, namely the local/foreign and original/banal. These terms are used here to illustrate the encounter wherein the remote dwellers are considered to be foreign (unfamiliar) and original (uncontaminated). All these negative descriptions stem from the peripheral spaces that the Bushmen occupy in relation to the tourists.

Previously rigid geographical borders, once perceived as ‘enclosures’, have, since the end of the Cold War, now become porous. Travelers are no longer
geographically isolated because of either spatial or ideological differences. In southern Africa, the end of apartheid similarly lifted race-space restrictions/boundaries, permitting a variety of new cross border arrangements, such as the cross border game park which separates/links the Southern Botswana San with those whose land was returned to them in the Northern Cape in early 2000. The significance of place and its impacts on travelling culture continues to generate meaning in new spaces/places. Yet, such manifestations remain ‘arbitrarily’ attached to their origins.

A cultural studies approach in which social relations are analyzed in terms of ‘power geometries’ (Massey, 1994) offers a useful starting point to examine core/periphery relations in the Kalahari. In brief, the paper tackles one of the neglected areas of globalization, namely people. Studies on globalization mostly concentrate on technology, finance, and media, while forgetting the human agents behind the process. This chapter examines the role of the human agent: how do people/travelers facilitate this process while simultaneously fragmenting territorial borders. As they move from one place to another, human beings carry with them the potential to change, which is part and parcel of globalization. My use of the term, ‘globalization’, refers primarily to the impacts of space-time compression. This occurs when people move in and out of their spaces, whether as tourists, researchers or even as ordinary travelers. What used to be closed and discrete spaces become open, and therefore constitute arenas of interaction. Once these territorial borders become porous, social relations created and transformed by culture, change both in content and form as argued by Doreen Massey (1994).

In an attempt to demonstrate this movement, I will reflect on the following elements experienced during the 1999 trip; passport and border crossings, the fragmentation of borders through the use of cellular phones and satellite phones and dishes. All of these phenomena point to the emergence of some kind of domain in which even the most geographically marginalized and remote communities evidence some kind of global interaction (see Tomaselli, 2001). The use of cellular phones, satellite dishes and traditional phones, symbolizes the importance of communication in globalization because they are the means through which space is overcome while distance is shrunk. As Blumler and Gurevitch point out, “media provide the channels through which diverse groups strive to register and disseminate to the rest of society their claims on resources, status, identity and power” (1996:123). The present study, through observation of the encounter between the tourists/observers and the Bushman, examines how human agents contribute to globalization at the local level. Though the emphasis is placed on the human aspect, various forms of globalization will be drawn into the picture to show this as an integrated process.

The Bushman and the Politics of Space
Is space a natural or human construction? In short, does space exist prior to
society or is it a construction of society? Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics (cf. Lefebvre, 1976). "Space is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location" (Massey, 1994: 168). Without these relations therefore, space fails to exist. As Rien Seegers (1997: 1) once remarked, "The Germans live in Germany, the Romans live in Rome, the Turks live in Turkey, but the English live at home". From this quotation, one can see the cultural value of space. The question then arises: where do the Bushmen live? Do they live in the bush? If so, where is the bush? How can one identify the boundaries of the bush? Historically, the Bushmen were known to be nomadic people (Barnard, 1992). The association of the Bushmen with the bush signifies an absence of geographical borders. The travels of Kort Jan and his family over the past 40 years exemplify this point. Together they traveled from the Gemsbok Park in South Africa, via Namibia to Ngwatile in Botswana, where I first met Kort Jan in June 1999. For him, the link with the bush was not only physical. It also had an emotional connotation. Though the Bushmen lived separately in bands, made up of fellow family members, they knew of each other's existence. This was of course despite the long distance involved in seeing each other. Though confined to one place like Ngwatile, another's space/place was always referred to as being 'over there'. Hence this intangible destination was a motivating factor for the nomadism of the past. Other Bushmen are thought to have gone 'there' in their search for life. Taking the Bushmen movement and history as an example, one queries whether globalization is really a new phenomenon. Thinking about the period of the great discoverers, navigators and missionaries, which foreshadowed colonialism, the opposite seems to be the truth. The distinction lies in the fact that the recent and much publicized form of globalization is more rapid and centered around modern technology and ever extending trade routes.

The field trip to Ngwatile and D'Kar revealed changes in the Bushman lifestyle wherein one can claim that, like the English, the Bushman live 'at home'. Though they go out to hunt, the Bushmen do return home to a place where women and children gather and cook food. As a result, they own livestock, for example, dogs, donkeys, horses and goats. This fixed space brought with it interaction with other Botswana communities such as the Bakgalagadi, who before then were few and far between in the area. Through this interaction, the Ngwatile Bushmen community modified its behavior as shown by the construction of grave sites, the use of dogs and donkeys for hunting, and ownership of livestock. In return, the Bushmen imparted to the Bakgalagadi the art of hunting. This mutual interaction and modification of social practices and technologies illustrates how "place is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location" (Massey 1994: 168). Without this location, one may conclude, no interaction will take place. As this interaction occurs, the space undergoes transformation evidenced by the building of huts, which combines both the Bushmen and Bakgalagadi techniques, their mode of dress and language patterns. The metaphor of 'home' is associated with
relative residential immobility. ‘Home’ is a fixed space, a guarantor of survival. The fact that Bushmen were nomads made them susceptible to diseases, especially at an early age. Spatial stability helped in binding the once scattered family membership and band system. These mobile groupings were characterized by inadequate mutual support. Fixed spaces, however, result in identifiable communities, which can became accessible for donations by foreign agencies and tourist investment, as occurred with the three villages in the Ngwathe area, visited in February, 2000.

According to Kort Jan, the past as nomadic and the present as fixed have their own advantages and disadvantages on Bushman lifestyle. The most distinctive disadvantages of a fixed space are the restrictions manifested in things such as the quota system and passports associated with both national and international borders. Passports are the means through which governments apply protectionism by regulating their borders. The question then is: has this endeavor succeeded?

When we left South Africa we carried with us two kinds of mobile phones, namely the normal Vodacom cellular phone and a satellite phone. As we crossed the border into Botswana, we left the South African service provider signal area. To me, this was indicative of the restrictions associated with border crossings. In the middle of the desert, at our destination, with no telephone line or light, a member of our party, Rob Waldron called his wife back at home, and asked her to inform Tomaselli’s family that we had arrived safely. The new possibility of communication via the satellite phone, the first time we had used it, certainly removed much of the anxiety regarding our safety, felt by our families in South Africa. The use of the satellite phone promoted two observations. Apart from the centrality of communication in globalization alluded to previously, some information and messages “flow across old earth boundaries in ways in which no national government can easily prevent” (Massey, 1994: 16). The ability of information and messages to flow without the interference of national governments upholds the rights of citizens to communicate freely. The right to communicate is a cornerstone of every democracy and thus signifies the importance of the media not only to globalization, but also to democratic dispensation. Another observation from satellite phone relates to the way in which time and space are shrunk by technology. Our ability to communicate from remote spaces renders distance less important.

Once fixed space becomes increasingly populated, social friction is more likely to occur because of “location of resistance and radical happenings” (Hooks, 1990: 31). Kort Jan and some members of his family once lived in South Africa. They were forcefully removed from this area by the then government. They later settled in Hukuntsi, Botswana with the Bakgalagadi. They were again alleged to have stolen the latter’s livestock. They were thus evicted and settled in Ngwatle, 80 km north, which is on the outskirts of the modern developments in Botswana. The reason for this movement relates to the inability of the Bushman to protect their own space.
The movement from Hukuntsi to Ngwatile benefited them in that they were relieved of the restrictions connected to the yard system, which were not prevalent in Ngwatile\textsuperscript{11}. A yard system is prevalent in formal settlement wherein every family is allocated a piece of land on which to build a house. Contrary to allocated yards or plots in Hukuntsi, the Bushmen families in Ngwatile are spread across the vast land in the area. This settlement pattern allows free movement and space without confining the Bushmen to allocated yards as in Hukuntsi. All the evictions and forced removals experienced by the Bushmen demonstrate the role of power in the construction of space. This power operates through race, class, gender, ethnicity and more importantly capital (Mosco, 1996; see also Massey, 1994 and Ghani, 1993). The treatment meted out to the Bushmen seems to be linked firstly to capital and then ethnicity\textsuperscript{12}. These elements do not only determine our understanding of the space we inhabit. They further determine our relationship with the world outside (see Harvey, 1989). Capital enables us – the observers - to exercise our power in ways that dominated groups think is natural and inevitable. It is the limited capital amongst the Bushmen that defines their relationship with the group interacting with them. During our interviews with them, we discovered that the majority of them did not want to migrate to other developed settlements such as Ghanzi and D’Kar. It was evident that even if they get employment elsewhere, they will come back to Ngwatile. The question then is why is Ngwatile so special to them? The answer obviously has to be linked to the Bushmen’s migration discussed above. Ngwatile is presumably important because its natural desert state discourages migration by others while consolidating their occupation in legal terms. This view presents space as a location of ‘power-geometries’ also characterized by resistance.

Upon arrival in Ngwatile, we camped approximately 800 meters from the community\textsuperscript{13}. This was done intentionally so as not to interfere and change community life. Every morning we were awakened by the sound of Kwasa-Kwasa and Kwaito\textsuperscript{14} music coming from the village. Hearing the music gave us the impression that we had not left the city.\textsuperscript{15} As we visited some of the Ngwatile and D’Kar dwellings, we were astonished to see an abundance of South African soccer player centerfolds on their walls. Absent were the Botswana soccer players’ posters. The extent of this absence became evident in the friendly soccer match that we organized to improve our interaction with them in the sandy pitch in Ngwatile. We were surprised to realize that most of them had adopted the names of South African players as their nicknames. When we approached the soccer field prior to the game, we were also met by the sound coming from an unattended Omega audio tape player hanging from the pole.

Everyone danced to the music. Shortly thereafter, other villagers started to emerge and gather around the soccer field. It was only then that I came to understand the role of this player and the music that had been breaking the silence since our arrival. It was an indigenization process\textsuperscript{16} at play. The music symbolized the communication behavior within the community. Though an individual property, the tape machine was being used as an alarm signaling
activities or routines within the community. Based on the importance of music to the Bushmen and the atmosphere before the commencement of the game, the tape machine seemed to have prepared the Bushmen for this encounter. To me, this perceived indigenization process or adaptive practice was indicative of how borders have been weakened, resulting in homogenizing what was called local/foreign space, implying therefore that every culture is susceptible to infiltration. Though different definitions of culture are proposed, (for example, see discussion in Dunn, in this volume), it is used in this chapter to mean people’s way of doing things. This differs from one society to the next. My definition conforms well to the Bushman reality of artifacts such as assegais, bows and arrows and beads that are not only attractive to the tourists, but also important in giving the Bushmen a sense of uniqueness and difference. Once contact with ‘other worlds’ is developed, the way in which these artifacts are made and used changes. While some are kept, others are modified, depending on the level of contact. The case of the audio-tape alluded to earlier can be used as an example. In my view, this instrument might have replaced the ‘word of mouth’ tradition, particularly on matters relating to the announcements in the community.

Cultural Exchange and Identity Displacement: The Centrality of Difference

Ghani (1993: 50) perceives space as “an arena of production, reproduction and contestation”. In brief, while we see space as a production site of culture, it cannot be understood outside power relations. During our stay in Ngwatile, we were always visited by both men and women who brought with them crafts ranging from beads and necklaces to assegais and ostrich shells, as well as traditional remedies for kidneys and liver ailments. We bought some of these as gifts for our families and friends. These crafts might be inanimate, but they are not silent. They are cultural products imbued with meaning. In brief, they are the means through which we communicate with Bushman cultures even long after we have left their locales. As a result, one realizes that culture has proved to be an important medium through which symbolic exchange occurs. This is explained by the manner in which culture has become a central issue in protectionism as discussed by Thompson. He argues that “the struggle over power increasingly takes a symbolic and discursive rather than simply a physical and compulsive form, and that politics itself increasingly assumes the form of cultural politics” (1996:213). The application of cultural protectionism by governments demonstrates how culture has infiltrated politics and thus occupies a central position within it.

It is through culture that identity is attained, maintained and preserved. Once culture is infiltrated, identity is likely to become displaced and eventually fragmented. Cultural infiltration occurs when one culture comes into contact with others, thereby borrowing from or adapting to them. Since identity is a product of culture, its originality becomes diluted in an attempt to conform to the
new changes that culture is going through. Contrary to an interpenetrated culture which has come into contact with other cultures which transformed it, original culture has made few contacts which failed to impact heavily on it (see also Öncu and Weyland, 1997). So instead of being fixed, identity will change to conform to a particular space, both social and political, at a given time. Therefore, a displaced identity is temporal as people move from one space to the next. By selling their crafts to us, the Bushmen demonstrated that culture has been turned into a commodity from which labor could be ‘appropriated’ and surplus value ‘extracted’ (Meehan, 1986).

An attempt to extract a surplus during the trip was demonstrated by the Cultural Center that we found in D’Kar. The Center consists of the library, museum and the craft shop. Apart from being a site of expansion, the craft shop serves as a central place in the community, which ensures product quality and standard prices. As a determinant of quality and standard, the craft shop further serves as an institution of small, emergent capital, and power in the form of aid and development agencies. The museum on the other hand, serves as an area of exhibition and promotion of the Bushmen cultures. Being involved in cultural exchange, whether formal or informal, one will be empowering the Bushmen and their economy in one way or the other. Empowerment involves job creation rather than waiting for donations, which eventually make them less active, and more dependent. In other words, anticipation of visits by tourists put the Bushmen to work because they always want to sell something to them, rather than just beg – a sign of dependence.

Culture also travels. Carrying these craft items home is not necessarily a benign activity. These communicative objects carry the history and culture of the makers of these crafts. This became evident when I arrived home. For me, they were decorative objects to occupy an empty space in the house. I was surprised to realize that as people entered the house, the following questions were asked about my new acquisitions: Where did you buy them? Where are the people? How do they live and communicate? What is the role of women in the community? Which languages do they speak, and so forth. By answering these questions, I was unwittingly telling the history and culture of the Bushmen who are 1000 miles away in Ngwatile and D’Kar. In the end, I was fascinated to see how culture travels and penetrates borders into new spaces. Though these new spaces twist their meaning and significance, their relationship with their places of origin will remain intact. The fact that these crafts enter our homes is worth mentioning as it brings back into the picture the point that I raised earlier about ‘home’. By bringing them home we have further blurred the distinction between the Bushman and our spaces. By possessing these crafts, we communicate across space; thereby symbolically compressing time and space (Massey, 1994). As this process continues, the geography of social relations continues to change gradually, for example by the use of dogs and donkeys, modes of dress, belief systems and so on. Unfortunately, this brings with it powers of domination and subordination in some instances, thereby demonstrating the core/periphery model
as explained earlier. Within the context of the encounter, tourists think of
themselves as carriers of change, which the Bushmen have to receive or adopt.
The interesting thing however is that though believing in the collapse of rigid
borders, tourists still want to psychologically maintain the distance between
themselves and this ‘other’ inhabiting peripheral space which, as Edward Said
(1995: 54), writes, “they call the land of the barbarians”. As an example,
Bushman produce crafts, but the absence of high technology denies them the
opportunity to see the impact that they make on the world outside their space.
They continue to remain outside (periphery) the domains of the ‘international
public sphere (core). Contrary to the high technology prevalent in the
international public sphere, the peripheral Bushman community is characterized
by its absence. Modern travelers tend to long for an original state of innocence,
a state of purity before the Fall (Tomaselli, 1992). The encounter between tourists
and First Peoples could be interpreted within this framework – as an attempt to
search for original culture (Tomaselli, 1999). When interviewing the two young
Bushmen who lived in Ngwatle since their birth, Pedris and Motshabise, about
the general perception of the people who visit them, I was shocked to realize that
the majority of the visitors are disappointed when they find them dressed in
modern clothes. This scenario presents the encounter as a socio-economic and
political activity wherein social class and racial and economic power determine
the nature of social relations.

Why the disappointment? A possible answer might be that we always visit the
Bushmen with preconceived ideas about them. This, I presume, is made possible
by the materials in circulation such as television commercials, films, and books.
It is this preconceived idea that motivated some of us to visit them. This idea is
confirmed by John Thompson’s concept of “mediated worldliness”. This, writes
Thompson, “deals with our sense of the world which lies beyond the sphere of
our personal experience as shaped by mediated symbolic forms”. In other words,
our experience of the distant world, continues Thompson, is shaped by the media:

It gives us that lived experience, which is often preceded by a set of
images and expectations acquired through extended exposure to media
products. Even in those cases where our experience of distant places
does not concur with our expectations, the feeling of novelty or surprise
often attests to the fact that our lived experience preceded by a set of
preconceptions derived, at least to some extent, from the words and
images conveyed by the media (Thompson 1995: 34-35).

As the quotation clearly shows, through the help of media products we are no
longer confined to our local spaces, but we continue to invade distant ones as
well. Invasion has to do not only with the way in which the media captures,
portrays and commodifies the conditions under which the Bushmen live, but also
the way in which the tourists react to the Bushmen spaces during the encounter,
such as entering the Bushmen’s private dwelling places. As much as we
appreciate this mediated world, it is not without disadvantages. There is
distortion and confusion between representation and reality. In other words,
though some of these products have been produced many years ago, they are still
distributed widely across the globe. The tourists’ expectations and understanding
of foreign cultures are based on these products. Seeing the Bushmen in anything
other than their traditional regalia does not conform to their (tourists)
expectations, hence it creates a sense of disappointment. Spaces of representation
and representations of space differ (Lefebvre, 1976). In other words, when
spaces change with time, they are no longer accessible to us as people, but only
represented symbolically, as exemplified by the wearing of traditional clothes.
By requesting the Bushmen to put on their traditional regalia, tourists want them
to conform to stereotypical preconceptions by returning to a particular space
linked to their past way of life. This is contained in one of the Ngwatile
community’s responses towards the Spoornet calendar pictures: “we no longer
live like this as you can see, we do it when we have visitors like you so that you
can give us money. The same can be said of the label Bushman. We no longer
live in the bush, but for the sake of the tourists, we accept the label”.20 Apart
from the representation of space contained in these comments, the power of
capital is highlighted, thereby illustrating further that the encounter is also a
process of reinforcing domination. Thus, whatever takes place between the
Bushmen and their visitors is exacerbated by the latter’s level of power within
the highly industrialized world.

The notion of spaces of representation relates to arenas which the Bushmen
use to show-case their past life. The hunting trip serves as a space characterizing
representation of this past life. The distinction therefore deals with the
disjuncture between past traditions associated with ‘originality’ and the present,
as entailed in the above comments. During the answering of questions about
Bushman crafts, I was fascinated by the sense of difference evoked by Bushman
history and culture in contrast to our own. By difference, I refer here to the
unfamiliar practices or the ways of doing things displayed by production of these
artifacts. This difference makes us who we are, for identity is meaningless
outside other identities alongside it. As a result, difference is not only a primary
factor in identity formation, it is, as shown by elements such as language,
clothing, appearance and so on, also its strong indicator and therefore
distinguishes us from others close to home.

As an embodiment of meaning creating process, identity is a matter of
difference (see also Eagleton, 1983; Hall, 1997; Saks, 1997). Difference
therefore, can be taken to be the primary stage of identity construction.21 It is this
difference, I argue, that motivates us, as tourists, to visit small communities like
that of the Bushmen. When tourists visit them, there is always one question that
we have in our minds: how are they different from us? Immediately after our
encounter with them, tourists will be able to make the following pronouncements: they live like that, they sleep like that, their houses are like that
and so forth. One can, because of the centrality of difference in the modern era,
conclude that tourism celebrates difference which is turned into a commodity. As human beings therefore, we live in a world not only characterized and dominated by difference, but one which values and emphatically celebrates it. When we fail to detect this difference, we enforce it by our power invested in capital as Petrus’s comments about tourists’ expectations indicated earlier. As an instrument of power, capital determines who travels where, how, and when and the status to be given to tourists (see also Bauman, 1998). As a determinant of power, capital further erodes the sharp distinction between representation and the real as it imposes representation on the real by ignoring the latter. Though the Bushmen in Ngwatile do not normally dress in their traditional garments, they are encouraged to do so by the power of tourists. This indicates the tourists’ attempt to maintain the difference as represented in the media. As part of the globalization process, the encounter consolidates some of its imbalances by degrading and fragmenting the cultures of remote dwellers. Thus, the remote dwellers model their lifestyles on the center while the opposite does not occur. In their adaptations of new lifestyles and practices, the culture of the remote dwellers is gradually eroded.

While people value and appreciate difference, it is the beginning of classification which carries with it marginality which sometimes leads to denigration. In my opinion, the question of difference drives and promotes encounters. This is evident in the tourists’ disappointments referred to earlier by Pedris and Motshabise. As an example, tourists often request the Bushmen to put on their traditional regalia and also ask them (Bushmen) to take them on hunting trips. It is only then that tourists are satisfied that they have seen original Bushmen and so start taking pictures. These photos are taken back home, for they are cultural symbols that tourists want to circulate in order to demonstrate this difference. These deliberate practices are also manifested in the questions asked about Bushman arts and crafts. At that time, one question came to my mind: why do people like to see the Bushmen in traditional attire? For me, this attire symbolizes the past associated with originality and authenticity of the Bushmen as a First People. It is this originality based on difference that people are desperately searching for. This search, I presume, is a self-fulfilling process to replace their lost traditions. Hence, tourists fail to accept the changes that the Bushman culture is going through. The search is self-fulfilling in the sense that it creates the impression for the tourists that they have made contacts with authentic and yet different people. Unfortunately, the difference created by globalization is temporal and perhaps more homogenized, for it is more representational than real since it’s driven by capital.

Thus the Ngwatile Bushmen only look different at the request of tourists. Once the tourists are out of sight, they revert back to the present lifestyle not different from ordinary people elsewhere. As soon as spaces are completely compressed, and distance overcome, this difference fades away. The encounter symbolizes the compression of these spaces for the same kind of music, be it Kwaito or Kwasa-Kwasa, can be heard even in the middle of the desert. Furthermore, the
Bushman dress just like the inhabitants of the center and through the radio, they listen to the news and sports to which people in the wider world around listen. So once the encounters with tourists become more frequent, culture is exchanged, bringing about more similarities than differences, as shown by the dominance of Kwasa-Kwasa and Kwaito music in Ngwatile. All these changes are compromised upon the arrival of the tourists who want to see them as different, as portrayed by the media.

The fact that the Bushmen culture is part of a particular space means that it cannot survive the changes taking place. (Since the Bushmen never had a fixed space linked to their culture in the past, they managed to survive contacts, which would have rapidly changed their way of life). For space as Ross argues, “is not a static reality, but an active one created by our interaction. It is this interaction”, continues Ross, “that transforms us” (Ross, 1988. cited in Gregory, 1990:9). By refusing to come to terms with the new identity of the Bushmen, not only are tourists failing to accept change in their lives, but they are also confusing their identity as shaped and constructed by their new space and time which they call ‘home’. This is done as explained earlier by confusing representation and reality. Having the Bushmen in traditional regalia does not mean that they are real Bushmen. It is a representation of their past and yet transformed identity. Through this representation, one realizes that identity construction is an evolving process determined by space and time. An attempt to understand identity outside these two linked factors is inadequate as identity is shaped by these factors.

**Conclusion**

The chapter demonstrated how social relations are transformed by the fragmentation of geographical borders. The word transformation is used to denote transformation as a continuous and comprehensive process, which involves emotional, physical and psychological elements required in every sphere of life. As we move in and out of a particular space as tourists, exiles, refugees, illegal immigrants and so on, we contribute in one way or the other towards the fragmentation and the weakening of the territorial borders safeguarding closed social relations. Though these processes can be seen positively as a contribution to the diversity and enrichment of the Bushmen culture, it has its drawbacks. Thus, the fragmentation of these borders carries with it adaptation which influences our way of doing things, such as language, life style, and mode of dress, religion and most importantly the way we relate to the world outside. The recently adopted sedentary life style of the Bushmen provides a good platform for interaction between them and foreigners. This has resulted in the placement of Ngwatile as a heartland of cultural interfusion. This paper has sought to show that from the day of the encounters, the Ngwatile Bushman culture has never been the same as it was originally. With more tourists being attracted to the area, the cultural evolution is far from finished.

Apart from the advantages and disadvantages of fragmenting borders due to globalization, one can see future prospects of this interfusion facilitated by
cultural exchange. It is important to acknowledge the role of people as agents of cultural change and exchange. In this context, the following question becomes crucial: What will the culture of the Ngwatile Bushman look like in the next twenty years? Will the much sought after authenticity/originality by the tourists be preserved? This comes amid the continual movement towards the much-sought Bushman cultures. Despite the dynamism associated with culture, one has to make clear that the fragmentation of geographical borders is inevitable. This brings with it the blurring distinction between the core/periphery, local/foreign and original/banal binary categories as features of discrete and enclosed spaces. The dichotomies explain the encounter as uneven wherein ‘periphery’, ‘time’ and ‘original’, as linked to the Bushmen, are used to denote fixity. However, ‘core’, ‘space’, ‘foreign’ and ‘banal’ are thought of in dynamic terms. The fact that metropolitan societies miles away from Ngwatile and D’Kar are consuming the Bushmen’s cultures, considered to be peripheral, testifies to this unevenness. With the proliferation of satellite dishes in areas like D’Kar, the Bushmen are gradually being integrated into the ‘global’ public sphere. Having left a rock and roll cassette, we will not be surprised, next time, to find some additional influence of this music on Ngwatile lifestyle.

While people continue to search for originality in the Bushmen, their authentic culture is continuously being transformed (contaminated). The end-result will be cultural change that other ‘subaltern’ cultures went through. For cultures of remote dwellers, this process of rapid change might mean cultural degradation or decadence.

ENDNOTES

1 The field trip was part of a much larger project undertaken by Keyan Tomaselli with regard to representations of the San in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. See Tomaselli (1999, 2001). The project was funded by the Natal University Research Fund. Other students on this trip included Jeffrey Sehume and Anthea Simoes, and filmmaker Rob Waldron. Belinda Jeursen and Tomaselli (2001) did previous work on the area.

2 This idea is confirmed by the classification of the Bushman as one of the Remote Area Dwellers (RADS) by the Botswana government to signify them as the rurally poor people (Barnard, 1992).

3 Though Lacan (1977) views the other as always shifting positions, it is not as fixed or stable during the encounter with the remote dwellers.

4 This idea connects well with the San religious system which views God as the sky who overlooks them from every direction (see also Barnard, 1992). All of them emphasize the idea of boundlessness.

5 During conversations with the Kruiper clan at Kagga-Kamma (South Africa), they always alluded to this space which is said to be behind the mountains (CMS Fieldtrip
6 The nomadic life of the Bushmen did not allow much interaction. Families were kept as small and apart as possible especially in winter when food was scarce (Barnard, 1992). Though the Bushmen were living miles away from each other, they always knew of other family members existing far away in the place they referred to as ‘other side’. With the non-existence of the boundaries then, they could visit each other during autumn or raining season.

7 Imposed by the Botswana government, the quota system prohibits the killing of bigger wild animals such as Kudu, Gemsbok, Eland and so forth in winter. For the Bushmen, this is inconceivable considering limited resources within their means during this time (interview with Kort Jan).

8 Kort Jan once lived in South Africa, before travelling to Namibia. He does not have a passport. This hinders him from visiting friends and families outside Ngwatile.

9 The original land in the Northern Cape from where the Kruipers at Kagga Kamma came from was returned them by the Land Claims Court in South Africa in early 2000.

10 The fact that the Bushmen lived in bands, implies that they could not be involved in large-scale confrontation. According to Chirot (1994), when faced by competitors, they had little choice other than fleeing into ever remoter areas because their numbers did not permit them to resist successfully.

11 Traveling through the Ngwatile village, we realized how the changing living patterns in the village moves which was going to be difficult had the Bushman not left Hukuntsi. Thus, at one period they become very close to each other and they later move approximately five hundred meters from each other. During autumn, the kraal, which is often constructed at the center of the homestead, serves as the meeting point for cultural activities. This process has been going on for some time as marks in Ngwatile indicated.

12 In Botswana, the Bushmen are referred to as Basarwa, from a Tswana word Basarua, which means people who own nothing. Though the Bushmen do own goats, donkeys and horses, this seems to be inadequate to the Batswana economy based on cattle rearing. In Northern Sotho, Basarwa means people who are doing unfamiliar or uncommon things. As a result, the term denigrates the Bushmen as people.

13 We had to ask for permission from the headman

14 While Kwasa-Kwasa originated from the formerly Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo, Kwaito is a South African township music emerging in the early 1990s and has support amongst the youth.

15 Contrary to the remote Ngwatile, metropolitan areas are sites of cultural contestation.
Indegenization according to Thompson (1996) is the transformation of foreign goods to suit local use. In this regard, the local culture is not wiped out, but strengthened by foreign technology.

In an interview with one of the Bushmen, he told us how his conception of God changed after seeing a movie shown by the tourists. According to him, one of the tourists singled out one of the images on the screen and told him that was God. Since then, he thought of God as a human being rather than sky or wind in accordance with the Bushman belief system (cf. Barnard, 1992).

Pedris was at that time actively involved in the establishment of a Trust in Ngwatile that would oversee the community benefiting from tourism in the area. Unfortunately the project was at that time coordinated through Kudu Trust which was a few miles away from the area.

Apart from The God must be crazy I & II produced in the mid-eighties, South Africa’s railway company, Spoornet, used Bushman culture for their print and television advertisements. Though these products deal with the company at present, they depicted the past traditions of the Bushmen. Spoornet further distributed calendars nationally, that showed the lifestyle of the Bushmen. (see Tomaselli, 1992; Buntman, 1995).

An interview with Pedris, who wanted tourism in the area to be regulated through a Trust of some sort to avoid the possible exploitation of Ngwatile community.

According to Hall (1997), difference matters because it is essential to meaning. Without it, meaning cannot exist. Therefore, because of the centrality of difference, meaning is relational. Hence when identity is constructed, besides it.

In 1936, the National Parks Board in South Africa refused to allocate a piece of land to the Bushmen arguing that ‘they were not pure Bushmen as many of them spoke Afrikaans’ (Gordon 1995: 32). After changing its mind, the Board allocated them a place in Struis Zyn Dam in 1940. According to Gordon, the criteria was as follows: i) be of sufficient Bushman type. ii) they had to habitually use either Bushman or Nama as their language. iii) they had to provide evidence of a Bushman cultural background (ibid.35). Gordon notes that the following words are used to denigrate the Bushman; the little wrinkled people, inarticulate, primitive people.

Like most societies, Bushmen only put on their traditional regalia on special occasions like celebrations or when they are requested to do so by the tourists.

According to Doreen Massey (1994), space and time are inseparable. On the eve of our departure from Ngwatile to D’Kar, one Bushman requested a broken rock ‘n roll cassette which he fixed, and an Adidas cap. On the next day, the cassette was being played on the tape recorder while he was wearing the cap.
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Chapter 16

A LOCAL ENCOUNTER ON A GLOBAL LANDSCAPE:
A CRITIQUE OF GIBSON BOLOKA’S ENCOUNTERING
THE ‘OTHER’

ANTHEA SIMOES

The most significant theme of Gibson Boloka’s analysis is his re-introduction of human agency into the larger process of globalization. The human encounter described is that between the author and the San Bushmen communities of Botswana. This relationship is theorized within the framework of the interplay between core and periphery and the interrelationship between place and culture which travels, and transforms in so doing. Borders are seen to fragment, cultures infiltrate and social relations transform as a result. That which is emphasized is the humans involved in this transformation - a dimension often neglected in political economy theory.

The most salient themes of Boloka’s investigation include the politics of spatiality, the exchange and commodification of culture, and issues of identity and identity construction (which includes the politics of difference). All of these are examined within the wider context of globalization. My own critique serves as further problematization of these issues, as well as an indication of additional points which would be relevant to the analysis. It is hoped that the complexities of the contemporary circumstances of culture, identity formation and the development of localizing forces in relation to the global, will be brought into sharper relief within a general framework of political economy.

Context of Globalization

From the outset, Boloka specifies his use of the term globalization in terms of space-time compression. A short investigation into this complex and ubiquitous term will be useful for a general understanding of the context in which the encounter takes place, as well as some of its dynamics. Different aspects of the phenomenon (of globalization) will be addressed in detail in the critique.

The term ‘globalization’ is described not only as the space-time compression of the world, but also as an intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole (Robertson, 1992; see also McGrew, 1992). The work of Anthony Giddens (1990) outlines the institutions of modernity in terms of which the process of globalization may be understood. They are the world capitalist economy, industrialism, the world military order and surveillance or the global information system (1990: 59). The world system of nation-states is also a critical underpinning of these four institutions. These institutions allow for the separation of time and space and ‘dismembering’, or in Chris Barker’s (1999:34)
words, the “fitting out, of social relations developed in one locale and their re-embedding in different places”. Both of these factors are relevant to the encounter described by Boloka (2002; see also Tomaselli, 2001).

A common understanding of globalization is that it is a phenomenon of “economic activity [conducted] on a planetary scale” (Barker, 1999: 35) which has various political and socio-cultural consequences worldwide. The World Communication Report states that globalization symbolizes the “worldwide triumph of market economies and the liberalization of international trade” (1997: 13). The two main sections examined in Boloka’s study - space, culture and identity - relate to some of the controversial issues associated with the discourse of globalization. These include the boundedness of nation-states in relation to world-wide economic and cultural flows which disregard geographic borders, the uneven development of the global economy which excludes many Third World countries altogether, issues of local identity in relation to the global, cultural homogenization or fragmentation, and the role of communication in creating the “phantasm of a global symbolic community” (Comaroff, 1996: 168).

**Politics of Space**

Spatiality is a key concept in the context of globalization. The “current stage of globalization, driven by transnational corporations, is nonintentionally contributing to the restitution of space and location and to the multiplication of local histories” (Mignolo, 1998: 36).

This point is extended into an argument, which basically purports that this new language of spatialization results in a rejection of the historical construction of Third World societies as ‘living in the past’. Instead, it asserts the present as a “variety of chronological circles and temporal rhythms” (Mignolo, 1998: 37). In other words, globalization allows for conditions to be thought of as spatially rather than chronologically. Of course, the very meaning of ‘space’ and ‘spatial boundaries’ have taken on a new form in the modern world. Boloka is careful to establish the historical root in globalizing forces. Reference to the historical construction of difference is important considering the title of the chapter, which includes reference to the ‘Other’. I shall return to this point later.

Spatialization, according to Vincent Mosco’s inference (1996: 173), refers to the power of capital to overcome constraints of space and time through the improvement of transportation and communication systems. It also entails the transformation of space by “restructuring the spatial relationships among people, goods and messages” (1996: 174). Globalization (an allusive and mythologized term, according to Mosco) might be pinned down as the spatial agglomeration of capital, led by transnational business and the state, that transforms the spaces through which flow resources and commodities, including communication and information. The outcome is a literal transformation of the geography of communication and information that accentuates certain spaces and the relationships among them (Mosco, 1996: 205).
Globalization does not entail the elimination of space, but rather its transformation, the creation of a system where increasing areas are linked through the new technology, but certain nodal points where power is centralized, are strengthened (Mosco, 996: 205). Within such a globalized system, the global order’s centers are no longer the capitals of nation-states but rather “pulse points of complex networks” (Comaroff, 1996: 172).

Particular spatial and power relationships are suggested by Boloka’s reference to the core and the periphery (Boloka, 2002; see also Thompson, 1996). The double layered conception of core and periphery suggested by Hopeton Dunn’s (2002) diagram of power-flows, should be extended to a triple layer in this instance. Within the scale of the nation-state, the San are on the periphery politically, as a minority group to the Tswana and economically and geographically, as a poor rural community in relation to the more developed urban areas in the East of Botswana. Within the sub-Saharan region, the relationship of Boloka as a black South African to the Ngwatile San as citizens of Botswana can be conceptualized in terms of South Africa’s historical hegemony in the sub-continent. And then on a global scale, the relationship of tourists to the San suggests the construction of the core North to the peripheral South. This illustration is indicative of the complex ways in which spatiality can be conceived in the contemporary context of high capitalism.

The relation of the political, economic and geographic to the position of the San in the nation-state of Botswana requires further elaboration. During the colonial and postcolonial period, all Khoisan-speaking people were classified into a single, ‘homogenous’ ethnic group called the ‘BaSarwa’, whose contribution to the Botswana economy was as a “secondary labor reserve” (Wilmsen, 1996: 8). Boloka (2002) explains the derogatory meanings of the word, which indicate the power relations constructed discursively (see also Katz et al, 1997; Gordon, 1992; Wilmsen, 1989). These ethnic labels were renegotiated during the 1990s and class interests aligned different groups of ruraly poor in different ways. Ngwatile, where Boloka visited, actually accommodates a mixture of both Basarwa and Bakgalagadi, which is one of the thirteen Tswana tribal groups, as well as people of mixed heritage from both groups. In line with the work of John Comaroff, Edwin Wilmsen states that “[e]thnicity, then, is a relational concept, one in which the dominant are able to define the subordinant” (Wilmsen, 1996: 5). The term “internal colonialism” refers to a situation where a “richer, culturally dominant core group subordinates an ethnically or racially identified minority or ‘periphery’ group within the same country” (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 62).

Ethnic labels in the era of advanced globalization tend to homogenize groups within which there are various divisions and alternative identities (Langer, 1998). Divisions of class and politics are glossed over by unities of culture and
language. Further, “[c]ontested histories which produce different subject-positions” are ignored (Langer, 1998: 165), as was found by the Culture and Media Studies researchers at Ngwatle. This is part of a ‘strategy’ of exchanging individual histories for a singular culture which “excludes long standing territorial disputes or communal conflict” (Langer, 1998: 165) or even, it could be suggested, economic inequalities. This is interesting considering the disadvantaged position of the San despite their legitimate claim to the land of Southern Africa as constructed by ethnic discourse in Botswana.

The politics of space is a vital part of the process of globalization and is of particular interest, as outlined by Boloka, in the case of the San. Historically, the San were nomadic and had an emotional, almost spiritual bondage to a land that was understood to have no boundaries. This notion of ‘boundlessness’ is piquant, as it appears to ring truer of the modern context of economic activities being conducted on a world scale than of the San themselves. Boloka (2002) describes how the San’s new sedimentary lifestyle, exemplified in the settlements at Ngwatle and D’Kar, resulted in social interaction and therefore transformation of social practices and technologies.

Although globalization involves the overcoming of boundaries and the relative loss of power of individual nation-states, Barker stresses how place still remains significant as an “intersection or nodal point of global flows but in unpredictable ways” (1999: 35). In Boloka’s analysis, place becomes crucial for the intersection of travelling cultures. The conception of travel appears better suited to cultures in late modernity because all locales are subject to distant locations. Interestingly, San cultures have probably always been travelling cultures.

A reductionist view of spatialization in globalization discourse, which focuses only on the relations between the advanced societies, should be avoided. More appropriate is the concept of a “set of hierarchical political economic and cultural relations articulated and disarticulated within and across all nations” (Mosco, 1996: 206), as exemplified by the analysis of core-periphery. Boloka’s examples of the satellite phones and dishes, the tape recorder and the South African soccer posters exemplify the inclusion into the global political economic and cultural world system of the most remote and unlikely places, even if it is as part of a unified and yet entirely unequal system. Keyan Tomaselli (2001) similarly offers a reflexive methodology deriving from field trips between 1994 and 2000 to Botswana, where digital TV images jostle with pre-modern lifestyles and forms of identity.

There is much contemporary analysis of the rise in local identities and localizing forces in opposition to the global. In fact, the growth in local identities and the globalization of culture are considered complementary sides of the same historical process (Comaroff, 1996). Accordingly, Wilmse concludes that “[t]he global has to be interpreted and domesticated for it to have local meaning, and this in turn - the experience of globalism - underscores and reinforces an awareness of localism” (1996: 17).
Culture, Cultural Exchange, Cultural Commodification

In concrete terms, Boloka’s examples bring to mind the mechanistic debates about globalization as cultural imperialism or cultural homogenization, as opposed to a more nuanced interaction and negotiation. In Boloka’s experience, cultural exchange occurs quite literally. The visitors take with them tourist memorabilia that speak ‘on behalf of’ the Ngwarre San in a new locale and (it is later mentioned) they leave behind a tape of rock and roll music. The conventional model of cultural exchange “presumes the existence of a pure, internally homogenous, authentic, indigenous culture which becomes subverted or corrupted by foreign influences” (Morley and Robins, 1995: 129). The reality, however, as argued by Boloka (2002) and Tomaselli (2001), is that “every culture has, in fact, ingested foreign elements from exogenous sources, with the various elements gradually becoming ‘naturalised’ within it” (Morley and Robins, 1995: 129-130; see Simoes, 2001).

In accordance with this perspective, Boloka interprets the tape recorder as an object of indigenization. In a discussion of the tension between cultural homogenization and heterogenization, Arjun Appadurai (1993) argues that “as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies, they tend to become indigenized” (328). This interpretation resonates with Comaroff’s statement that “[t]he transnational flow of universalizing signs demands their domestication, that they be made meaningful and salient to homespun realities” (1996: 174). In her study on Salvadoran refugees in multicultural states, Beryl Langer (1998) demonstrates how the discourse of the opposition between dominant and ethnic cultures often disguises the permeability of cultural boundaries. She speaks not of “discretely bounded ‘ethnic culture’, but of ‘life-worlds’ that had to a greater or lesser extent incorporated elements of global culture” (1998: 171). This also highlights the fact that although the world seems to be drawing nearer to a global culture, local cultural forms still have agency over the way that they use, incorporate and negotiate global trends.

It should be noted that my use of the term ‘culture’ is used in accordance with Boloka’s paper. Also, in the absence of one more appropriate or useful, it is hoped that a more flexible, permeable and less bounded conception of culture is achieved in my argument, in contrast with more traditional, anthropological understandings. A suitable definition of culture is that it consists of “concrete sets of signifying practices - modes of generating meaning- that create communication orders of one kind or another” (Nyamnjoh, 1999: 15; see also Barnard, 1997: 51-52). This definition of culture, according to cultural studies, allows for the understanding of the different forms of exchanges and mutations
The presence of satellite dishes in some remote Botswana communities is mentioned but not detailed in the paper. Satellite television is “free of geographical restrictions” (Paterson, 2000: 7) and is therefore advantageous to the large rural populations normally excluded from access to terrestrial channels (which have only recently been established in Botswana in terms of a national broadcaster). It does, at the same time, beg the question of content, which typically consists of “sports, American movies, and European and American newscasts” (Paterson, 2000: 7-8). This is suggestive of the damaging one-way flow of communication from the West to the Rest that is often criticized in contemporary political economic debates, as exemplified by Chris Paterson’s visual imperialistic approach. Although such arguments perform the important task of indicating biases in world-wide information flows, which need to be corrected, they ignore the possibilities for negotiation of the global within local contexts.

Boloka nevertheless concludes his chapter with the nostalgic vision of authentic Bushman culture as “continuously being transformed (contaminated)” with the “end-result... [of] cultural change [and possibly] cultural degradation or decadence”. The interpretation which is implied appears to be more along the lines of “the simple expansion of western institutions and cultural formations to the rest of the world” rather than a “set of unpredictable, disjointed and multidirectional cultural flows” (Barker, 1999: 33). The examples cited in his chapter, however, propose a situation, which involves a more complex process of give-and-take that cannot be simplified to a process of simple domination or one-way influence.

Boloka states that on a basic level, the Bushman culture “has been turned into a commodity” (see also Tomaselli, 1999b: 205). The commodity is the most common embodiment of capitalism, and “commodification is the process of transforming use values into exchange values” (Mosco, 1996: 141). Boloka cites the example of the crafts that are sold to tourists. These crafts symbolize culture, and Boloka argues that when they are transported into new spaces, they blur the cultural boundaries between the “Bushman and our spaces”. Although it is not explicitly stated, it could even be inferred that the San themselves have become a commodity whose image they adapt for greater market worth to the tourists. Boloka suggests that the imposition of representation on the real, through the tourists purchasing a particular image of the Bushmen, signifies the power of capital. This coincides potentially with Maria Koundoura’s (1998) statement that the commodification of culture occurs not only through the nation-state and its institutions, but also within “complex cultural and economic processes of multinational capital” (71).

The tourist scenario brings up the issue of the Western search for ‘original culture’, shaped by the often distorted images which are produced by the media of the cultures visited. The tourist invests capital in attaining an experience of
difference as compared to the real. The nature of the encounter between observers and observed is often impacted by the motivations of the Westerners, their search to find “in the margins of the Third World a figment of their imagination, a fantasy of Western consciousness - the exotic, erotic, primitive, the happy savage” (Bruner nd: 29; see e.g. Tomaselli, 1999b: 206-207). This romantic characterization not only suppresses the real conditions of life, but also creates an illusion of a life that never really existed. As Comaroff aptly interprets Appadurai, in the much dissected global ecumene, “mass tourism encourages the celebration, circulation, and consumption of the exotic” (1996: 172). Cultural interchange is also vital when one considers Comaroff’s statement that “identities are not things but relations; that their content is wrought in the particularities of their ongoing historical construction” (1996: 165-166).

Identity and Identity Construction

Analysis of identity in Boloka’s chapter is important considering the concept’s “centrality to the question of agency and politics” (Hall, 1996a: 2). Boloka correctly suggests that identity is a process determined by space and time. However, it would seem that a more complex process of identity formation is at work in the San situation, than is implied. This would entail analysis in terms of Hall’s second model of identity which describes identity as “relational and incomplete” as opposed to the former version, “fully constituted, separate and distinct” (Grossberg, 1996: 89; see also Hall, 1990).

To the temporal and spatial logic, discursive representation and language should be added (Simoes, 2001). Stuart Hall (1996), influenced by the theories of identification of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, names the psyche along with discourse in the constitution of identity. In a similar vein, Cornell and Hartmann (1998) highlight the social psychology of individual identity formation. Such investigations will not however be included in this critique, as it is the outward social factors in the constitution of San identities, which would have been observable and relevant to Boloka.

In the more recent, flexible model of identity, cultural identity is viewed not as a static definition of a particular common origin or common experiences (Hall, 1990). Rather, culture is impermanent and creates a tension within the individual between “roots” and “routes” (Hall, 1997: 4). Identities are “fragmented and fractured” (Hall, 1996a: 4) rather than unitary or singular (see also Hall, 1994). The notion of a unitary or singular cultural identity based on a particular historical origin corresponds with the persistence of certain myths about the San. These are evident in the interactions between tourists and the San. Langer (1998) argues that in relation to the modern, Western conception of society/community, ethnic groups are constituted as ‘communal’ and also ‘pre-modern’ which nostalgically fixes these representatives of the traditional world in time. She advocates that this is indicative of a “wilful ignorance about the economic and technological changes that have fundamentally altered the
conditions of identity-formation throughout the globe” (1998: 170). In other words, this ignorance coincides with the understanding of conditions as chronological rather than spatial. It marks the inflexibility of the tourists, for example, in being unable to recognize people dressed in Western clothes, listening to a tape recorder, with access to satellite television, as “real” San/Bushmen.

Subjectivity can also be interpreted as spatial, as opposed to temporal, which involves taking literally the statement that people experience the world from a particular position” (Grossberg, 1996: 100). Boloka’s analysis clearly illustrates the contradictions that location provides. Fixed space is a “guarantor of survival” (Boloka, 2002) but also results in social interaction and cultural infiltration. As already mentioned, land is particularly relevant in the San scenario because of how closely their identity is religiously linked to it. The issue of land rights (or more appropriately, the lack of them) is pivotal in the case of the Ngwatile San, asserts Robert Waldron who is creative director of an advertising company in Johannesburg and a regular visitor to Ngwatile (Jeursen, 1995).

The movement of Kort Jan and his family between Namibia and parts of south central Botswana, described by Boloka, is suggestive of a ‘culture of migration’ which combines elements of the old parent culture and the new, evident substantively in the trappings of their new life. As T.S. Eliot remarks, in the context of migration, “the people have taken with them only a part of the total culture ... The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture” (in Bhabha, 1996: 94).

There exists the contention, by Cornell and Hartmann (1998), that migration frequently results in processes of identity construction, as different cultures are brought into contact with each other, and old arrangements are changed and new competition occurs for the same resources. The migration path of the family and its interactions and altercations with people en route and in their new home; the “social frictions” which are more likely to occur as “fixed space becomes increasingly populated” (Boloka, 2002) are indicative of this. The subjects of the photographs in Boloka’s presentation appear culturally mixed. This would belie the assumption that there are cohesive, insular communities still in existence and assert the existence instead of the “hybrid ‘cultures’ that intersect through migration at the end of the Twentieth Century” (Langer, 1998: 175).

The discursive approach to identity focuses on identity as constructed by various discursive practices through exclusion and difference. Of course, the Ngwatile and D’Kar San may not necessarily identify with subject positions constructed through representation, but discourse does produce the context in which their identity is understood. The world is constituted in part (even if only in small part) by how it is represented (Hall, 1996a: 340). Boloka alludes to such processes of discursive representation in the context of the ethnic discourse of Tswana politics (as already mentioned) and in relation to the preconceived ideas of the tourists as formed through media images which fix the Bushmen as
primitive, authentic and untouched. (‘The Great Bushman Myth’ creates a static, insular vision of Bushman culture and relates back to historical, colonial discourses of difference that reduce cultures of the ‘Other’ to their essences). The construction of identity occurs in the “encounter with the assumptions of the encompassing culture of the society at large” (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998: 174).

The one area one finds lacking in the chapter is a consideration of the issue of language. The original San languages are at risk of complete disuse. Benedict Anderson (1983) illustrates how the combination of the capitalist development of print and the “fatal diversity of language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community” (9). His focus is on the formation of national consciousness, and national and ethnic cultural identities can also span over borders. But the importance of language in identity formation is duly noted. Language is a significant factor in identity construction, and it would be useful to have more information that describes the San groups encountered. “Language recognition and cultural recognition... are [also] important parts of political empowerment for Indigenous peoples” (Katz et al., 1997: 186). Belinda Jeursen (1996) and Keyan Tomaselli (2001) make reference to challenges experienced with regard to language during interviews on research trips. Richard Katz, Megan Biesele and Verna St. Denis (1997) are careful to acknowledge the work of the translators who aided them during their research, and link the use of the orthography of the Ju/'hoan language to respecting and better understanding Ju/'hoan society. Language would have affected the dynamics of Boloka’s encounter and would have shown links to other groups in Botswana. Jeffrey Sehume (2000), who accompanied Boloka on the same trip, describes the multiple identity backgrounds of the Ngwatile community, which he argues is evident in language use. One man described, speaks a mixture of Sesarwa, Afrikaans (which derives from his work experience) and Tswana. Within a larger context, language is relevant in analyzing impacts of globalization which is “creating the condition for and enacting the relocation of languages and the fracture of cultures” (Mignolo, 1998: 42).

In terms of collective ethnic identity, one may distinguish between primordialist and circumstantialist views of ethnicity (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). In the former, ethnicity is fixed and unchanging and is rooted in history. This evidently corresponds with the first model of identity as already described. In the latter, ethnicity is considered fluid and changeable; it is useful and adapts to changing circumstances. This relates to the second model of identity as identified by Hall. Cornell and Hartmann also emphasize a constructionist view of ethnic identity whereby ethnicity is a social construction. Ethnic identity is seen as a combination of the conditions of society (and its changes), as well as the active involvement of humans in the “construction and reconstruction of identities, negotiating boundaries, asserting meanings, interpreting their own pasts, resisting the impositions of the present, and claiming the future” (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998: 101). Such a view of ethnic identity emphasizes the San’s agency in their own identity construction. Perhaps the example of the San
manipulating their traditional image for the benefit of tourists is an example not only of the economic commodification of people, but also of the communities’ construction and reproduction of their identity.

The role of international agencies (not examined by Boloka), for example human rights and aid, religious and environmental organizations, is paradoxical. They are themselves global phenomena similar to multinational capital and its state and academic subsidiaries, using new technology and communication services to strengthen solidarity amongst different groups in the world system. Yet they also act as mechanisms which call out the specificity of the ethnic or indigenous subject. As such, they serve as forces which maintain “cultural boundaries that might otherwise be submerged” (Langer, 1998: 173) and act in opposition to the circulation of “‘homogenising’ cultural and material commodities” (Langer, 1998: 172). An example is the Cambridge-based organization, Cultural Survival, which addresses the plight of the Ju’/hoansi of Namibia, as described by Elizabeth Garland (1998), who came into contact with the organization on the World Wide Web. She explains how global discourse interpellates the Web browsers as members of a “particular [benevolent] global community of people”, the aid-givers and the Ju’/hoansi are established as “societies of people in need of that help” (1998: 14). The ‘Bushman’ have become a “locus for the mobilization of a host of actors around a collective social objective” (Garland, 1998: 15). These well-meaning actors, a range of institutional and individual players, form “just the kind of ‘web’ or ‘network’ invoked in most current imaginings of ‘global civil society’” (Garland, 1998: 15). What is revealed in this example, is the complexity of a situation where the ‘Bushmen’ are being implicated in a global social network which seems to call out their ethnic specificity in relation to homogenizing forces; and yet relegates them to the outskirts of the debate about their own future (see also Tomaselli, 1999a, 2001). The glaring cavity is the absence of the voice of the Ju’/hoansi themselves. Access is a pivotal issue of globalization.

**Issues of Technology**

The new technology of communication is lauded as providing new and unlimited possibilities of access to people from all over the world to the ‘joys’ of the modern world. Unfortunately, for many minority or disadvantaged groups, this remains at the level of unfulfilled possibility. Langer (1998) argues for the possibility of linkages and solidarity between political refugees (for example) through participation in electronic networks. This of course, presumes access to electronic media, which in Third World, as well as First World countries remains an elitist privilege.

The greater potential which new communication technology offers is countered with the reality that this will not be available to all in Botswana (Kasoma, 1992). The country’s expansive territory and scattered population makes telecommunication installation and adequate transportation, essential for access and participation, difficult. Such services and the benefits they bring are
therefore concentrated in the eastern urban areas. (Negotiations are being
initiated by the multinational satellite Phone Company, Global Star, and the
Botswana government to subsidize the costs of handsets and call costs for
outlying communities. This would be cheaper than the outlay costs for fixed
line services or radio. This plan is, however, still far from fruition (personal
communication). Boloka states that the “absence of high technology denies [the
San] the opportunity to see the impact that they make to the outside world”
(2001). It could be further argued that the absence of high technology also
restricts their control over that impact.

Conclusion
In conclusion, it seems appropriate to return to the title of Boloka’s chapter,
‘Encountering the ‘Other’: Porous borders and the changing geography of social
relations’. What is proposed is the instability of culture and the constantly
shifting arrangement of space in the global context, the struggle of non-Western
countries to “make their own histories, identities, and ways of life out of
materials both indigenous and foreign” (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998: 235) and yet
the ultimate implication of dominance of the Western world and the powerful
elites in globalizing forces. A discussion of Boloka’s analysis brings to the fore
a complex present which is characterized by the possibility of development of
local identities and localizing forces in relation to the global, the “transformation
in spatialities in the contemporary world” (Barnett, 2001) and the challenges in
Africa of actually bringing about a ‘globalization from below.’ A theory of
political economy is necessary to describe the societal processes and structures,
which define the field on which human action can be negotiated (See Mosco,
1996: 257-270; Murdock, 1995: 90). Boloka’s chapter, nevertheless, provides a
vital investigation into the global-local discussion where human agency is
balanced by and qualifies the larger economic, social and political structures that
constitute globalization.

ENDNOTES
1 Further, each of these spatial relationships operates not between binary opposites, but
rather between ‘spheres of activity’ (see Abou-el-haj, 1991: 143).

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