Electronic Media in Natal: a Summary

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The field of electronic media in Natal is dominated by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) which in turn is dominated by Radio Zulu. There is only one independent radio station broadcasting continuously to Natal - Capital Radio 604 - and M-Net TV has made little headway beyond urban white, so-called coloured and Indian homes.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions national media officer, Moeletsi Mbeki, has confirmed that COSATU’s communications department is negotiating with the SABC in a joint working committee to investigate broadcasting union affairs in Nguni, Sotho and Afrikaans. COSATU Radio is part of an ambitious wider communications push which may include a literacy campaign and may stretch as far as a daily newspaper, as well as publishing books and producing educational and entertainment videos.1 This development is bound to affect the SABC status quo to an unknown degree.

A joint venture between print and electronic media has existed for clearly defined educational purposes since the beginning of August on SABC TV channel 2/3 from 2:15 to 3:15 pm. The programme, called the Matric Help-U Series, broadcasts classes in English on Mondays, mathematics on Tuesdays, physical science on Wednesdays and Fridays and biology on Thursdays. The Learning Channel is funded by Barlow Rand and is described as the TV education wing of the Daily News newspaper in Durban, although the copyright resides with the Star newspaper in Johannesburg. However, the programme is not limited to Argus newspapers; it is supplemented by printed material in the weekly Echo supplement to the Natal Witness newspaper in Pietermaritzburg. For example, the August 8 edition of Echo had a two-page insert on Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet and differential calculus and on the following Thursday, a one-page spread continued Romeo and Juliet and investigated electricity circuits and enzymes.2 The link between print and electronic media is important in view of newspaper companies’ expected foray into deregulated radioland, which will be dealt with later.

There have been student-run radio stations on university campuses, although at least one of these has been replaced by a catering firm with a program of Top 40 music videos and M-Net soap operas. The South African Students’ Press Union (SASPU) has launched a “Free The Airwaves” campaign to upgrade the broadcast potential of existing campus radio stations to support community radio. This campaign, which is being followed up by the Congress of Natal Campus Radio (Contra) urges organisations not to wait for deregulation but to “go pirate.”3

Efforts to create alternative media in Natal have ignored radio and TV, with the exception of developing links with sympathetic journalists in radio and television newsrooms, and have concentrated almost entirely and not very successfully on alternative print media. Reasons for the failures and successes of alternative print media should be considered to see what lessons can be learnt and what waste of limited resources prevented if the same efforts should be extended into electronic media. (At the very least, tight auditing should be necessary.) One area of alternative electronic media which has been explored is that of video technology.

The circuit for alternative videos and cassettes to be shown on home or organisations’ televisions and tape recorders is irregular and haphazard: small scale video and audio production skills have been developed through facilities offered by the Universities of Natal (Durban and Pietermaritzburg), Durban-Westville and Zululand (Ongoye and Umlazi), Mangosuthu Technikon in Umlazi, which has a superb resource centre and video library, and ML Sultan and Natal Technikons in central Durban.

The Media Resource Centre (MRC) in the Faculty of Education, University of Natal, is one such video facility. One example of their work is a 12-minute video of a Good Friday march in Amaoti, Inanda, which has proved wildly popular in the squatter community. Residents used batteries to power up borrowed video machines and televisions and turn squatter shacks into informal movie theatres in order to watch the video, entitled Amaoti: Place of Suffering And Hope. The Centre for Culture and Working Life in the Sociology Department of the University of Natal, by way of another example, has
just released 500 copies of the alternative music tape cassette Mandini Strikers (cost about R12) after producing Music For Liberation and People Must Share.4

The University of Natal (Durban) also has the Audio Visual Alternatives video unit and the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS). Durban can also boast the Durban Media Trainers Group (DMTG) and the Resource Centre (both at the St Andrews Street Ecumenical Centre). The Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA) and the Koinonia church group in Botha’s Hill all tap into this ad hoc network of alternative videos.

Different organisations explore electronic technology in different ways. The Ecumenical Centre, for example, sought permission to make copies of Inside Story: South Africa’s Killing Grounds, a BBC documentary on Inkatha/ANC violence in Natal, and then sold them at cost. They have a library of about 150 other videos available to tenants, organisations and individuals. The ecumenical agency Diakonia, the biggest tenant of the centre, is selling Let Peace Prevail, tape cassettes on Inkatha/ANC peace talks featuring Inkatha chairman Frank Mdalose and ANC Southern Natal leader Jacob Zuma in both English and Zulu for R5; they also motivated for and now sell the videos Healed By The Cross, The Moment Of Grace And Opportunity: Working For Democracy in Church and Society (R25) and Bricks, Blocks and Cardboard Boxes: the Housing Crisis in Durban (R25).5 Another of the centre’s tenants, the Durban Media Trainers Group (DMTG), is producing a video on how media works.

All the above centres share an interest in process which takes precedence over other facets of video networking, such as advertising, promotions, sales, rentals and distribution on an organised and sustained basis. However, the Cape Town publisher David Philip has expressed interest in distributing a MRC video of poetry readings by Chris Zithulele Mann with an accompanying booklet of poems at bookstores and through agents. This could provide a possible outlet nationally. Durban’s Local History Museum is now acting as a distributor for the first time of another MRC video, on the Indian seine-net fishing community, entitled Hanging Up The Nets.6 There remains, however, no co-ordinated distribution in Natal of alternative electronic media.

In general, the lack of distribution networks seems to be attributable to the low emphasis on post-production issues rather than circumstantial or manpower difficulties. Commercial video distribution is not limited to white and Indian urban areas. According to a survey conducted by the sociology department of the University of Natal, 4.1% of the union workers surveyed owned a video machine.7 Shops in townships often have a few tapes to rent out, usually of boxing fights and Ninja martial arts movies. The indifference towards facilitating promotion and distribution has meant that to a large degree, the videos and tapes produced go out to the converted - people who are already aware of the issues raised by the media. This has important implications for the success of any proposed move into educational or developmental work in a deregulated radio or TV environment. In addition, it is worth noting that the above organisations found it made sense from their perspectives to subsidise retail costs and produce in fairly small quantities for limited distribution rather than choose a commercial model whereby efficient distribution and large-scale production can - in theory, at any rate - lower costs.

It is clear that the public interest in electronic media exists even in places where economic constraints are severe. Research conducted in 1990 by questionnaire among 300 young people living in the Durban isipha or shacklands of Amaoti (Inanda), Dassenhoek (Pinetown), and Mqabaza, Malukazi and Folweni (all south of Umlazi) showed this. The research, by members of the Youth Centre Project under the Centre for Social and Development Studies at the University of Natal, showed that people living on the urban fringe and without electricity still had access to television.

Television watching fell into the respondents’ definition of sokungcebeleka or pure leisure activities on par with playing the jukebox or table soccer game at the local shop.8 There was no indication of an awareness of television or radio as a medium of instruction or education.

In the survey The Struggle Over Leisure: Durban’s Workers, Culture and Education, conducted by Debby Bonnin and Ari Sitas of the University of Natal Sociology Department, union members prioritised home or neighbourhood-based oral culture - spending 28% of their time socialising, visiting and drinking - and 20% of their time in maintenance work on their home and possessions. Although the radio was on most of the time, this study relegates it frequently to audio wallpaper. Only about 11% of workers’ leisure was spent listening to the radio, just above the time utilised reading (8%), attending
church (6%) and union meetings (5%) and cultural events (3%). While watching sports - live or televised or on radio - took up 15% of workers’ leisure hours, watching television (other than sport) only took up 2% of their free time.9

The editor of the report on the Youth Centre Project under the Centre for Social and Development Studies at the University of Natal has said that “no access to television appears to be a critical factor in distinguishing the genuinely dissatisfied from other youth.”10

Møller continued: “the media plays a very prominent role in the lives of township youth. As in all modernising contexts television has a tremendous impact on lifestyles...There are signs that township youth without access to television experience relative deprivation. The research revealed that living without television depresses the perceived quality of life... the media (television, videos, radio) and educational pursuits were ones which reportedly contributed more than any other activity towards feelings of freedom on weekdays. It is not clear whether the media fulfills mainly the needs for escapism on ordinary days especially for young people forced by circumstances to stay at home. It is possible, however, that both the media and personal study are seen to broaden horizons. If this interpretation holds, moves underway to introduce educational slots on television for private consumption and distance learning may strike a responsive chord with township youth starved for knowledge.”11

There are certainly facilities existing to extend electronic media at the educational level: for example, a TV studio with video is used for micro-teaching at Eshowe College of Education, one of 10 teacher training colleges in KwaZulu. The Department of Education and Training has one teacher training college in Natal, Indumiso in Imbali outside Pietermaritzburg. All of these 11 centres - as well as the Edgewood (white), Springfield (Indian) and Bechet (coloured) colleges of education - have potential for educational media training and production and possibly as a media resource network. The teacher training centres, although they are burdened by a very heavy curriculum, would be particularly interesting to investigate vis-a-vis media education as the teachers could be most influential after they graduate. (Any attempts to bring in campus-style local radio production at the teacher training centres would probably have to be cleared through Pretoria, as the hierarchy in KwaZulu and DET (Natal) is notoriously rigid and accustomed to obeying orders.)

In addition, many schools, such as the Catholic-church-run Star Of The Sea boarding school in remote Kosi Bay have video machines. This indicates another possible network(s) for the distribution and/or teaching of educational media.

Diverse non-commercial video hire/sale outlets include the Audio Visual Resources Library, the United States Information Service, the Eugene Malherbe library at the University of Natal in Durban, the Natal Provincial Library service, the Durban Municipal Library, the Natal Society Library in Pietermaritzburg, the Read, Educate and Develop (READ) foundation, the Science Education project, the Shell Maths and Sciences project, the Inkatha Institute, the Consumer Councils, the churches and the unions.12

The Education Resource Information Service (ERIS) has compiled a catalogue of 900 videos about Africa and a 556-page-long general film catalogue, which list contents, sources and cost. An increasing awareness of the use of video can be seen in its appearance in newspaper supplements targeted at students.13

But when they are all added together, these many different video and tape outlets in Natal total only a fraction of the listener- and viewership of SABC. The issue is not that tape recorders, television sets and video machines are beyond the economic grasp of the majority of people living in Natal. The black community enjoys wide access to both radio and TV as a 1990 survey of 700 Umlazi township residents by the Centre for Culture and Media Studies at the University of Natal (Durban) confirmed.14

Roughly three-quarters of the people surveyed (74%) owned a radio while approximately half (56%) owned a television. (see Figure 1 on page four)

However, in terms of access to a radio or television, the figures immediately became higher: 81% had access to a radio and 72% had access to television. (see Figure 2 on page four)

A breakdown of interviewees by occupation showed that even the jobless and students, people least likely to physically own a radio or television, listened to radio shows and watched television programmes. Radios were clearly more common than television sets, and radio programmes more acces-
The study published under the title The Struggle Over Leisure: Durban’s Workers, Culture and Education by Debby Bonnin and Ari Sitra looked at among other issues the influence of media, in the context of competing consumption-oriented capitalism, on why trade union’s educational and cultural initiatives were frustrated.

This study contained three components. The most critical for our purposes was a self-answering questionnaire, distributed at factory lunch breaks, for large sample of Durban and Pinetown workers on the relationship between their leisure time and material culture. Respondents worked in the manufacturing, commercial and distributive, health and educational sectors and were proportionally representative of the number of workers in each sector. Although the educational and earning levels of these industrial and commercial workers were consistently above national and regional averages, it would seem that they still were not earning enough to make them a highly-valued target by advertising: 13% of the workforce earn less than R100 per week, 36% earn between R101-R150 per week and 33% earn over R150. Furthermore, 57.3% of the workforce was under 35 years of age. The largest category of work performed was semi-skilled labour in industry or in the commercial and distributive trade. The participants lived primarily in KwaZulu-controlled Umlazi (24.8%), the freehold township Clermont (17.1%), KwaZulu-controlled KwaMashu (9.1%) and Indian Chatsworth. Responses from shacklands were statistically negligible. 32.5% of the workforce was migrant, but few lived in hostels; they kept their rural homesteads as a base while renting a room in a township.

The survey attempted to be sensitive to the urban/migrant divide, the gender, language and age gaps, occupational and regional differences. Out of the 29% (244 workers) who accurately filled in and returned their questionnaires, most said that after working hours and travel time was subtracted, very little time was left for leisure. To put this in context, half took more than 30 minutes to travel to work. This means more than one hour of their day is spent travelling, 14.7% lived between 26 and 30 kms away from work and 63.9% leave for work between 4 am and 6 am. Even less time for entertainment or self-education was available for employed women, who performed double shift duties within family households, and shop stewards who dedicated virtually all their waking hours to union activities. Earning power was linked strongly to ownership of media objects, said the surveyors: “there is a definite relationship between access to material culture and wages. Workers who earn below R100 per week just don’t have access to any of this equipment; this is with three exceptions. Firstly a very small number of TV owners, secondly, 22% of radio owners and finally, 28% of sewing machine owners earn below R100 per week.”

This study confirmed some of the trends in the CCMS survey. In particular, it showed that while ownership of items of material culture amongst Durban’s working class is minimal, significant numbers owned a radio (52.7%), a hi-fi (37.8%) and a colour TV (25.4%) or a black and white TV (20.1%). The conjunction of radio and television with a hi-fi may indicate that the media are lumped together with

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entertainment rather than with books and magazines as sources of information and education. On the other hand, the preponderance of hi-fi’s may point to a need to emphasise cassettes as a form of educational media.

The study interpreted the results as follows: “While the ownership of these items may be very low, the use of them is even less. For example of those who own TVs, 26.6% watch TV for less than an hour per day. Only 4.7% of those who own hi-fi’s play cassettes every day, while 22.4% say it is very rare that they use the equipment. These patterns are repeated with the exception of the radio. 36% claim to listen to the radio most mornings and evenings while 31.3% say that they only listen in the evenings.”

However, the conductors of the survey warned of the danger of underestimating radio and TV, noting that “while just over a quarter of workers only watch T.V. for less than an hour per day, it is not how much they watch but rather what is watched that emphasises the potential importance of this medium...this has some serious implications. The same point also needs to be borne in mind when one considers the influence of the radio.”

Respondents were asked to list six programmes they listened to/watched. On both TV and radio the same choices appear; the difference is the order in which they are ranked. The most popular radio programmes were music (63.7%) followed by sport (47.8%), stories (42%) and news (40.5%). Announcements lagged behind at 25.7% and religious programmes at 20.2%. The most popular radio station was Friendship, surprise, surprise - Radio Zulu with 54.5% of respondents listening to it. 15% favoured ‘music stations’ such as Capital (the most popular), Radio 5 and 702. Radio listening, said the survey, “has declined as a source of information since the growth of TV. Used primarily as a backdrop, it is an important transmitter still of consumer values, of specific forms of music and cultural priorities.” The survey claimed that Radio Zulu “despite its ethnic channel-dominance, is losing out to stations like Capital radio and 702, with more international and varied programmes.” However, AMPS surveys indicate that Radio Zulu was losing little to these stations. Radio was also a way of attending church, through broadcasted religious services.

The most popular television programme, in contrast, was news at 57.3%, followed by music (51.3%). After a considerable gap there came films (33%), sports (31.3%) and religion (8.6%). The surveyors concluded that “what is interesting about these figures is the large number of workers who listen to NEWS on the TV. If these figures are related to the 45.5% of respondents who list TV as an important information source, the effect of T.V. news assumes large proportions, alongside newspapers.”

This survey concluded that the leisure “problem” was not, for example, the lack of resources such as televisions or radios but the lack of time and structural changes such as the need for more creche facilities (18.1%) and old age homes (15.9%). “In short,” they concluded, “working life, apartheid’s townships and their material capacities make workers unable to involve themselves in participatory projects during their leisure time. It forces them to become passive observers and consumers of events and media.”

Having established that there are a considerable number of radios and televisions and that there is educational media being produced which by and large is not getting out to those radios and televisions, what else is there? The SABC, that’s what.

The current main players in the electronic media in Natal are TV 2 (Zulu/Xhosa) and Radio Zulu. Radio Zulu has a stunning 4 million listeners, most of whom are in Natal although Radio Zulu broadcasts to the PWV areas (where it is the favourite radio station for the 1991 Miss Soweto), the OFS, and parts of the Transkei and is transmitted to Cape Town on the TV 2 audio channel on alternative Sundays.17 TV 2 and Radio Zulu juggle for supremacy. In the cities, TV 2 does slightly better than Radio Zulu in their target market, black South Africans. In the countryside, with the same target market, Radio Zulu does considerably better (17%) than TV2 (9%).18 There is of course TV 1 (English/Afrikaans) and TV 4 (English/Afrikaans). But in a recent AMPS (All Media Products Survey) of 1989/90, TV2 in just one hour captured three times as much of the black urban market (22%) than TV4 in two hours (7%).19

Together Radio Zulu and TV 2 knock out any other contenders and point to the importance of considering language policy when creating future radio stations. For example, in the black market, urban and rural, TV 2 and Radio Zulu together achieve 26% listener- and viewership. TV 4 attained only 3%.20 Even if we look at unsegregated listener/ships for the entire province, which means we are including

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whites, coloureds and Indians who may not understand Zulu, Radio Zulu is still the market leader. In Durban, with competition from other sources of entertainment and information, Radio Zulu is still the market leader for the total population.

M-Net TV is available in Natal in the two-hour SABC slot and on decoder and is popular among urban whites, and Indians, for whom M-Net East is specifically screened on Sunday mornings (after working out that their target market owned a very high proportion of video recorders). M-Net has, according to AMPS, only about 3% penetration of the black urban market in Natal. TV 2 is doing seven times better. There is no equivalent to Bop TV in Natal. On the inland border of the province, near the homeland of QwaQwa, reception of TV 3 (Sotho/Pedi/Tswana) can be picked up. A month-old development has been the unannounced introduction of a combined triple channel of TV2/3/4 on Saturdays only, which has been confusing viewers.

Aside from Radio Zulu and its four million listeners, SABC has Radio Port Natal, targeted at middle-aged white Durban, and Radio Lotus, a commercial “flop” - the description comes from an SABC employee - which targets the Hindi and Tamil-speakers of Durban’s Indian community. Radio Lotus captured only 2% of the entire province listenership. Radio Lotus does better in Durban as a whole, capturing 4% of the total, unsegregated listenership. Radio Lotus also broadcasts nationally on Sundays.

Radio Port Natal, according to AMPS March 1991 figures, has an average weekday listenership of 196,000 on weekdays, while Capital is far behind both RPN and Radio 5 with 58,000. The 1990 figures for average daily listenership in Natal put RPN at 141,000, Radio 5 at 77,000, RSA at 86,000 and Radio Suid Afrika at 38,000.

The three SABC stations - Radio Port Natal, Radio Lotus and Radio Zulu - previously fell under different departments which reported to SABC headquarters in Johannesburg. They have now been brought together under centralised Durban management, very possibly to ward off takeover attempts or forestall privatisation. Radio Zulu on its own would be a very tempting target but when it comes with two unprofitable stations as part of a package deal, the prospect is considerably less appealing. On the other hand, it also makes sense that three radio stations operating out of the same building would fall under the same management. This follows the recent restructuring of SABC radio. Radio Zulu earlier fell under the Nguni and Sotho Services, which then reported to the senior director, radio services. Radio Lotus and Radio Port Natal fell under regional and community services, which reported to the same senior director.

This pattern is not exclusive to Natal: five other regions have been reformatted to include one money-spinner station on which loss-making stations piggyback. In the Eastern Cape, Radio Algoa rides on the back of Radio Xhosa. In the Far North Transvaal service, Radio Venda relies on Radio Lebowa and Radio Tsonga. The Market Research Africa national survey mentioned earlier found that 77% of those black households with radios listen to the Nguni/Sotho services regularly and that in rural areas, this figure rises to 99%.

Natal also receives Radio South Africa on FM and Radio Metro, which takes over Radio Zulu’s broadcasting slot from 11 pm until 4:30 am and may be squeezed out entirely by Radio Zulu’s hopes to expand into a 24-hour station. It will lose an hour in August when Radio Zulu expands to broadcast until midnight. Radio Metro reportedly gained 800,000 listeners nationally in three years, but its expansion in Natal will depend very much on what Radio Zulu does. It may be worth noting that in contrast to the PWV area, in Natal there are no radio stations, government-controlled or independent, which target the black market in a non-tribal, mostly-English format during peak listener hours. In short, unless he or she wants to stay up past midnight, the black listener either gets a SABC mouthpiece, with its emphasis on bantustan politics and curiously archaic linguistics, or must put up with radio stations which consider him or her peripheral to their classical, middle-of-the-road, pop/rock or Southern Indian music. Capital will accept upper middle-class black listeners but it does not set out to woo them.

Outside of the SABC stable, the independents are limited to medium wave coming out of homelands by government broadcasting regulations although most are preparing for FM after deregulation. 12-year-old Capital Radio is based in Durban but transmits on difficult-to-pick-up medium wave on 604kHz from Umtata and Umzimkulu in the Transkei. Radio 702 can only be picked up at night in Natal as long
as it is stuck with a medium wave 100 kW transmitter in GaRankuwa, Bophutatswana. The BBC World Service is available on shortwave during the day and medium wave at night on 1197kHz from a relay station in Maseru, Lesotho. The Voice of America medium wave relay station broadcasts from Bophutatswana on 621 kHz.28 Aside from these, there is Radio 5 in Johannesburg on FM. Radio 5 achieves exactly the same weak penetration of the Natal and Durban markets as the highly specialised Radio Lotus - 2% of the total provincial market and 4% of the total Durban market.29 Capital is climbing: AMPS figures for 1990 showed an average daily listenership of 19,000 for the whole of Natal and it now has 58,000 but it is still far behind Radio Lotus, RPM or Radio 5 and certainly 3.5 million or so listeners behind Radio Zulu.30 Both Capital and Radio 702 are only waiting for deregulation in order to shift to FM broadcasting, which they have so far been denied. Capital’s new studio in Durban is set up for FM.

A recent interview with Capital Radio programme manager Anthony Duke concluded with “future plans include operating an FM stereo channel when broadcasting is deregulated.”31 During the same interview, Capital staffers said their programming revamp was intended to make them community based, along the lines of regional American radio stations.

Radio Zulu is the giant here in Natal. Its presenters become entertainment stars, socialites and role models solely through the power of their voices. In much of rural Natal, it is the only source of information. A source in management confirmed that it plans on becoming a 24-hour station within two years and is considering applying for licences for two separate stations.32 It is probably the biggest money-spinner among 23 SABC radio stations - it is certainly the most profitable service among what used to be described as the Nguni-Sotho division of SABC radio.

Radio Zulu is also the only branch of SABC radio to have a black manager, the Reverend Hiwu Mbatha, former head of their religious programming section. The Reverend Mbatha began his new job at the beginning of July. This is in line with current SABC restructuring policy which intends to phase out white managers of black stations. This policy is causing considerable discontent within SABC as the black managers who have been boosted in the restructuring worked out very quickly that they will never be transferred to manage a white station, regardless of their skills.33

Looking at South Africa as a whole, many of the SABC’s African vernacular radio stations are neither performing much of a public service nor competing in the commercial field. Radio Setswana is in the red. Radio Swazi is broke. Radio Ndebele is, too. Radio Venda is impoverished. Radio Lotus is a flop. Radio Lebowa is apparently just managing to make a profit. Radio Sesotho and Radio Tsonga are breaking even. Radio Xhosa makes money back.34

Why Radio Zulu does so much better is a matter for another report. What is known is that expansion of Radio Zulu is a certainty. Senior Radio Zulu management have demanded a 24-hour service as Zulu is in many ways the lingua franca of South Africa: if I, the listener, speak Tswana or Xhosa, I the listener, will understand Zulu. This of course depends on the type of Zulu used. Right now, Radio Zulu has a language policy which bans English words and demands Zulu equivalents for them. Commentators have to use High Zulu, which currently makes it virtually impossible for people for whom Zulu is a second language to understand the programme. As a small example of what goes on, the common word for bicycle in Zulu is ibhayisikili. On Radio Zulu, it is injumani (horse). Radio Zulu consistently transcends the divide between urban and rural. It dominates our ears to such an extent that it achieved 17% black provincial penetration when no other radio station achieved a reach of more than 1%; likewise, Radio Zulu achieved 22% of citywide black listeners when its nearest contender, Radio 5, limped in battered and bruised at 2%.35

If Radio Zulu ever was privatised or fundamentally restructured, the Buthelezi legacy would have to be dealt with. Radio Zulu has very strong ties to the homeland structure. There is a Radio Zulu office with two Radio Zulu staffers in Ulundi, the capital of KwaZulu, which operates only on the sufferance of KwaZulu Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi. A broadcaster said that when Buthelezi objects to a Radio Zulu broadcast (which does not happen very often), he threatens to close down the Ulundi office. Radio Zulu is used as a way to speak to the people by members of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and chiefs. They announce times of Inkatha rallies, Inkatha branch launchings, visits by chiefs, and so on.36 This access is not allowed to people in other structures, such as the ANC, or independents, who are told to pay for such services. In addition, security firms like Coin and mines recruiting for labour announce on Radio Zulu that they will be hiring new people at the homes, offices and institutions (Umlazi
Court House, for example) of KwaZulu Legislative Assembly members and chiefs. This draws a very strong link between prosperity and conforming to the bantustan hierarchy. Also, Buthelezi controls the news service. There are no critical stories about the Chief Minister on the news. His speeches are - this is a matter of policy - read out in full on the news. This means that quite often the news bulletin is entirely Buthelezi’s words, as he has a lengthy and prolific speech-writer. Deregulation is expected to alter this scenario to a degree as yet unknown. “I think whoever takes control will have to encourage less political control over broadcasting services,” Hiwu Mbatha said. 37

Players in the field are staking their claims already, even if the future is clouded in the fog of the Viljoen Commission. Predictions for the future of electronic media vary considerably. One advertiser was gearing up for 10 television stations and 50 radio stations across the country. Others predict new wine in old bottles, so to speak. SABC chairman Christo Viljoen himself, in a letter to a Natal newspaper, said that private sector radio stations in South Africa could be authorised within the year. Viljoen wrote, “the task group is expected to submit its report to the cabinet within the next few weeks. It is doubtful that any private licences will be issued before the recommendations of the group have been passed by parliament, hopefully during 1992.” 38

The Natal Witness deputy editor Martin Williams told the Pietermaritzburg branch of the Institute of Marketing Management in June that SABC was “apparently talking about having around 40 radio stations” by 1993.

“Even before this comes about there is already a trend where black radio listenership grew by a staggering 42.5% last year (1990),” Williams said. 39

Many media forecasters expect piecemeal alteration starting with radio and ending up with television. This is a likely scenario. It is after all easier to create new radio stations than to face the political and economic risks of tinkering with existing television stations.

Moreover, advertisers have noted a “general shrinking of white, coloured and Asian TV audiences, suggesting growing disenchanted with the medium” of television. 40 And the considerable expense of operating a television station reduces its viability. It is not, in some ways, a very flexible medium.

In Natal as a whole, recent AMPS surveys put television below radio in penetrating the black market. This may be put down to economic trends and the lack of infrastructure, notably electricity, in periurban and rural areas. TV 2, in one survey, therefore captured 9% of the black Natal market while TV 4 attained only 3%. 41

On the other hand, television is becoming more important within the black community. A 1989 Youth Centre Project investigation affiliated to the Centre for Social and Development Studies at the University of Natal gave diaries to 1200 township youth aged 16 to 24, selected at random in three metropolitan areas: Clermont, KwaMashu and Umlazi in Durban, Cape Town and Soweto.

The results confirmed the dominance of television over radio among younger South Africans: “two-thirds of the youth in the nationwide study lived in homes with television sets and a slightly lower proportion watched television on the diary days. Television is typically a daily leisure event.” 42

Television viewing ranked higher with the youth than radio listening as a popular free-choice spare time activity on weekdays 43 and was among their favourite leisure pursuits: television came in at fourth place, after parties, music and soccer, while radio ranked eighth. 44

A class breakdown within youth found variations in listening and viewing patterns. For schoolgoers, who spend an average of 88 minutes a schoolday watching TV, television had more competition from chores (131 minutes a day) and study (90 minutes) than from radio (36 minutes). “On weekends, freed from the demands of schoolwork and jobs, television watching time increased to 105 minutes and radio increased to 42 minutes a day.” 45

However, to a certain degree the programmes were background noise, considered “not all-absorbing” and functioning as an accompaniment to other leisure activities. It is worth repeating that there is no indication of an awareness of television as a teaching tool or an education medium. Rather, it is valued for being a life-enhancing form of entertainment.

Working youth, who often spent considerable time in transport between home and employment, spent
the least time of all groups on passive recreation. The unemployed, on the other hand, “spend a great
deal of time on housework, passive leisure such as watching television and sleeping.”

Although results indicated that youths in shacklands had access to televisions, run off batteries or
generators, the researchers felt that the lack of television could provide a symbol of the divide between
township “haves” and shackland “have-nots”: “youth in non-electrified shack areas and site and service
housing scheme may feel more excluded from the mainstream than their township neighbours if they
have restricted access to television as well as to other leisure facilities.”

A gender breakdown came to the conclusion that “women are avid radio listeners throughout the week,
while men tend to listen to music from other sources. Over weekends women watch less television than
men.”

Young, housebound homemakers reversed the youth trend of television preference over radio: “house-
wives invest more time than all others on sleeping and napping, meals, listening to the radio...less time
to watch television...It appears that housewives are less likely to have people to speak to while pursuing
their tasks and are more reliant on non-personal company from the radio.”

Diary entries indicated that television and to a lesser extent radio may be considered safe entertainment
because they keep young women in the home and relatively free from the dangers of unwanted preg-
nancies. Family members watching television are off the streets and away from tsotsis, gang warfare
and political violence. Radio, on the other hand, because a transistor is more mobile, is part of a more
risky street culture as well as functioning within the safe confines of a home. These responses must be
considered in view of impending deregulation.

A cover story on the Vljoen Commission, published in a supplement for advertisers by The Financial
Mail, concluded, “radio has the most to gain from deregulation. It has the ability to grab a major share
of local advertising, particularly retail and services. Radio stations are cheap to establish and run and
could be set up to service extremely localised markets.”

“Within 18 months I think radio will be thrown open to private enterprise. I think they should phase the
deregulation in - starting with radio and following with TV” - Bernie Raynor, the media director of the
Mundels advertising group.

The only independent commercial radio station in Natal, the Durban-based Capital Radio, will want to
defend their market niche. But competition there will be. At least four new commercial radio stations
are predicted for Durban alone by Raynor, the media director of Mundels, which is among the top 15
communications groups nationwide.

The German experience of deregulation was that expanding the number of radio and television stations
did not significantly expand the amount of time spent listening and watching them. Despite access to
about 20 private channels and two public TV networks in Germany, viewing has increased by only 10
minutes a day. In other words, people allocate a certain amount of their leisure time to TV viewing and
radio watching and won’t easily increase it.

In such a competitive environment, unless significant subsidies were granted to such stations for the
purpose of developmental work, the marginalised communities living on the fringe of Durban are
unlikely to be represented in any way whatsoever. When your radio station is up against five others,
Brenda Fassie or Mango Groove will always take precedence over educational broadcasts - unless, of
course, a government agency takes responsibility for reimbursing the missing advertising income or
provides a tax break.

Raynor has noted that in the United States, there is a radio station for every 15,000 to 20,000 people. If
we followed that, we would have 1,750 stations. Obviously, South Africa is considerably less affluent
and not as advertising-oriented as the USA.

So Raynor predicts that Durban, for example, would have four specialist commercial radio stations after
deregulation. One of these is expected to be a citified version of the local giant, Radio Zulu, which is
considering splitting itself in city radio and rural radio, the first commercial and the second primarily
educational. At present Radio Zulu is an integral part of the KwaZulu bantustan so any change in
Ulundi will have affect the future of Radio Zulu as well.

CCMS, University of Natal
Raynor's rule of thumb, moreover, is that any city or town which supports a weekly newspaper could support a local station. For example, Durban florists, Pinetown restaurants, a Clairwood service station would advertise in a local radio station when they would not have advertised on Capital because their market is not the entire province.

Raynor has calculated that such stations could run on a staff of 10 or even less and at a realistic advertising rate, with 50% of their airtime sold, such small stations could yield 35% to 40% annual return on a monthly income of R125,000. Production costs are low for radio at 7% - less than print production costs (12%) and a lot less than TV (21%).

Using Raynor's rule of thumb, Pietermaritzburg and the Empangeni/Richard's Bay axis will certainly have their own regional radio stations. So will Newcastle, Ladysmith, Vryheid, Port Shepstone and Kokstad. These smaller stations will run on a broad-based commercial format, with a mix of music, talk shows, information and news.

The new players in the commercial radio field will be the newspaper companies. This follows the pattern set by Times Media Limited when they diversified into M-Net television and when Argus diversified - having first obtained almost total control of the newspaper process - into electronic information packaging.

The Argus giant is already well aware of this. Jos Kuper, MD of Marketing and Media Research, the Argus group's research organisation, has said: "the threat to mainstream newspapers in West Germany was shown to be regional radio and free sheets, because they entered into the mix between TV and print and started providing localised input that people seem to need in their lives." The newspaper companies are already well-placed to move into an expanded radio field. There is no reason - short of chronic myopia - why a newspaper company would stand by and watch its advertising profits drain away to a rival. Much better to contain both inside one corporation and practice cross-subsidisation.

Another reason for newspaper companies owning deregulated radio stations, from the state's point of view, will be the ability of newspaper companies to slam the brakes on the deregulation process. The state could relinquish control to the monopolies. A possible example of this may have been M-Net's recent decision to postpone the launch of their news service until April. M-Net commercial sales manager Ken Baillie was touting their news program as a "bond" between the makers and the viewers, as the viewers would not have to switch channels for the news. Posts were advertised and people were hired. And then the project was postponed. M-Net's publishing owners, having taken a look at their dwindling advertising profits, may have feared further inroads into advertising pie.

According to AdIndex, in 1990 print's share of national advertising expenditure fell to its lowest level ever (51%) while TV rose to its highest. TV's highest, it should be noted, was 31% - still lower than print's slice. However, combine radio and TV and we get 44% of the national advertising expenditure. AdIndex, by the way, has been criticised by advertising agencies for reportedly overemphasising print. A more accurate figure could be higher still and some media analysts are predict a radio/TV share of 65% soon. These are all figures which will make new owners - especially those from a beleaguered industry - intent on maximizing profits and indifferent to longterm educational or developmental policies and issues.

So deregulation is bound to come with control mechanisms. If five stations opened in Pietermaritzburg in one year, they would go broke.

Radio could be easily situated to fulfill print's role as a permanent reference tool. Eric Mani, marketing director of The Sowetan, has said that the great strength of newspapers is that people can cut out articles of use or interest. Instead of a clipping on the wall, a listener could play back a tape of a radio program. Instead of the literacy, adult education and matric course supplements inserted into The Sowetan, Echo, New Nation and City Press, will people ask for back copies of tapes on the same issues from an education radio station?

Raynor has, however, argued that deregulation will not threaten the press "if handled with a view to protect established interests by allowing publishers access to broadcasting and by phasing in the free market." His example is East London: "There is room for one station there and it would be logical to
allow the local publisher, *The Daily Dispatch*, to be considered more favourably as owner or part-owner.\(^{55}\)

A similar example would be *The Zululand Observer* in Empangeni (and within broadcast limits of Richard's Bay, Melmoth and Ulundi) which is partially owned by Natal Newspapers and Caxtons, both of which fall under the Argus umbrella.

*The Natal Witness*, the country's last independent newspaper, in Pietermaritzburg, has already served notice of its intention to move into radio. The *Witness* has diversified its business as much as possible, printing telephone directories and the Government Gazette to offset the minimal returns brought in by a daily newspaper. *Witness* deputy editor Martin Williams predicted in June that mainstream print organisations would be forced to "diversify" into radio in order to "protect or increase its advertising revenue."\(^{56}\) By July, *The Natal Witness* was writing to Christo Viljoen to ask when they could apply for a licence.\(^{56}\)

*Ilanga*, owned by the Mandla-Malat holding company on behalf of the Inkatha Freedom Party, could conceivably take over part of Radio Zulu if SABC did privatise. Both have umbilical links with KwaZulu.

The Argus subsidiary Caxtons would be a major regional radio player in this scenario, especially in the Newcastle/Madadeni/Osizweni area, where they distribute the weekly freebie *Newcastle Advertiser* (print run 9,300) and have just bought out the weekly *Ladysmith Gazette* (print run 10,000), an independent which was administered by CAPRO (see below) until the transfer in September. Caxtons will be a player across the country but in Natal its most likely area will be down the South Coast. Caxtons dominates the South Coast from Durban to Transkei with the monthly freebie *Ogwini* (print run 30,000), distributed from Hibberdene to Port Edward on the Transkei border and inland to Harding; the weekly freebie *The Southland Sun* (print run 15,000) in the southern white, coloured and Indian suburbs of Durban - Brighton Beach, Clairwood, Fynlands, Grosvenor, Jacobs, Montclair, Ocean View, Bluff, Wentworth, Woodhaven, Woodlands and Yellowwood Park; the weekly *Chatsworth Sun*, free to *Daily News* subscribers (16,000 copies printed) but also selling 8,500 copies a week at 50 cents each in 23 outlets in Chatsworth; *The South Coast Herald* (print run 1500) in Port Shepstone; the free bimonthly *Mid South Coast Mail* (print run 7000) in Alexandria County, Scottburgh, Umkomaas, Ilfracombe, Umtwalume, Umzinto, Park Rynie, Craigieburn and inland as far as Highflats; and the weekly sold newspaper *The South Coast Sun* (print run 7,500) in Amanzimtoti, Kingsborough and Prospecton.\(^{61}\)

The CAPRO national chain would be in a position to move into regional radio after deregulation in Northern and Midlands Natal, where they distribute the weekly bought newspapers *The Vryheid Herald* (print run 6000) and *The Greytown Gazette* (print run 3900), the monthly or bimonthly freebies *Town Talk* (print run 20,000) in Pietermaritzburg, *Village Press* (print run 12,000) in Hillcrest, *Mountain Echo* (print run 5000) in Underberg and *Southern County News* (print run 6,500) in Richmond and the weekly freebies *North Coast Courier* (print run 9000) in Ballito, *Escourt News* (print run 8000), *Northern Natal Courier* (print run 5000) in Dundee, *The Howick Phoenix* (print run 6000) and the *Midlands Observer* (print run 18,000) in Escourt, Hilton, Curries Post, Lion's River, Balgowan, Nottingham Road, Mool River, Colenso and Bergville. Capro would also be a force in Kokstad, where they sell 2075 copies of *The Kokstad Advertiser* every week.\(^{61}\)

Noel Coburn, joint managing director of Caxton Publishers and chairman of the Newspaper Marketing Bureau, has disputed that deregulation will cut into his profits. Coburn quoted SABC's own research showing that South Africa's black middle class "understands written English better than spoken English." What Coburn has stressed is that "resources can be safely channeled to the growing black market away from the white sector which can be kept by maintenance strategies." Coburn has argued that this is possible because "it's five times harder to win new customers than to keep existing ones."\(^{63}\)

However Coburn’s view of the black market is likely to be strongly influenced by advertising. And the expected content of these future radio stations can largely be judged by the current content of the above-mentioned other media in the area, chiefly weekly newspapers catering to conservative readers in English or Afrikaans and largely dependent on local advertisers. The link between the two media, print and radio, is likely to be pronounced if existing media companies are planning to become the proud new owners of radio stations as well as newspapers after deregulation. Coburn's own newspapers are not following his dictum of wooing the black market, except where it coincides with the white market.
Again, these local advertisers are unlikely to want to place their products in slots devoted to educational or developmental work as the expected listeners will not have much disposable income in their pockets. In fact advertisers will become much more discriminating after deregulation. Bryan Gabriel, MD of the Media Business, has noted: "if I have to place ads in four radio stations to get the same coverage as one now gives me, it is bound to be more expensive. It costs more to run four small stations than one large one."

Therefore, subsidies or tax rebates will again have to be considered if the use of regional radio (or TV) stations for educational purposes is considered worthwhile. These subsidies or tax rebates would likely be linked to listenership figures.

An alternative to subsidies or tax rebates, of course, would be a decision by the Viljoen Commission to implement a minimum amount of time for educational broadcasting per station, rather like the way in which the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has in the past insisted on licences being granted only to those television stations which broadcast Canadian-made programmes to prevent a total infiltration of American culture.

However, it should be pointed out that subsidies, tax rebates and content quota systems all cost the taxpayer money. A government which faces serious money demands for basic health, housing and education may not consider a longer-term investment in South Africa through community media a viable prospect unless strenuous lobbying is undergone.

To return for a moment to focus on the participant/recipient of altered media, it may be worthwhile here to quote from the trade union study of leisure activities by Sitas and Bonnin which was detailed above. Although concentrating on a particular segment of South African society, their results may well be transferred to youth and female and rural sectors. Bonnin and Sitas concluded that “the trade unions are faced with educational and cultural priorities that demand TIME from workers to engage themselves in a variety of projects. Over and above the practical experience workers gain in their daily struggles at work and at home, the information they glean from their own oral communication networks or the media they absorb, the labour movement is demanding more participation in its initiatives. Like in the case of shop-stewards, workers will sacrifice more of their limited time as long as they can find MEANING and PURPOSE in what they are asked to do. The quality and purpose of the projects is of central importance.

If “they have to redistribute their usual leisure time differently, they create strains in their relationships. If they are asked to read more, the roof collapses, duties get left behind, women tend to be landed with all the burdens. What is achieved is a MARGINAL REDISTRIBUTION of activities in leisure time. But as long as the meaning and purpose of what is demanded of them sustains itself, two outcomes are possible: the development of enormous frustrations, where people even when they stop participating realise that conditions must change. Or a consciousness develops which is not satisfied at all by the current working and leisure activities. But in the end such marginal redistribution will always crash against limits and frustrations.

“Such projects and demands can only be tied to two further initiatives: firstly, to efforts to make SUBSTANTIVE GAINS for themselves. The shortening of the working week would release more hours for creative and educational work. Increases of wages nearer to a living wage will provide for better households and less time spent on fixing and mending, and so on. But this is insufficient because these growing capacities are no guarantee that workers will spend their incomes or hours in less TV watching or celebrating commodity acquisitions...

Projects “not linked to a process of transformation of the totality of life’s conditions” will be crushed by “the pressures from a developing capitalism” ... “On the other hand if capitalism delivers substantive gains to workers and breaks through the fragile collectivism of working life, it will define the historical agenda for years to come.”
Appendix A: Statistics and Damned Lies

It should be noted that the AMPS statistics for the province of Natal were based on a total population figure of only 4,454,000 people of all races and those for the city of Durban were drawn from a supposed total population base of only 1,321,000.

Figures from the town planning department of the Durban city corporation and the town planning unit at the University of Natal in Durban suggest that if we ignore the artificial boundaries of KwaZulu as a separate entity from Natal and Durban, the figures are more correctly in the region of roughly 9 million people for the province and three million people for the city.

Clearly, the AMPS figures have ignored the substantial proportion of real or potential viewers, listeners and readers located in KwaZulu. is not to be considered merely a rural market, either: the massive squatter camp of Lindelani, just north of Durban, and the township of KwaMashu (estimated population 250,000) which lies parallel to Durban North, are both urban and de facto part of the Durban economy yet they fall under the administration of Ulundi, the homeland capital.

This warning about the possibly erroneous population figures which form the base of the AMPS figures may not necessarily affect the proportions of newspaper or magazine readers, television viewers and radio listeners.

On the other hand, if a significant quarter of the population - urban, with varying degrees of education, part of the labour market, with desires for consumers goods and entertainment and access to at least some media - is ignored or overlooked because they fall into KwaZulu shacklands which are a de facto part of Durban, these comparative figures for press, television, radio and magazines may need to be challenged.

In addition, commercial radio stations such as Capital dispute AMPS figures as inaccurate.

AdIndex figures are also accused by advertisers of being inaccurate, for weighting print more heavily than radio or TV.
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48 Ibid, p 18.


50 “War of the Words,” op cit, p 45.


53 “The sky’s the limit,” op cit, p 52.

54 Ibid.

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56 “War of the Words,” op cit, p 44.

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58 “The sky’s the limit,” op cit, p 52.

59 “Radio ‘may threaten SA print media’,” op cit, p 5.


61 Telephone interview with Kay Minietti, Caxtons Durban advertising co-ordinator, July 24 1991.


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