Media and Citizenship: Identity Politics, Politicized Identities and the question of Belonging

ONE DAY COLLOQUIUM, 28 FEBRUARY 2013

Building on the success at SACOMM 2011 to have a more active and engaging group of Journalism and Media Studies academics, the Department of Communication Science at UNISA, with the Mellon Focus Area Project on Media and Citizenship, School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University and the Journalism and Media Studies Interest Group (the JMSIG) will co-host a 1 day colloquium entitled Media and Citizenship: Identity Politics, Politicized Identities and the question of Belonging. New developments in the field of Journalism and Media Studies as well as socio-political shifts and changes globally, imply new ways of thinking about the relationship of media to citizenship in relation to forces such as globalization, globalisation, the increasingly multicultural nature of nation-states, liberalization and the rise of Popular media forms, the proliferation of digital information and communication technologies, and the rise of social media. Media and Citizenship thus investigates, amongst others, the ways in which “the media” reshape the political landscapes of citizenship in specific contexts.

call for abstracts

The Department of Communication Science at the University of South Africa with the Mellon Focus Area Project on Media and Citizenship, School of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University and the Journalism and Media Studies Interest Group (SACOMM) now invite paper proposals for a 1 day colloquium on Media and Citizenship: Identity Politics, Politicized Identities and the Question of Belonging. The colloquium will take the form of roundtable discussions where the relationship between diverse types of media and journalism, social policy and citizenship will be explored.

We therefore invite scholarly papers from diverse perspectives that explore how theoretical discussions and build on past insights and structures to allow us to confront new realities, challenges, and solutions, focusing on the colloquium theme Media and Citizenship: Identity Politics, Politicized Identities and the Question of Belonging. The colloquium will take the form of roundtable discussions where the relationship between diverse types of media and journalism, social policy, and citizenship will be discussed.

Topics/Questions that could be addressed include:

- What theories and methods are appropriate for investigating the relationship between media, journalism(s) and citizenship?
- What do we expect of media in democratic societies, and are developments in media technology, culture and economics as the rise of digital and social media advancing such principles or proving to be an obstacle to their realization?

Format

The colloquium will be held at UNISA and will take the form of roundtable discussions. Roundtable will rely predominantly on the ideas of up to ten panelists addressing a common substantive topic, allowing adequate time for group deliberation. We will accept individual paper submissions, which subsequently will be worked (and possibly reworked) for a Research Focused Themed Issue of Communication (March Quarter of 2013). Successful applicants’ colloquium attendance and travel costs will be sponsored.

Paper proposals should include:

- Title of paper
- Name(s) of author(s), organizational affiliation(s) and e-mail address(es)
- Abstract between 600-1000 words in length which describes the substance of the paper
- A short CV including all publications already published by prospective participants on the issues of media and citizenship, and identity politics

All proposals should be sent to Vesla C Milton at milton@unisa.ac.za by Monday, 1 October 2012.

Participants will be informed of the outcome of the peer review process by 30 November 2012.

A longer, 5-10 page paper must be submitted to the same email address by Friday, 01 February, 2013 for distribution to all participants. Paper submission by this date is critical for the roundtable as its success is dependent upon the discussion of the papers.
Making meaning of citizenship: citizens’ use of the media in South Africa’s democratic evolution

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Introduction

In 1994 South Africans embarked on a road of constitutional democracy to transcend the disenfranchisement and divisions created by apartheid. This new era in South African politics broadened prospects for all South Africans to participate in democratic process and in doing so, create and invoke new meanings of citizenship. Mattes (2012), in an analysis of youth perceptions of democracy in post-apartheid South Africa argues that the ‘born free’ generation – those with “no working memory of apartheid” (2012: 133) – show less enthusiasm for democratic values than older generations in South Africa. Assuming that enthusiasm for democracy has bearing on perceptions of citizenship and civic identity, this paper explores the context in which young South Africans give meaning to citizenship and how the youth use the media to give meaning to concepts such as ‘an active public sphere’, ‘civic agency’ and ‘participatory politics’. The objective of the research is to provide information about the way in which the media contribute to the quality of democracy in South Africa through mediating citizenship in a way that improves prospects for young citizens to “exert influence over public decisions by combining with others who share their values or interests” (Friedman, 2010: 117).

Robins, Cornwall and Von Lieres insist that to research citizenship and democracy the starting point must be the “the perspectives of citizens themselves” (2008: 1069). The Media and Citizenship Project at Rhodes University conducted focus groups to get a better understanding, based on experience in their ‘every day lives’, of the way young South African citizens engage with the media to participate meaningfully in South Africa’s public sphere. The focus group discussions were based on quantitative findings from the 2011 Afrobarometer¹ and the South Africa Netherlands Project on Alternatives in Development (Sanpad) study on Youth Identity, Media Use and Consumption. The Afrobarometer survey explores the relationship between media use and political participation not only in South Africa but also on the rest of the African continent.

The objective of this research is to investigate the importance of the media in informing and shaping young citizens’ political and civic engagement. In 2008, more than three out ten eligible voters were from the ‘born free’ cohort (Mattes, 2012: 140). As young people in South Africa take up the task of citizenship, their constructs of civic identity, political participation, agency and voice could be indicators of the potential for a vibrant democracy in South Africa. This research assesses current trends in the way in which young people’s perceptions of citizenship, political participation, agency and voice are related to media use and consumption.

Contextual and theoretical framework

Young citizens, democracy and the media in South Africa

Comparing South Africa to other ‘new’ or emerging democracies, Mattes proposes the mass media as a contributing factor driving the evolution of democratic practice transitions from authoritarianism to democracy (2012: 136). In contrast to other post-authoritarian contexts, Mattes provides evidence from South Africa that

¹ Afrobarometer is a longitudinal, comparative series of surveys testing public perceptions and attitudes in 35 African countries on democracy “and its alternatives”. The first Afrobarometer survey was conducted in 1999.
shows “the absence of any positive impact of education or of news media use” on the attitudes of young South Africans in terms of political interest and discussion, political knowledge or the extent to which young people believe their voices are heard outside of elections (2012: 148).

Boyce (2010: 87) suggests that South Africa has an “ambiguous relationship” with its youth. On the one hand, Boyce says, the youth is characterised as a generation in crisis beleaguered by HIV and AIDS, crime, unemployment and poor socialisation skills. On the other hand there is an expectation that “their energy can be harnessed to address the challenges facing the country” (2010: 87). There are higher unemployment levels among youth than older people (2012: 55) and less than half of young people in South Africa indicate they are “satisfied with their lives as a whole” (Boyce, 2010: 95). At the same time South Africa’s youth show higher levels of trust in societal institutions (Boyce, 2010: 91) than other age groups. This bears evidence of the ambiguity of the lived reality of young South Africans and suggests that it would be useful to acquire a more nuanced perspective on young South Africans and the way they use the media to give meaning to their lived reality.

The media and the quality of democracy

How central is the media in democratic process and does it have potential to provoke meanings of citizenship and democratic practice among young South Africans? In the liberal framework, the centrality of the media is often assumed as an institutional function in democracy. Challenging this assumption, Curran calls this a “wearisomely familiar” and persisting “traditionalist” version of the role of the media (1991: 29). A more useful departure point for an investigation of the role of the media in the quality of democracy is perhaps Dahlgren’s (1991) description of the function of the media as assisting citizens to “learn about the world, debate their responses to it and reach informed decisions about what courses of action to adopt” (1991: 1). The problem is that Dahlgren’s description assumes citizens with equal and even access to the media. It further assumes media practitioners who are likely to consider their role in democracy in terms of democracy education, strategies to enhance the discursive potential of news content and innovative approaches to enable civic action. But, says Nyamnjoh (2005), the potential of the media to make a contribution to the quality of democracy is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Nyamnjoh argues that unequal access to wealth and power has implications for access to the media and that the extent and nature of these inequalities will differ from society to society. He further proposes that media routines and practices are dictated by a cultural hierarchy that excludes and marginalises “entire world-views and cultures that do not guarantee profitability” (2005: 2). Nyamnjoh talks about the “predicament of media practitioners” who feel obliged to serve the values associated with liberal democracy and who end up ignoring “alternative ideas of personhood and agency in the cultural communities of which they are part” (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 3). Schooled in the liberal normative framework but faced with a context which require a different approach the media are “torn between conflicting understandings of democracy” and caught up in the tension between rhetoric and practice, end up serving neither democracy nor development (Nyamnjoh, 2011: 20).
The media and an active public sphere

Curran (1991), like Nyamnjoh, poses power as a variable that is not taken into account sufficiently in versions of the traditional or liberal account of the public sphere. The version of the public sphere as proposed by Habermas (1989), says Curran, “does not consider how the media relate to wider social cleavages in society” (1991: 29). Curran proposes an alternative version of the public sphere in which the media articulate a complex web of “vertical, horizontal, and diagonal channels of communication between individuals, groups and power structures” (Curran, 1991: 31). Couldry et al (2007) talk about a “mediated public connection” (2007: 65) where the starting point for interrogating the public role of the media is from the viewpoint of the media users themselves. The findings from this research provide an opportunity to interrogate the potential for an active public sphere in South Africa from the perspective of young media users and their experiences of utilising the media in articulating citizenship and democratic participation.

The media, civic agency and participatory politics

Heller (2009) argues that “the capacity of citizens to participate in policy-making and engage in public life” (123-124) is crucial in order to deepen democracy and that it remains a “core deficit” (Heller, 2009: 126) of representative democratic practice in South Africa. Mattes’s findings, as discussed earlier, that young people in South Africa do not feel that their voice will make any difference to the political dispensation, warrants further examination. These perceptions of lack of agency have implications for the nature of participatory politics in South Africa. Boyte’s (2004) concept of “everyday politics”, Mouffe’s (1993) notion of “radical democracy” and Nyamnjoh’s (2005) “politics of belonging”, provide important entry points to explore the role of the media in civic education, mediating cultural and societal differences and providing indigenous or locally appropriate understandings of democracy.

In summary, the analysis takes account of the following contextual and theoretical issues:

- In South Africa, the media do not seem to play a role in making young citizens more interested in political discussion, more inclined to participate in political process or more confident to voice their political concerns to elected representatives.
- The potential of the media to play a part in improving the quality of South Africa’s democracy could be compromised by media practice that is rooted in a liberal normative framework while the local context requires a different cultural approach.
- South African youth construct identity through a ‘complex web’ of vertical, horizontal and diagonal channels with an equally complex dynamic between individuals, groups and power structures.
- To build agency and confidence among South Africa’s youth to participate in politics the media may need to navigate cultural and societal differences, different understandings of democracy and experiment with appropriate models of civic education.

Methodology
This research is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study initially drew on the Afrobarometer survey, which was conducted across 35 African countries to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of people on democracy. In addition to this, the researchers drew on a quantitative survey conducted by Sanpad that looked specifically at young South Africans, their media consumption and use and how this influenced their identities as young South African citizens. Not only have the results of these surveys been drawn on in this paper, but they were also the basis from which focus groups were conceptualised for this project. As a result of the findings that emerged from these two quantitative samples, the focus group questions, participants and key focus areas were established.

The focus groups were conducted in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng drawing participants from a range of geographic, socio-economic and political backgrounds. In the Eastern Cape the focus groups were conducted in Alice, East London, Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth. In Gauteng focus groups were conducted in Johannesburg. These locations provided an opportunity to explore urban/rural divisions and, because of the fact that there was a university in each town. Based on the results of the Sanpad survey, a number of key variables were identified as significant indicators of patterns in media use and perceptions of citizenship and political participation. These included location, education, employment, race and age. Of these key variables, the Mellon Media and Citizenship Project chose three as sampling criteria. These were location (rural/urban), education (up to and including secondary school/tertiary) and employment (employed/unemployed). Keeping to the parameters of youth classification (1997: retrieved from www.polity.org.za on 10/03/2013) in South Africa participants had to be aged 18 or older and younger than 36. Race, although an important variable, was not included in the criteria for determining focus group participants. The rationale was that difference in responses related to race would be analysed as these emerged in the focus group discussions. Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants, where one or two individuals who fitted the profile of participants within each focus group were identified and were then asked to identify other participants based on those variables.

Findings and Discussion

The media and quality of democracy

The findings of the 2011 Afrobarometer survey show important shifts in the way South Africans in general view the media and democratic processes in the country. For example, in 2008, 80% of South Africans said

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The findings of this survey are the result of the Afrobarometer Round 5 for South Africa conducted between 2011 and 2013. 2400 South Africans were interviewed across South Africa.
they believed the media have a right to publish without government control. The latest figures (2011) show 61% saying the same thing. People believing that the government should have a right to prevent the media from publishing news that “might harm society” doubled from 16% in 2008 to 33% in 2012. At the same time it seems that the extent to which South Africans rely on and trust the media to expose corruption has increased. In 2008, 59% of respondents said the media should investigate government corruption. In 2011 this figure increased to 70%. Coupled with perceptions of democracy – 28% of respondents said they regard SA as a “full democracy” and 64% said they would give up regular elections to live under a non-elected government who can provide jobs and houses. These findings, reflecting the views of all South African citizens, reveal frustration with democracy to deliver on its promise of providing the basic conditions to improve the lives of most citizens. It further reveals lack of confidence in media information that benefits society while at the same time showing faith in the ability of the media to fulfil its watchdog function.

These perceptions strongly relate to the findings of the Sanpad study regarding trust of public and political institutions by young South Africans. There seems to be a strong sense of distrust by the youth of politics and political institutions. This influences their involvement and participation in political activity. Of the close to 1000 young people surveyed, only 30.7% said they trusted political parties, only 34.6% said they trusted local party elections and only 40.9% said they trusted the National government. Of the three levels of government (national, provincial and local), national was the most trusted, with local government trusted by just 34.4% of respondents (provincial = 38.3%). This is reflected in the focus group discussions, which revealed that a prevalent attitude from the participants was that they felt as though they had very little impact on government services. The perception from a large portion of the respondents was that the political system was out of reach for them, and even if a different political party governed South Africa that very little would change for them in terms of service delivery. Focus group participants were specifically asked if they felt that their vote would improve the quality of government services, and the prevalent response was negative. One respondent noted, “It’s all the same, if you vote or not because nothing improves. Your vote does nothing.” Another said that voting does not improve their own lives, but only improves the lives of the politically powerful or elite. They argued “It certainly improves the party that is in power or the person who is in power at the time, [but] not service delivery.” Politicians were also perceived in a negative manner by many respondents who argued that they made promises without fulfilling them. Political engagement was also considered difficult because the participants felt that the politicians were inaccessible: “Politicians are out of reach to us in our community. We only see them in the media and on TV. We have never heard that they are around or that they are contributing something.”
While these results provide interesting insight into the perceptions of young people and democracy in South Africa, the research aims to take this one step further by linking these perceptions to media use or consumption. When asked if the news media gave them information that would help them understand problems in their lives, the focus group respondents provided mixed results. The largely negative perceptions about the media were that it tended to focus too much on the problems in society without also seeking solutions to these problems. The young people in the focus groups also felt that some of the programmes (particularly television programmes) they were exposed to were not relevant to them. This was strongly supported by the survey results that showed very low levels of relevance of the respondents to news media. Only 44% of respondents found radio relevant, 42.9% found television news relevant, and 39.1% found mainstream newspapers relevant. These were the three highest media for relevance amongst the survey respondents and it is clear that while young people may be consuming these media, they do not necessarily find the content relevant to their lives and their identities. This was particularly true of unemployed youth surveyed, who found the media less relevant than those working either part time or full time.

Figure 1: Relevance of news media across employment situation by survey respondents

Perhaps this speaks to “the suburban news agenda in much of our media, drowning out the voices of those – the majority – who have less access to power, wealth and media” as noted by Prof Anton Haber recently when the Rhinoceros was nominated as the National Press Club’s newsmaker of 2012⁴. Friedman argues that

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⁴ http://www.theharbinger.co.za/wordpress/2013/01/21/thick-skinned-rhinos-and-news-makers/
despite protestation by the South African media that it is the “eyes and ears” of citizens at large in South Africa, “a source of knowledge which is the property of the entire society, and therefore presumably reflects a common social reality”, that it is in fact fulfilling this role solely for the suburban middle class. He notes that the press “sees the world through the eyes and ears of the middle class, and the freedom it seeks to guard is that of the middle class” (2011: 107).

Similar patterns emerged when race as a variable was examined in the data. Black African, Coloured and Indian survey respondents found the media significantly less relevant than the White youth surveyed. It seems clear that the media in South Africa consistently disregard marginalised youth in their reporting, targeting the news to a minority audience.

![Figure 2: Relevance of news media across race by survey respondents](image)

The media and an active public sphere

The relationship between the media and young people in South Africa seems to be largely one way from the media to the youth. Young people surveyed in this project consumed the media and used it as a source of information for some political activity; they did not use it as a means of engaging within the public sphere. Only 18.9% had ever written a letter to the media (see Figure 2), and the focus group participants did not regard the media as a means through which to engage in civic or political action. When asked how they would engage with other people in their community about an issue many suggested mechanisms outside of the media for

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5 Although the researchers do not regard race as a true classification of people, it is still a significant socio-economic factor in South African society and does impact significantly on gender, class, location and situation. The Sanpad survey used the following race classifications: Black, White, Coloured and Indian for survey respondents. These are the classifications used for demographic data in major institutions such as Statistics South Africa, which conducts the National Government Census.
engaging with people in their communities around an issue. Some of the responses included putting up posters, handing out flyers, and more often calling of community meetings. One respondent added, “There is nothing better than calling a meeting.”

Survey respondents were asked whether they discuss news or current events with a number of different sources, least popular of which was a media source. Young people surveyed would primarily discuss news and current events with their family (77.9%) and with their friends (77.3%). Less than half (42.2%) said they would discuss news and current events on blogs or online forums. While this may point to issues of access, this is a less likely explanation than the fact that young people feel alienated from the media. Recent studies have found that one in three South Africans are internet users in South Africa, and that “if this rate of growth is maintained, then more than half of the population will be online by 2014 and more than two out of three could be online by 2016 (De Lanerolle, 2012: 6). The survey results also showed that more than half of the survey respondents (62.8%) used Google or other search engines to access news information, which shows an unanticipated high level of access by the young people. What is clear then is that young people are consuming media (both online and offline), but not engaging with the media or using it to engage with the public sphere. It is telling that very few focus group participants made specific reference to the media when asked how they would engage with other people in their community regarding a problem or issue facing the community. What this may relate to is the fact that these young people feel as though the media does not focus on issues in their communities and provides little information about their local context. One participant noted that it would be “best” if the news could focus on local areas, while another state that “I would like the media to focus on things closer to home, on our issues”. The disengagement by the youth with the public sphere through the media is likely a cause of the disengagement by the media in local community issues that are relevant to young people.

The media, civic agency and participatory politics

Previously discussed results on the low levels of trust in politics and political institutions are surprising in the face of relatively high levels of voting amongst the survey respondents. 42.1% of survey respondents said they had voted in the most recent national elections and 40.7% had voted in the most recent municipal elections. These figures are lower than those for actual voters at the last national elections (56.7%), but when seen in relation to other political activity surveyed, are significantly high. When asked if they had been active in a political party only one in ten (16.6%) said they had, or if they had attended a public demonstration in the last year only two in ten had (21.9%), and only three in ten said they had signed a petition in the last 12 months (32.8%). Survey respondents were more actively engaged in social activities such as helping a neighbour (79.1%) and being involved in a social group (67.4%).
While the focus group responses very often supported the results of the survey findings, the issue of voting did show a disparity on this question. Focus group respondents were largely disparaging of voting and had strongly negative attitudes towards this political activity. This was particularly true of the unemployed participants who felt that they were let down by having voted in the past without seeing any change in their circumstances. Some stated that they had never voted and would not be voting in forthcoming elections (either national or local). Some of the responses in this regard include one participant who stated, “I have never voted, because the thing is, I feel that the party that’s in power right now, even if it loses its nantsika, its rule, another party’s going to do the same thing that they are… so I don’t really participate in politics.”

Another argued, “me, myself, I have never voted because I do not wish to vote [for] the same person who does not give me my right’s.” Others stated that they had voted, but that political “parties make promises, they promise heaven and earth… and then after the election, they don’t do anything of that.”

Figure 3: Participation by youth surveyed in civic and political activities

Civic engagement by young people, such as volunteering for a charity or taking part in a demonstration, may be inhibited by the fact that young people do not know how to get involved. This emerged from a number of focus group participants, who said they thought about engaging with an issue that troubled them, but did not actually take any action on these feelings. One respondent felt that “One thing I would like to do something about is the children I see sleeping on the street, and I think one can do something about it, but I just don’t get
to doing something about it” and another noted that “we have often discussed the possibility of helping out but we don’t know where to start.”

The question that emerges is whether or how the media influence civic or political engagement by the youth, their attitudes towards political processes, and their distrust of political institutions. Perhaps a starting place is the overwhelming trust in the media that emerged from the survey data. Close to eight out of ten respondents said they trusted television news (79.5%), 78.3% said they trusted radio news, and 71.9% said they trusted newspapers. When examined in comparison with the previously mentioned data for political and public institutions, these numbers are significantly higher. The focus group respondents also regarded the media highly, particularly television, which was trusted more so by unemployed participants. The participants regarded television as trustworthy because it allowed them to see visually what as being discussed in the news broadcast. Some of the comments made by respondents regarding their trust in television include: “I would say that I trust TV the most because they always show what happened live. They don’t just say that something happened. There is something, a picture that shows you that something did happen so that you trust it and it’s live.” Another said, “I like TV because you can see that thing when it is happening and you can see that it happened, but the newspaper you cannot see it happen when it’s written.”

“TV is real because the cameras were there, so it’s something real and newspaper people were not there.”

While young people trust the media, and use the media for news and entertainment consumption, there is astonishingly little regard for the media as a relevant source of news for the young people surveyed. The data is contradictory in that although there are high levels of trust in the media, the media are not regarded as relevant or used by young people to engage in civic or political activity. Levels of trust were significantly different between those who were employed and those unemployed. Unemployed youth were also more likely to trust the media significantly more than employed youth. Television was noted as particularly trustworthy by focus group participants because it allowed them to visually see what was being discussed in the news broadcast. This correlates with studies conducted in the Netherlands, which shows that young people were more trusting of television news because the images were proof of what had occurred (Costera Meijer, 2006). One participant of the focus groups in this study regarded TV as trustworthy because “they always show what happened live. They don’t just say that something happened. There is something, a picture that shows you that something did happen so you trust it.”

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6 Radio was used most by survey respondents (70.8%), with TV news (67.3%), and Google or other search engines (62.8%) the third most used medium for gathering news. The medium used the least by survey respondents to gather news was tabloid newspapers (38.5%).
Figure 4: Level of trust of media based on situation of survey respondents

Conclusion: Are the media improving prospects for citizens to influence public discourse?

Despite the ‘normative vision’ of citizenship that asserts engagement with the state via the mediated public sphere, in reality citizens do not always manage to acquire new political identities by claiming their democratic rights (Robins et al., 2008: 1071). As in the case of other post-colonial settings, the continuation of existing unequal relationships to government persist even when new democratic spaces have opened up. It is clear from the results that while many young South Africans feel the media can be trusted as a source of information, they do not feel strongly represented in the media and find the material they consume irrelevant to their lives. This is a strong indication that the media are not providing young people with the information they need; not only to establish their own individual identities, but also their civic and political identities, and the possibilities for their engagement and action.

The media have a potential role in assisting citizens in emerging democracies like South Africa to give meaning to political process and civic identity but these effects are not “direct, simple, nor immediate” (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 1). While adherents of the watchdog role of the media claim that it “provides citizens with information about civic rights and responsibilities” and that it “makes the public more aware of what is expected of the citizens in a democracy” (Hyden and Okigbo, 2002: 48), the qualitative findings of this project combined with the quantitative findings of the Sanpad and Afrobarometer surveys suggest that more innovative approaches are needed if the media in South Africa want to be seen as “promoting and protecting the discursive realm that makes democracy real and functioning” (Hyden and Okigbo, 2002: 51). Media consumption was high amongst participants, as well as media trust, but the lack of relevance of media content suggests that those wanting to engage with the youth through the media need to target content through more youth-orientated genres.
The perceptions garnered during the focus groups and which emerged from the survey data reveal that the 'born frees', while less inhibited by apartheid and therefore less intimately connected to this past, are significantly distrustful of politicians and political institutions. While they do claim to vote, many spoke of negative experiences of the voting process and particularly of politicians in power. The media may be a potential source of influence because it is largely trusted by the youth surveyed, but the media is currently either shirking its duties knowingly, or oblivious of its lack of engagement with the youth to promote democracy. South Africa’s commercial media’s “view from the suburbs”, which has it prioritising minority communities and ignoring “the experiences and perspectives of people outside its suburban world” (Friedman, 2011: 109-110). Perhaps this is particularly true of the media’s opportunity to engage with the ‘born frees’ who may pose particular challenges in our young democracy to the bias in the media. The findings seem to reiterate the argument made by Nyamnjoh (2011) regarding the media’s inability to serve democracy, and perhaps also points to the fact that the media is torn between understandings of democracy, as well as a lack of understanding of how young citizens are trying to make sense of their role within this democracy.
References


Appendix One:

Focus group discussions moderator’s guide:

Let’s begin with where you live:

1. Thinking about the problems you face as young people today, which is the most important problem you face?
   a. Do you think there is something you can do about these problems? What?

2. Do you think the information you get from the news media is useful to give you a better understanding of these problems?
   a. What is most useful about this information?
   b. What is least useful about the information?

3. Can you recall anything you have read in the newspaper, heard on the radio, watched on television or read on social media that made you want to go out and do something about it?
   a. What did you do?
   b. Did you use the media to help you do this?
   c. Did you ask your friends or others who live in your community to help you?

4. If you want to do something about a problem in this community/neighborhood how would you find out if there are other people who would join you?

Now let’s talk a bit about your experience with elections and political meetings:

5. Think of the last time you voted in an election – either local or national government – what or who helped you most in deciding which party to vote for?

6. Have you ever attended or participated in a meeting with politicians – nationally or locally?
   a. Did that experience motivate you to get more involved in politics?

7. Have you ever participated in a community meeting about problems facing this community?
   a. Did that experience motivate you to get more involved in your community?

8. Do you think that your vote will improve the quality of government services? (like education, or health care or roads or housing)

Now I would like to talk about ways in which you get and share information

9. Do you think there is enough information in the news media that is of interest to young people?
   a. What would you like to see more of? Why?
   b. What would you like to see less of? Why?

10. What media that you use do you trust most? Why?
    a. Do you trust the news in tabloid newspapers like The Sun or The Daily Voice? Why?

And the last two questions:
11. What do you think are the responsibilities of younger citizens, like yourselves, in South Africa?
   a. What do you think it is that newspapers or the radio or television or social media can do to help young people do that?

12. Could you live without newspapers, or the radio, or television or social media? Why?
Appendix Two:
Details of focus group discussions

Focus group 1 – Eastern Cape (Grahamstown)
No of participants: 7
Age groups: 18-36
No of males: 5
No. of females: 2
Variables: Unemployed, maximum Grade 12, rural town

Focus group 2 – Eastern Cape (Grahamstown)
No of participants: 7
Age groups: 18-36
No of males: 4
No. of females: 3
Variables: Pilot study

Focus group 3 – Eastern Cape (Grahamstown)
No of participants: 7
Age groups: 18-36
No of males: 5
No. of females: 2
Variables: Tertiary education, rural town

Focus group 4 – Eastern Cape (Alice)
No of participants: 7
Age groups: 18-36
No of males: 6
No. of females: 1
Variables: Employed, tertiary education, rural town

Focus group 5 – Eastern Cape (Alice)
No of participants: 7
Age groups: 18-36
No. of females: 7
Variables: Unemployed, rural town

Focus group 6 – Eastern Cape (East London)
No of participants: 8
Age groups: 18-36
No of males: 3
No. of females: 5
Variables: Unemployed, Grade 12, urban city

Focus group 7 – Eastern Cape (EL)
No of participants: 8
Age groups: 18-36
No of males: 6
No. of females: 2
Variables: Employed, tertiary education, urban city

Focus group 8 – Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth)
No of participants: 6
Age groups: 18-36
No of males: 6
Variables: Unemployed, Grade 12, urban city

Focus group 9 – Eastern Cape (PE)
No of participants: 7
Age groups: 18-36
No of males: 5
No. of females: 2
Variables: Tertiary education, urban city

Focus group 10 – Gauteng (Johannesburg)
No of participants: 6
Age groups: 18-25
No of males: 2
No. of females: 4
Variables: unemployed, Grade 12, urban city

Focus group 14 – Gauteng (Johannesburg)
No of participants: 5
Age groups: 26-36
No of males: 2
No. of females: 3
Variables: employed, tertiary education, urban city
Formation of Citizenship through Talk Radio Participation

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ABSTRACT

Citizenship is an evolving idea and practice. Nonetheless the citizenship situation in Kenya, as in the world, is evolving but remains controversially state-centric. Citizenship thus remains a less understood practice as a concept of belonging; contested in practice. This paper aims at investigating the relationship between the concept of mediated citizenship and participation through talk radio deliberation. It offers an analysis of the content mediated through public discourses by determining the way in which participants draw their identities through different topics articulated in Jambo Kenya talk show aired on Radio Citizen in Kenya. It also focuses on how the call in listeners gain access to this media space, referred to as a “mediated arena of contestation” Pinto J and Hughes S. (2011, 1).

The concept of citizenship has brought lots of debates in both the electronic and the print media in Kenya. These citizenships, although subconsciously, are formed through Jambo Kenya as a mediated public sphere for articulating issues of democracy and good governance. The audiences are like minded people creating citizenships as identities through themes debated out in the show. These themes are those surrounding citizenship and their lived experiences.

The findings of this paper, carried out through a thematic content analysis, suggests that participation is important when government officials take audience debates as a means to social change because it is an important aspect that citizens need in a democracy. This is evident in the similarity of the caller's comments and thoughts on different themes articulated in the show. Wahl-Jorgensen (2006, 199) believes that citizenship should be thought about as a national thing (not universalistic). As problematic as the idea of citizenship might be, “citizenship cannot merely be an empty vessel into which we pour all our hopes and dreams—or alternatively, our nightmares. We also ought to retain the principle that political efficacy matters to citizenship”. This is how talk radio Jambo Kenya offers an avenue for participation as a right to achieve democracy and offering knowledge, despite its shortcomings.
Introduction

Citizenship is a contested concept that is at the centre of policy debaters within and across national borders. According to sections 87(1) & 89; 87(2) & 90; 91 & 92(1) and 93 of the Constitution of Kenya, one becomes a citizen by birth, descent, registration and naturalization. This study however, goes beyond this by looking at citizenship as a sense of belonging to the Kenyan state with all the rights and responsibilities granted to an individual by the government, as noted by Isin & Neilsen, (2008) focus towards governing subjects is given hoping that it produces the citizen as an individual. The study adopts Smith & Pangsapa (2008, 27) and Murdock’s (1995, 93) definition of citizenship as an aspect no longer fixated on membership of a particular nation-state but as a contested space for a variety of identity construction projects that shift the focus from a fixation with rights, to a concern with some combination of entitlements and obligations; and as “the constitution of rights and responsibilities required by full and effective membership of a political community. These entail not only rights of access to the resources that underwire personal expression and social participation but also agreements to contribute to the renegotiation of the common good”.

The concept of citizenship has brought lots of debates in both the electronic and the print media in Kenya. Participation in talk radio is concerned with the study of the nature of talk radio as genre in relation to issues of, right of access to public information, checks and balances on power, human rights, and respect for minorities in the society, nationhood, citizenship, corruption and their ultimate involvement in governing of the country. Jambo Kenya’s participation focuses on the emergence of ideas around democracy, and citizenship. While analyzing these concepts, this chapter draws on Livingstone and Lunt’s notion of citizenship through participation, where they state:

The debate over political involvement and communication has recently focused on the notion of ‘citizenship’, and one aspect of this concern is with the notion of the ‘public sphere’. If the citizenry is to play a role in democracy then it needs access to an institutionally guaranteed forum in which to express their opinions and to question established power. Thus the debate about public involvement of citizens in political communication leads to questions about the media as a public sphere where the relations between established power and the citizenry take place. (1994, 10)

Hinegardner L. (2011), in her article we made that film; there is no filmmaker notes that “social theories about the changing meanings of citizenship, have shown that, although one generally thinks of “citizenship” as membership in a national community, a diverse set of practices and contexts is transforming the category of “citizen” into a concept increasingly detached from definition by state. Based on empirical research of Jambo Kenya this chapter argues that participation in the public sphere plays an important role in reinforcing
citizenship as a social identity through public political deliberation. The chapter addresses talk radio as a social platform by seeking to establish whether Jambo Kenya enhances citizenship through participation in democratic deliberation hinged on full and equal participation of citizens; just like Habermas (1992/1997; 360) describes the public sphere as a network for communicating information and points of view, in the process the streams of communication are filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions.

The act of citizenship, as a principle of equality, is interrogated as meaning and practice, not reference to citizens of a particular nation/state (acquired through birth, naturalization or by descent).

As a form of news and current affairs programme, Jambo Kenya's notion of participation is carried out by analyzing its role in encouraging knowledge and the caller's perspectives on citizenship. The nature of carrying out this chapter is by analyzing talk radio listening as an opinion activity and examining the extent to which radio listening is related to the citizens' practices of, and attitudes towards political debates, opinion expressions, and their importance in the functioning of a democratic society. There are several questions whose answers this chapter seeks to establish; bearing in mind that democracy and citizenship should be developed from bottom up. Does Jambo Kenya act as an arbitrator between the state and the citizens? How does it construct and reflect power struggles? In what way does Jambo Kenya mediate deliberation and hold the government accountable? How does Jambo Kenya invite participation? In what ways do callers, studio guests and producers use this forum for participation? Do the producers and presenters of the show tailor their topics to fit into the issues of citizenship and participation? What role does Jambo Kenya play in the formation and practice of citizenship?

**Negotiating Citizenship through Nationhood in Kenya**

Citizenship is what Connolly (1974) has called an essentially contested concept. He describes it as of utmost importance in relation to the relationship between the nation and the state as it defines belongings, identities and personal rights and in many countries it also defines the level of access to social benefits. Several states recognise citizenship in four ways -- birth, descent, marriage and naturalisation. There are different types of citizenship: social, civil, environmental, political, formal, and substantive citizenship. Several studies have been done to understand the idea of citizenship in different democracies. Some authors have mostly unpacked the idea of citizenship into substantive citizenship and formal citizenship. (Chesterman and Galligan, 1997, 7 & (McEwan 2001:51). In Kenya, nationhood is associated with ‘kenyanness’ (Kenyan nationhood), as
negotiated by Wekesa (2008) could be considered as an ethical and philosophical doctrine that aspires or inspires the Kenyan people into the love for the country. This doctrine could form a starting point for the ideology of nationhood, informed by the fact of a shared identity as well as other attributes including a common descent, language, culture, religion and a territorial boundary. Nationhood can be argued to be a basis for the creation of citizenship, which is an act that occurs through political consciousness.

Before the advent of multi party politics in Kenya, airing of patriotic songs was mandatory by the government to all media houses. These songs were mostly sung during the Moi era when KANU was not only the ruling party but also the sole political party. They were sung with the government’s hope that the songs would curb ethnicity in the country and create a sense of nationhood. With the coming of multi party politics and the end of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) era, alternative efforts to maintain a sense of nationhood were practised. Suggestions like having a national dress and “najivunia kua Mkenya campaign” (I am proud to be Kenyan) were put in place. To date the national dress has not been implemented hence Kenyans thought that notions of nationhood are just but an illusion. The meme has been regarded by many as having sinister connotations. Nationhood being a bond by common descent or language, the study of Jambo Kenya interrogates language basing on the assumption that there is a sense of citizenship, through nationhood that is likely to be forged among the callers when they articulate similar issues using the same language.

Language Use

Kiswahili (Swahili), has since time immemorial been Kenya’s national language with English being the only official language. The term Kiswahili is a language that is widely spoken by the people of Eastern Africa and adjacent islands. It is the most widely spoken African language in Kenya, accounting for about 70 per cent of the speakers. Kiswahili has the oldest uninterrupted history as an African written language compared to other African languages used in the country, Momanyi, C. (2009, 128). Kiswahili’s journey has however been long and gruelling (Thuku, W. The Standard, 29/08/2010). This dates back to the post colonial period, where several debates surrounding the use of language to create the national identity have been carried out in different forums. In 1969, Charles Njonjo, the then attorney general of Kenya stated clearly that “Swahili is derived from Arabic, a language which originated from the Arabs. Swahili is not our language and it is not our mother-tongue: it is a foreign language just as much as English is a foreign language.” Mazrui A & Mazrui M (1995, 78 from Republic of Kenya 1965: Column 8). Mazrui & Mazrui also note that “…it was not until July 4,

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8 “Najivunia Kuwa Mkenya” is a campaign that was formulated by government spokesman Dr. Alfred Mutua. This campaign was meant to establish a sense of patriotism and belonging to Kenya as a nation. Kenyans put stickers on their vehicles, houses, bicycles and offices as a sign of patriotism.
1974, after the Governing Council of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) unanimously resolved to make Kiswahili the national language of Kenya and the official medium of parliament with immediate effect, that these anti-kiswahili sentiments were silenced once and for all."

Kenya’s new Constitution under Chapter two section 7 (2) declared Kiswahili an official language of the Republic together with English (1) retaining its previous status as a national language9. Patriotic songs, the national anthem, the loyalty pledge, and the Kenyan flag could be significant to the creation of identity, but in the study of Jambo Kenya I base on Kiswahili as a language used to facilitate debates. In Kenya, people use Kiswahili to communicate in offices while the President sometimes uses Kiswahili to address the nation, mostly off the cuff. The decision of Kenya to use Kiswahili as the national language immediately after independence was recognized as a need to foster human development. This is because Kiswahili is the language of interethnic communication in Kenya where it bridges the linguistic gap between communities.

When Jambo Kenya begins, the radio station’s (Radio Citizen) signature tune is played “Radio Citizen Chemichi ya ukweli, 106.7 Chemichi ya ukweli, Citizen” Chemichi ya ukweli means “the fountain of truth”. When this is played, first of all the tune (which is in Kiswahili) and its lyrics captivate the audience and they tend to listen to the content with the hope that the truth will be disseminated through it. Studies carried out by Steadman10 in 2009 reveal that 73% of Kenyans believe in the content that is disseminated by the media. Radio Citizen has therefore ensured that it has a captivating slogan that would motivate the listener to keep listening. Jambo Kenya has its own slogan that is not used during other programs that are aired by Radio Citizen. This slogan is “Mjadala wa Jambo Kenya- Mjadala wa Mwananchi. Kuzungumza ni kulielewa”. This means; “Jambo Kenya’s debate, the citizen’s debate, dialogue breeds consensus.” This slogan is in Kiswahili, encouraging the listener to participate in the topics under discussion. This way, Jambo Kenya, as a mediated public sphere uses Kiswahili in the slogan and the signature tune, being in Kiswahili, are likely to attract audiences because they bring about the aspect of creation of citizenships through language use and also so that the message is not transient.

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9 str8talk (28th October 2010) Swahili becomes Kenya’s second official language http://str8talkchronicle.com/?p=9992

10 Steadman is a Research Services International group based in Kenya it carries out research on citizen’s opinion towards government operations, political, social and matters that affect people on a day to day basis.
**Jambo Kenya** allows its call in audiences, those who send text messages and its studio guests to converse in Kiswahili and sheng. They do not pay much attention to audiences speaking fluent Swahili which is arguably a somewhat difficult language to speak fluently. I view this as Language (ab)use to the delight of the audiences. My interview with the two presenters of the show- Ateya and Njogu revealed that Swahili is a very difficult language and so they encourage use and abuse to the delight of the audiences, and also to the studio guests. They note that at times they are at a disadvantage when it comes to getting appropriate studio guests for the show because some individuals experience major challenges speaking fluent Swahili. Therefore, while fostering audience’s delight by letting them use language as they please, the presenters still focusing on the contentious issues I read this as a means of ensuring that everyone is involved in the debates that are carried out. This inclusion is an aspect that the program seeks to achieve even as it mediates between the citizens and the state. The excerpts below, from some of the Jambo Kenya episodes illustrates how the presenters themselves also use sheng to put their points across.

**Presenter:** *Ni kwamba wakati tunaposaga miwa, pia tutengeneze umeme na vile vile tutengeneze petrol.*
*Kutokana na miwa ile ile ya mkulima anakuza. Pale tutakuwa na mapato matatu, kwanza kuzidi mkulima kwa sababu sasa hivi tunapoteza nafasi ya kutengeneza umeme na petrol Ndio mpango tulioko sasa nayo ni kutafuta senti kupita kwa ubinafsaji, shilingi karibu billion tano, sita katika kila factory*

When we process sugarcane, we should also process electricity and petrol. This can be possible from the sugarcane sold by the farmers, from which we will have three sources of income: the farmer will profit and from the processed sugarcane we can make petrol and generate electricity to benefit everyone. The plan is to make profits through privatization of these factories by investing five to six billion Kenya shillings in each factory.

**Caller:** Ateya Museveni anajua chenye atapata kule migingo tunataka jeshi litoke na kuekea migingo immediately.
*Ateya, Museveni knows that he will benefit from Migingo. We want your army to leave and head to Migingo Immediately.*

**Presenter:** {Interjects} *Leo ni Tuesday, lazima tumerudi Kazini wengine wana hang-over nyingi za Easter lakini tufanyeje?*

11 Sheng is a mixed language that emerged from the complex multilingual situation of Nairobi City. It is mainly spoken by young people - preadolescents to young adults - and dominates the discourse of primary and secondary school children outside their formal classroom setting. Its syntax is basically Swahili, but through ingenious code-switching, it draws from the phonology, morphology and lexicon of Kenyan languages spoken in the city such as, but not restricted to, Luo, Gikuyu, Masai, Luhyia, and coastal languages such as Giriama and Taita. (Githiora, C. (2002, 259). Sheng: Peer language, Swahili dialect or Emerging Creole? Journal of African Cultural Studies, Vol 15, No. 2, pp159-181.
[Today is Tuesday; we all must be back to our work places by now. Others are suffering from Easter hangovers but what to do?]

**Presenter:** Mumesikia wabunge wetu wakizungumzia, mmeska mitaani, mume wa watch citizen TV na Stesheni zingine important …. But what are they going to do wanaporejea bungeni tena hivi leo, what are they going to do? Wanaenda kufanya nini? Wana ajenda gani? Wana maaazimio gain wanapoelekea bungeni? [You have heard our members of parliament speak, you have heard on the streets and you have watched on Citizen TV and other important stations.... what are the parliamenterians going to do when they go back to parliament today? What is their agenda? Do they have any declarations?]

**Presenter 2:** lakini kulikua na wakati ambao umetengezewa wananchi. Naambiwa kutoka hii time hadi hii time, hatuwa ruhusu watu kupita, na kutoka hii time hadi hii time watu wanaweza pita. [There was the time that has been designated for citizens to go through. I am told that from this time to this time no one is allowed to pass, and from this time until this time people can pass.]

Considering the above excerpts selected from different episodes within the language context to illustrate the use of English and Sheng to describe/illustrate different issues. It is clear from these excerpts that not only do the audiences use language to their delights, so do the presenters. They use certain words that are not in Swahili like petrol, factory, immediately, Tuesday, hangover, Easter, I hope, pirates, important, agenda, and time. They also use sheng, e.g “mumewatch” to mean “you have watched”.

**Narrative Creation Setting the Scene through Language**

Through Kiswahili as a language, *Jambo Kenya* presenters use narrative creation to narrate a situation/circumstance to enable audiences join in the debate but enables the listeners to visualize the situation. The excerpts below reveal this. In the first excerpt, the presenter begins the debate by narrating through describing the situation of the coalition government of Kenya which has been “accused” of not delivering its promises. Katika tena uiano, kuleta tena muungano, katika kuhakikisha kwamba tunaishi pamoja kama taifa, lakini sasa kinyume na hayo matarajio ya wakenya malumbano yanaeleweka kwamba serikali ya muungano, kushirikiana sasa ni ndoto. Ni hivi majuzi tu ambapo pande mbili katika serikali hii ya muungano zilikiwa zimeelekea katika sehemu ya Kilanguni kuzungumza na kuweza kutafakari kuhusu mwelekeo wa seikali ya muungano lakini matumaini ya wakenya kuweza kuona kuwa serikali itaweza kufanya kazi pamoja yakatumukia nyongo maanake tofauti zilikiwa, mazungumzo hayakuandaliwa. Upande wa ODM sababu za kulibuka zilikiwa zipi?

[In relation to the coalition government in ensuring that we live together as a nation, but now as opposed to the expectations of Kenyans, arguments state that the expectations that the people had regarding the coalition
government are nothing but a dream. Recently two parties in this coalition government headed for talks in Kilanguni to plan on the governing direction of the coalition government. However, the hope that Kenyans expected to see the government work together were in vain because the talks did not take place because differences emerged from the ODM side. What was the cause of these differences?

The studio guest responds, although not through narrative but his description creates a visual image of how the debate has been planned.

**Studio Guest:** Mazungumzo hayakufua dafu kwasababu ya ajenda, wengi wetu hawakutaka kuzungumzia maswala ambayo yaliwa nyeti ambayo yanayoleta tatizo katika serikali ya mseto, hawakutaka maneno yale yazugumzwe kwa hiyo tukawa na mvurutano hapa na pale.

[The issues that were on the agenda did not take place because; most of us did not want to speak to issues that were sensitive. This is one thing that creates a problem in the coalition government. This caused the disagreement and the meeting came to a halt.]

To engage with the studio guest more, the presenter takes on a more nuanced stance on the situation in the coalition government, still through narrative creation. This is done to enable audiences to identify with narratives and participate in the debates. He states:

**Presenter:** Baada ya haya ya Kilanguni, malumbano yaliendelea na punde…. kila mmoja akaanza kumlaumu mwingine kwa sababu ya mazungumzio ya pale Kilaguni; upande wa ODM wakaanza kulaumu upande wa PNU, PNU upande wao wakasema ni ODM. Hadi sasa, sisi wakenya hatujapata kujua ni nani aliyesababisha kutibuko mkutano wa hivi majuzi wa kilaguni. Kana kwamba hivo haitoshi Martha Karua akajuizi kama waziri hapo juzi

[After this Kilanguni saga, the meeting took off and soon…. Everyone began blaming the other for the failure of the Kilanguni meeting. The ODM side blamed the PNU side while the PNU blamed the ODM. To date, the Kenyan citizens do not know who caused the disagreements that affected the meeting that was to take off in Kilanguni. As if that's not enough, Martha Karua recently resigned as Minister.]

The presenter also seeks to illustrate how service delivery is important in the creation of citizenship. This comes with the argument that for the people to feel a sense of citizenship, they ought to have faith in their government to deliver on what their role is. In the excerpt below, the presenter acknowledges the research done by Steadman by noting that only 3% of the Kenyans involved in the study have faith in service delivery of the government.

[This afternoon, the parliament will embark on its sessions. This will be the third session of the tenth parliament in 2007. Let us put into consideration that 75% of the legislators were fired and we now have a new image in parliament. One year later, there were complaints about the responsibilities of the tenth parliament. According to a study recently conducted by research firm Steadman; only three percent of Kenyans have faith in the tenth parliament.]

The above comes at a time when the parliament insisted that they were opposed to media coverage of their sessions. The presenter therefore uses a narrative to illustrate how the right to citizenship is being interfered with by those in power. He also illustrates how one year after the tenth parliament took office, 75% of the members were dismissed and new members were brought to parliament; but service delivery is still an aspect that needs to be focused on. The excerpt below shows how the presenter used narration, through Kiswahili to emphasize on the issues that need to be addresses.


[A Council that serves you should ensure that it provides you with clean drinking water at home. It is the responsibility of these councils to ensure that the roads that are in these cities are their responsibility. As to make sure that there is collection of waste in areas where you can see. It is the responsibility of forums like these to ensure that such waste is removed.]

Formation of Citizenship and Contest through the Mediated Public Sphere

Citizenship is an evolving idea and practice. Nonetheless the citizenship situation in Kenya, as in the world, is evolving but remains controversially state-centric. Citizenship thus remains a less understood practice as a concept of belonging; contested in practice, Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC, 2009). In his essay Citizenship without acts? With Tocqueville in America, Singer (2008, 95) observes that “citizenship is not usually understood in terms of acts.” He notes that “citizenship is generally associated with democracy and as
such is deemed a political matter”. Equality between and among citizens in accessing state institutions and resources too has been unattainable.

In this chapter, I perceive the citizens who participate in *Jambo Kenya* as an imagined community. The notion of imagined community was adopted from Benedict Anderson (1991:6), who, in his thesis argues that nations are imagined communities. He states that the nation ‘is imagined because the members will never know most of their fellow-members…yet in the minds of each, the image of their communion lives. The introduction sequence on talkback radio fulfils a number of purposes including preparing the off air caller, identifying the next caller for the audience, and providing a cue for the caller to begin to talk (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2002). This preparation is evident when the presenter begins the show with ‘*Jambo Kenya*’ and the caller responds in the same manner before giving their opinion. This is a culture that has been set by the presenters and the producers of the program. ‘*Jambo*’ is a greeting that is said to build friendship and as an identity by the Kenyan citizens. This is evident in the excerpts below where, when the listeners call in, they either say ‘*Jambo* (name of presenter)’ or they repeat the slogan *Jambo Kenya*. When the presenters add Kenya onto the greeting, it is a means of addressing the nation and a way of citizenship- citizens of Kenya.

**Presenter:** *Jambo Kenya, Waziri Martha Karua ameacha Bendera sasa yeye amasema she is a backbencher. Do you think yeye kama shujaa am ana uwoga? Wengi wa wabunge na mawaziri wanamponge abaki aendelee kuchapa kazi lakini anasema No! No! No! Je,wewe mkenya unasemajie?*

[Minister Martha Karua has resigned and is now a backbencher. Do you think she is a hero or a coward? Many MP’s and cabinet ministers have requested her not to resign but she has said No! What do you Kenyans feel about this?]

**Caller:** *Jambo Ateya Mpiga picha wa Turbo. Majibu yangu ni Martha amefanya uoga sababu bunge lilikua na vote of no confidence. Pili aliona madharau kwa rais baada ya kumtetea kwa muda badala ya kumweka kama V.P au naibu wa waziri mkuu akamfanya waziri tu. Naunga mkono watu wa NARK Kenya nao wamuunge mkono.*

[Jambo Ateya, this is the photographer from Turbo. I feel that Martha is a coward because the parliament had put in plans a vote of no confidence to the president. Two, she felt humiliated by the president after standing by him. Instead of appointing her the VP or the deputy prime minister. I support members of NARK political party, who ought to support Martha.]

The title of the program (*Jambo Kenya*) therefore echoes the idea of citizenships, although subconsciously, formed through *Jambo Kenya* as a mediated public sphere for articulating issues of democracy and good governance. The audiences are like minded people creating citizenships as identities through themes
surrounding citizenship and their lived experiences. Wahl-Jorgensen (2006, 202) advises that we acknowledge that acts of citizenship do not arise from rational, detached observation, but from a set of strong emotions, including anger, love, hate, and a sense of injustice. This is unavoidable during public contestations in Jambo Kenya, mostly those which the citizens have been deliberating on the state not involving them in decision making.

The slogan: “Mjadala wa Jambo Kenya - Mjadala wa mwananchi. kuzungumza ni kuelewana.” [Jambo Kenya's debate, the citizen's debate, and dialogue breeds consensus.] The consensus that the slogan seeks to achieve is not practical in that, when debates take place, not every participant agrees on the same point. In a democracy not everyone gets into agreement with what is said or with the issues under discussion so bringing consensus, as the slogan suggests, is relative. Some of the topics that reveal this include payment of taxes by individuals and lack of by the Members of Parliament (MP's); where the MP's increase their salaries but refuse to pay taxes, arguments that despite being taxed heavily the citizens still experience insecurity, lack of resources like health care, water, sanitation, roads, and schools. Instead of using the money to provide and subsidise services, the excerpt below illustrates how a set of strong emotion is experienced among the participants in the public sphere regarding insecurity in the country that has forced the youth to form vigilante groups to protect their communities. In the issue below, the debate concerns the lack of confidence in the government to offer security as a right to its citizens. The argument among the call in audiences is that there are citizens who are favoured by the government, the high society ones whose security is always put in check.

Security and stability are always critical in achieving these important individual and national endeavours. Security and stability are basic needs of the African people, in fact for all people of the world (Deng, et al, 2002). Scholars and politicians have described security and stability as all encompassing concepts and ideals that enable African people to live in peace and harmony. They create a situation of equal access both to the national resources and to participate fully in the process of their governance (Deng, et al, 2002).

**Caller:** Ni josephat, mpiga picha Turbo. Mimi nataka kusema makundi haya ni sawa. Nataka nipeane mfano wa Kisii. Wakati watu waliuwawa na polisi hawakufanya lolote ndio maana tukaanza na chongorio. Kwa sababu serikali haikiwa inatujali na hakuna lolote ambalo limefanya.

[This is Josephat, the photographer from Turbo. I want to say these groups are equal. I would like to give an example of Kisii. While people were killed, the police did nothing and so we started the group chongorio. We did this because the government know about the security issues but it doesn't act.]

**Presenter:** (Interjects) Kundi hili la chongorio lina manufaa yeyote kwa jamii.

[How does the group benefit members of the community?]
**Caller:** Kundi hili limetusaidia sana. Waziri wa internal security haelewi chochote.....
([This group has helped us alot. The internal security minister has no idea how much])

**Presenter:** Wasemaje

[What do you have to say?]

**Caller:** Sisi hapa Lugari tuliform community policing kwa sababu serikali ilikuwa imeshindwa.
([Here in Lugari we formed a community policing group because the government is unable to take care of us.])

*Jambo Kenya* tailors its debate in a manner that it criticizes leaders without offending them. It does this by having an element of incitement but in a way that it doesn’t appear to obviously be inciting the audiences. The excerpts below reveal that in articulating human rights issues, the presenters, in their introduction, give an illustration of the situation focusing on poor governance as a factor which has led to the situation at hand.

**Presenter:** Kwanza kabisa imebainika kwamba pale mitaani usalama ni haba lakini Bwana Herbert Khaemba mkuu wa polisi ametuhakikishia kuwa usalama utaathirika. Hii inafuatia vita vya kule Imarisio, Karatina wanachama 14 wa Mungiki waliua.


[Firstly it has been noted that there is little security on the streets but police chief Mr. Herbert Khaemba has assured us that the security will be boosted. This follows the war in Imarisio, Karatina where 14 members of the Mungiki cult were killed. We have received information that the youth in these areas have been ordered to fight with groups such as Mungiki, Chigomo or Kwechere. This includes young people in Kirinyaga and Meru. This is because the Kenyan government tends to lug in forming his duties. Groups such as these have been formed to defend their communities from any danger. Should we offer support to these groups or not? From the United Nations policy, the government should be cautious of how such groups emerge.]

The above excerpts illustrate how the presenter has already taken a stand, maybe subconsciously regarding the issue in motion. He then opens up the debate. It is important to note that through his formed opinion, the
call in listeners would already have formed an opinion regarding this contentious issue. Nancy Fraser (2000) proposes a theoretical framework that addresses both the political economy and culture, and considers both redistribution and recognition as appropriate responses to inequality, but ones that stand in tension to one another: the affirmative politics of recognition conflicts with the transformative politics of redistribution in that the former affirms group identity whilst the latter aims to eliminate the group as a group. The dimensions of citizens’ rights include rights of social citizenship like public education and healthcare, civil, political (Marshall, TH 1964). Inequality in Kenya is an issue that has always been a great concern. It has brought doubts of citizenship as national aspect and has been established in these aspects that are likely to form citizenship identities.

*Jambo Kenya* acts as a mediated public sphere by airing emerging political issues giving the programme topics for debates and the audience’s content for articulation “citizenship”. Different perspectives on citizenship have been articulated, not only in *Jambo Kenya* but also among other public spheres. The question “nani nimkenya?” (What does it mean to be a Kenyan citizen?) has been contested with the aim of understanding the sense of “kenyanness” and belonging. Since Kibaki swore himself into power, Alfred Mutua, Kenya’s government spokesman, seemed to have put quite a distance between him and reality. First of all he denied that there were violent conflicts all over the country. With international media coverage and horrifying reports about Police brutality and ethnic clashes, he changed his mind and stated, that only about 3 percent of the country’s 34 million people were affected. He declared that “Kenya is not burning and not (in) the throes of any division.” [*AP*] Leaving aside that this number bares any facts and much more people were “affected” by the crises, Mutua did not seem to be much worried about the Kenyan people or he had a severe problem with arithmetic: 3 Percent of 34 Million is more than one Million people. Any crisis of this dimension would alert any government in the world. This came at a time when Kenya was succumbed with Post Election Violence (PEV) and negative ethnicity (hate), which is a clear indication of regional politics and inequality illustrating the regional politics that are vivid in Kenya.

There has been inequality and no progress in service delivery, health, housing and injustices on land ownership, security, nepotism and amendment of the constitution. The excerpt below reveals how housing is being problematized by the call in audiences. The homeowners (landlords) seem to be overcharging the tenants who feel that it is an aspect of inequality where the rich landlords/home owners are getting richer. The audiences became producers of the show and aired this issue and changed the subject to challenge those in power as not delivering according to their expectation.

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12 [http://eyesonkenya.org/blog/?p=31](http://eyesonkenya.org/blog/?p=31) Eyes on Kenya - Eyes on Kenya is Non-Governmental entity that came up after considering the need for a voice that can critically analyze situations as they occur in Kenya. It seeks to provide an information portal that is educative as well as critical about politics, democracy and good governance in Kenya. It also provides a space for expression and debate about critical issues concerning relevant issues.
Presenter: Leo hii tunataka kuangazia swala la nyumba. Watu wanasema land lord wangu, ama yule mpangishaji wangu anaongeza kodi kiholela. Ama wapangaji ni wengi kuliko landlord.

[Today we want to highlight the issue of housing. People say say that their landlords keep increasing the cost of rent. Are the tenants more than the landlords can handle?]

Presenter: Kulingana na hali ilivyo nchini, watu wameamua kuhamia mjini na hapo tatizo ni nyumba. Nairobi na sehemu nyiongi nchini. Landlord wanawajibika kusema kuhusu bei za nyumba lakini baraza lilipokaa likasema haipo hoja ya kupandisha bei, hivi karibuni pendekezo hili litawasilishwa bungeni na hakuna mwenye nyumba ambaye atapandisha bei yake kiholela. Si vema wapangaji kuchelewa kulipa malipo ya nyumba.

[According to the situation in the country, people have decided to move to the cities and the surrounding areas hence the housing problem. Landlords are for giving a favourable price for the houses but they noted that there is no council of landlords that can handle that issue. The motion on raising house prices was moved in parliament and no landlord who will raise its prices arbitrarily and the tenants will have to pay their rent on time.]

Voice of the studio guest interjects: Hakuna landlord ataruhusiwa kutupa mtu nje bila kuwasiliana na ofisi yetu, hili ni wazo ambalo tutajadili kama bunge na tukapitisha.

[No landlord will be allowed to throw someone out without contacting our office. This is a motion that will be passed in parliament.]

During an interview with Waweru Mburu, head of radio, recounts that Jambo Kenya’s project to educate the audiences on their right as a citizen is crucial in their dissemination of content. The station’s management does this through training the producers and the presenters on how to educate the audiences on how to resolve conflict and how to know their rights and responsibility as Kenyan citizens. Connolly (1974) in Chakraborty, C., (2010, 174) however points out that problems regarding citizenship education arise not only because it is an internally complex concept, but also because it is a normative concept. Normative concepts usually do not have a universally shared definition because of the reason that they describe things from a moral point of view.

From Dahlgren’s assertion that social reality of the public spheres as plural, where major mass media create the dominant sphere and smaller outlets foster smaller spheres, organized by gender, ethnicity and other interest for demographics. Seibert and Roslaniec acknowledge that women’s access to power within the public sphere has always been the objective of feminism movement.
The study of Jambo Kenya revealed that the gender concept lacks in the programme’s content. Gender and citizenship can be disseminated through gender education focusing on issues of women rights to curb the aspect of inequality when it comes to gender. Women, just like other marginalized groups in Kenya have been making progress towards representation in all spheres of life. Issues such as: representation in parliament, national land policy, health matters and ownership of land by women. This therefore reveals that Jambo Kenya’s role has been engulfed by other issues but gender.

**Participation and the Public Sphere: The Right to Achieve Democracy through Talk Radio Participation**

Citizen participation has long been regarded as a hallmark of a democratic society Bowen (2007). In the South African context, Wasserman and Garman (2012) take note that “Eighteen years in South African democracy the very notion of citizenship itself is fiercely contested. While the decisive shift to formal democracy in 1994 restores the legal and political rights of all south Africans- reinstating to all the status of citizenship- the high levels of inequality has prevented the majority of citizens the practice of citizenship in the ways that matter most- voice in the public sphere and decision making power at local level to impact on the process that affect their daily lives. Citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. Arnstein (1969).

The notion of the public sphere, as a central aspect of good governance, is at the centre of participatory approaches to democracy. Citizen participation is, thus, at the heart of political equality. Political participation provides the mechanism by which citizens can communicate information about their interests, preferences, and needs and generate pressure to respond. Political equality is a valued good per se. The ability to express one’s political views is constitutive of membership in the polity. It confers a sense of selfhood, of agency, of belonging. (Verba, 2000). Smith & Pangsapa (2008, 27) also note that Participatory citizenship recognizes the role of groups in collective negotiation and co-determination in the decision making process that affects the lives of group members.

The issues that the producers concentrate/focus on to achieve participation and or citizenship or good governance are illustrated in the excerpt below, on how through the foundation for the development of social inclusion in governance of the country, talk radio audiences come in to critique the Kenyan government.

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Presenter 2: Haiya mmoja wa wakenya akikiri kuwa hawana imani na bunge hili la kumi. Wanaenda ndani ya bunge leo. Wanafa waondolewe kwanza serikali ya mseto imetugandamiza sisi raia wa kwawida.

[One of the Kenyans has admitted that they have no confidence in the tenth parliament. They go into the parliament today. They should first be dismissed. The coalition government has suppressed the common man]

Presenter 2: Ni hivi punde ambapo DPM Bwana Musalia Mudavadi alisema wizara ya Nairobi metropolitan yake Githae watolewe kabisa kwani yale anayofanya yeye kama waziri ni yale yanayofanywa na huyu Githae. Sasa hapu Amos Wako, Attorney general anapendeleza katika uchapishaji wake kwamba mawaziri ni lazima wawe na degree, pia anapendeleza wizara 24 ya PM, DPM na DPN wizara ya nne kilimo uvuvi na mifugo, tano ya ulinzi utawala wa mikoa na usalama wa ndani ya ushirikiano wa Africa mashariki na hapa nchini, elimu sayansi na technologia, kawi na ustawani wa rasli energy and mineral properties.

[The DPM. Mr. Musalia Mudavadi said that the Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan headed by Githae should be pulled out completely because the work that Githae is doing is a duplicate of his. Attorney General Amos Wako suggests in his publication that ministers must have a university degree. He also suggested the 24 ministries headed by the PM, DPM and DPN ministry of agriculture fisheries and livestock, defence of the provincial administration and internal security cooperation and here in East Africa, science and technology education, and welfare of rasli energy and mineral properties.]

Achieving citizenship and democracy in Kenya is only possible through the constitution. This was revealed through participation by talk radio audiences who, as Kenyan citizen’s view participation as a right to achieve democracy. From the history of democracy in Kenya, they credit the 2005 referendum where citizens cast their vote for the constitution that they deemed fit to run the country. Though it, they credit participation of citizens crucial. They use Jambo Kenya as an avenue for articulation these issues that would lead to participatory democracy as illustrated in the excerpts below.

Presenter: Akizungumza na Daily nation hapo jana, waziri mkuu Raila Odinga alisema tutaifikia mageuzi haya ifikapo mwezi June 2010 kuna kundi ambalo limekuja kuamini kama hi katiba itapatikana June 2010. Tume huru humu nchini interim boundary commison ya Andrew Ligale, truth justice and reconciliation commission itaanza kufanya kazi yake hivi karibuni. Baadhi ya malenzi ni katika idara ya usalama mashamba, land reforms yote haya asema PM asema 2010 watafanikiwa. Je unakubaliana na hawa wawili PM na Rais?. Ni mjadala wa Jambo Kenya...

[Speaking to the Daily Nation yesterday, Prime Minister Raila Odinga said that we will come to these reforms by the month of June 2010. There is a group that believes that the new constitution will be available in June 2010. The independent country commison interim boundary of Andrew Ligale, Truth Justice and Reconciliation...]
Commission will begin its work soon. Some contacts are in the security department of lands, land reform all this says PM says 2010 will be successful. Do you agree with these two, PM and President? This is Jambo Kenya’s debate...

Inclusion is very important in the governance of a democratic country. Inequality in Kenya however has been seen as one of the factors which had created exclusion from development processes to the disadvantage of certain communities. One call in listener noted that, development could only be meaningful if it reinforced inclusion in terms of access to resources by every citizen. The role of leadership in fostering nationhood was emphasized. Leadership must be based on fairness and inclusion. In Kenya’s case, centralization of decision-making had limited the significance of decision-making at the local levels and in cases where the centre was dominant, development prospects were affected by the weakening of decision-making at the local level\textsuperscript{14}.

**Conclusion**

This chapter suggests that participation is important when government officials take audience debates as a means to social change because it is an important aspect that citizens need in a democracy. This is evident in the similarity of the caller’s comments and thoughts on different themes articulated in the show. As problematic as the idea of citizenship might be, Wahl-Jorgensen (2006, 199) believes that citizenship should be thought about as a national thing (not universalistic). As problematic as the idea of citizenship might be, “citizenship cannot merely be an empty vessel into which we pour all our hopes and dreams—or alternatively, our nightmares. We also ought to retain the principle that political efficacy matters to citizenship”. This is how talk radio Jambo Kenya offers an avenue for participation as a right to achieve democracy and offering knowledge, despite its shortcomings.

“Of the three sectors—government, private business, and civil society— civil society is the most diverse and the least well understood…. Civil society organisations need to reach for the highest levels of competence to justify their support. The sector combines energy and creativity, with a social conscience. Together, these constitute a powerful impulse and should be nurtured. At the same time, capacities for management,

\textsuperscript{14} Kenya Elections 2007 Media Campaign. *Narok Asks Hard Questions On Nationhood*. Media focus on Africa Foundation.m [http://mfoa.africanews.com/site/Narok_asks_hard_questions_on_nationhood/list_messages/13403](http://mfoa.africanews.com/site/Narok_asks_hard_questions_on_nationhood/list_messages/13403)
programme design and implementation, fund-raising and self-study and evaluation need to be strengthened. A vibrant civil society supports citizens’ demand for accountability and participation in the public sphere. Civil society organizations organize and promote the citizen agenda. Somers M. R. (1993, 589) establishes that popular public spheres must be infused through participation from members of active civil societies. "Jambo Kenya" lacks the inclusion of civil society as a social institution, in its programming.

The paper confirms that it is imperative for the producers to include studio guests from different civil society groups to negotiate citizenships in this public sphere. As noted earlier by Livingstone and Lunt (1994, 10) individuals use the public sphere for their concerns therefore the civil society may come in the advocacy for a democratic Kenya. The Kenya Civil Society Strengthening Program (KCSSP) has also been set up to ensure that targeted civil societies organizations work more effectively to advocate for reforms, monitor government activities and provide other critical services to their constituents.

As much as the media ought to act as an agent of promoting development of citizenship, citizens should have conscience of their right and responsibility. The Kenyan government also needs to be reconstructed so that citizenship becomes meaningful.

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Reversed polarity in the digital future(s): The challenges for South African journalism education, training and research

Gabriël J. Botma

Abstract
This article evaluates the particular challenges that journalism education and training are facing in an era to which Hartley (2012) refers as (the) “digital future(s)”. Particularly the traditional dual role of journalism schools, to prepare students to became industry workers and servants of the public interest, will be assessed in light of changes to and the reconceptualising of journalism practice and theory.
Introduction

According to Hartley (2012:13) "journalism, like the magnetic sphere of the Earth, whose N/S geomagnetic polarity reverses every tens of thousands of years…, is going through a reversal in the direction of its communicational causation in the digital era”. But because professional journalism is the product of a passing “modernist, realist” age, it still does not realise or accept that popular culture is the “cause” of journalism, and not the other way around (Hartley, 2012: 17). Referring to recent developments regarding so-called new and social media, Hartley’s (2012:92) states that the digital age has overwhelmingly “reversed the causation” and once again showed that journalism was, is and should be a popular “bottom-up” and not an elitist “top-down” pursuit. According to Hartley (2012:92):

The flow of causation in journalism is not from a professional provider to popular culture, but the other way round. Popular culture is the cause, the subject, the agent, the origin of journalism, not matter how professionalized, industrialized, and bureaucratized the latter may become. This is what journalism studies neglects to its cost.

It this argument is accepted, the question arises whether and how journalism education, training and research (JET&R) in South Africa might be affected in what Hartley (2012) calls “(the) digital future(s)”. For instance, what are the implications for teachers, students and institutions if journalism should be regarded as part of popular culture and not an elitist profession? Particularly, what alternative paradigms are available for the reconceptualization of journalism as it relates to the construction of citizenship and identity in society if “modernist realist” conceptions are rejected?

Hartley (2012) repeats the often heard criticism that journalism schools are stuck in its historic relationship with the professional commercial mainstream media industry. Thus, the fact that journalism has (again) become a “bottom-up” popular cultural pursuit rather than a “top-down” elite modernist practice has seemingly escaped both the industry and those in journalism education (and studies), if Hartley (2012) is correct. For journalism schools, their alleged inability to transform their role has different consequences, such as a rejection, undervaluation and/or dismissal of popular culture.

JET&R in South Africa occurs on different levels at various institutions. It is therefore difficult and potentially misleading to generalise observations about current and future challenges for all journalism schools. Still, this article departs from the view that many journalism schools share certain characteristics and paradigms, in large part because of similar close relations to professional mainstream journalism institutions. It is therefore very likely that most journalism schools will sooner or later be affected by sweeping changes in the industry.

It is common knowledge that the journalism industry, especially in print, is under huge pressure worldwide due to various factors, including the rise of so-called new and social media as dynamic platforms for “mass-self-communication” (Castells, 2009:5). Although trends are uneven, and many newspapers in the so-called
developing world still maintain or even grow circulation and readership, consensus is growing that new conceptual and financial models for journalism are urgently needed. Meanwhile, predictions and prophesies abound about the liberating (or not) potential of the era of the truly “active audience”, or more correctly, “the people formerly known as the audience”, and its implications for inter alia the relationship between mediation, identity and citizenship.

Journalism schools are arguably dedicated to the public interest, particularly the development of students as citizens, although the increasing commodification of institutions of higher learning has been lamented by many academics for the last few decades. As relative newcomers to academia, journalism schools lack the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) of older disciplines and have to cultivate strong links to the media industry for various reasons, including financial and institutional support to maintain programmes and have access to experts, internships and research opportunities.

The key question to consider is how to re-conceptualize a field of practice and theory under conditions of transformation and change, at best, or, at worst, disintegration. For example, how and what should students be taught about the role of the media and journalism in a democratic society and how should research be conceived and conducted?

A note on methodology: This article is not based on empirical research, but combines personal impressions and a literature review to engage a theoretical argument about JET&R in a not too distant (digital) future where citizens will arguably play a more active role in the construction and mediation of notions of citizenship and identity.

Imagined communities: From print to digital

In Western societies of a previous era, mainstream professional (print) journalism was seen as central to processes involving the formation of (national) citizenship and (national) identity. According to Anderson (1983), the “imagined communities” of national states emerged through the rise of print capitalism in Europe in the 18th century. Since then, journalism has differentiated itself within various national states as a professional “field of practice” with its own relative autonomy in which practitioners compete for various types of “capital” – including “cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 2005, 1998).

Significantly influenced by the rise of broadcasting and film, journalism fulfilled at least the double role of so-called watchdog and nation-builder in the late 19th and 20th century. In other words, as members of the “Fourth Estate”, journalists proclaimed to hold those in (especially political) power to account, while economic considerations and a central allegiance to the “nation” and (segments/classes/groups of) “the people” prescribed certain limits to their critical engagement. In fact, the advancement of nationalism(s) could be viewed as a central discursive theme and strategy in professional mainstream commercial journalism. It was
in this milieu that journalism education and training was systematically introduced and became part of institutions of higher learning.

In South Africa a complex and often hostile relationship existed between members of the press and media, the authorities and sectors of the population during colonialism and apartheid. During apartheid the dominant white-owned press, as Tomaselli (2000) explains, was largely divided between Afrikaans newspapers that supported the National Party and English publications that voiced a measure of opposition. Similar partisan tensions were also visible at largely white institutions of higher learning, with Afrikaans universities generally opting for positivistic approaches to communication science and journalism, while some more “liberal” English universities introduced critical theory and media studies along with journalism (see Tomaselli & Shepperson, 1999).

Since the dawn of democracy in the 1990s these clear fault lines between Afrikaans and English groups and interests in the media and society in general disappeared to a large extent and were replaced by post-apartheid and post-colonial tensions and challenges as the ANC-led government embarked on programs of reconstruction and development, black economic empowerment and cultural redress. Members of both the Afrikaans and English owned press and media expressed overt support for the negotiated constitutional democracy. While higher education went through various cycles of restructuring and transformation (which is still incomplete in many respects) the often hostile stand-off between journalism and media studies amongst and sometimes within institutions arguably lost some of its edge. At any rate, media studies made progress in the sense that a general “critical” (as opposed to “administrative”) orientation towards media analysis has become characteristic of South African journalism studies and research as well (see Fourie, 2010).

Since the late 20th century professional mainstream journalism practice is increasingly under pressure from various quarters, including developments in the industry and society in general. According to Couldry (2012:1) “society’ can no longer be confined within national boundaries”, although “nation-states remain of crucial importance to many questions, from control over the movement of people to legal capacity and the regulation of telecommunications”. Referring to Antony Giddens, Couldry (ibid.) states that “societies are no longer... ‘wholes’ but levels of relative ‘systemness’ which emerge against the background of many other flows and relationships that cross or ignore national borders”. These references to system[ness] and emerge[nce] is interesting in light of the discussion of complexity theory which will be addressed below. Also important to note, in light of the focus on citizenship and identity, is the tension suggested here between national and global spaces and interests (flows and relationships). At the same time, internal tensions are also at play.

According to Couldry (2012:128) the “possibilities of potential political action are now greater and better resourced than in the pre-digital age”, and this “extends beyond rich countries” because “it does not depend on individual access to the new technologies”. But on the other hand, “long-term strategies of positive politics and
new political institution building are more constrained” in that a “huge amount of ‘noise’ in today’s augmented media environment fills in the gaps of the news cycle just as the old style media did” (ibid.). He continues: Networking more – and more effectively – does not stop the ‘spiral of silence’ against political non-conformism from turning. It is this double movement – an inflation of ‘counter-democracy’ and reinforced constraints against ‘ordinary democracy’ – that is likely to shape political innovation for the foreseeable future. What does it matter, against this backdrop, if mainstream news is being made more participatory? (Original emphasis)

Couldry (2012:118) refers to Evgeny Morozov’s concept of “the net delusion” to describe the “combination of internet hype and a thin account of social process” and argues that it “blocks our understanding of how the internet might contribute to the institutional structures needed for democratization”. The “term ‘network’ risks becoming empty” without “a more sociological underpinning”, writes Couldry (ibid.). As an example of a strong approach Couldry (2012:118) refers Charles Tilly, “who defined democracy as ‘the extent to which the state behaves in conformity to the expressed demands of its citizens’ and identified three macro-conditions for the emergence of democratization in practice:

1) the integration of trust networks into public politics;
2) the insulation of public politics from categorical inequality; and
3) the reduction of major non-state power-centres’ autonomy from public politics”.

According to Couldry (2012:129) Tilly’s first condition is “unlikely to be enhanced in a digital media age because the increasing information saturation of politics means that there are fewer reasons to trust the institutions which underpin processes of binding consultation, and growing reasons for people to withdraw their trust from such processes”. Meanwhile, “more and more levels of political decision-making are pulled beyond the spaces where, until now, some democratic process existed” (ibid.).

The status of Tilly’s second condition is unclear, according to Couldry (2012:128), because “it depends on the degree to which dominant regimes of evaluation already entrench categorical inequality. In some locations (where gender inequality drastically restricts entry into politics), media spectacle may provide openings for challenges to old regimes of evaluation. Elsewhere...the balance may be in the opposite direction”.

Regarding Tilly’s third condition, Couldry (2012:128) observes that it is “partly enhanced” in the digital media age because “all institutions become more porous and open to media scrutiny and scandal, and so it becomes increasingly difficult for any institutional power centre to insulate itself from public politics: some networks (for example criminal networks) may do so, but only by not becoming public”.

In summary Couldry (2012:129) thus argues that the “potential for new democratization as at best ambiguous and partial, whereas digital media’s potential to contribute towards de-democratization (a weakening in existing democracies’ institutional infrastructure) in multiple and continuous”. He continues (ibid.):

Then consider the continuing pressures in mainstream media towards a narrowing of political positions that political economy has long noted. We must beware of celebrating ‘the technical fact of communication
itself...as an inherent good’, without forgetting that communication forms by themselves will not be enough to build and sustain entirely new forms of public politics.

None withstanding the cautionary note sounded by Couldry above, it is a fact that technological changes had enabled new kinds of engagements by the “people formerly known as the audience”. Couldry (2012:129) in fact acknowledges that a “bleak vision” of a “thin polity’ whose ‘immense total supply of information is only sparingly shared among citizens” is not necessarily applicable outside the USA and UK in the “exceptional conditions of political mobilization in the contemporary Arab world...or indeed China where a large and generally young mass of ‘netizens’ are increasingly vocal and coordinated in using digital platforms to challenge and shame government...”. He continues:

Sustained political mobilization and transformation can only ever emerge through shared perceptions of intense need: perceived gaps between available and necessary resources that are intense enough that they require coordinated action. But in times of growing global economic and social crisis when the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organization warns of increasing food riots, such needs may well be emerging. Local pressures towards politicization will often be played out live on a global media stage.

Recent violent incidents in South Africa around a variety of issues in national labour and local municipal management can arguably be equated with the reference to food riots in the quotation above. It is certainly true that some of these events were “played out” on a global media stage, although it is not clear as yet what role new and social media played in these events. This paper will not address this question either, but focuses on the implications of a digital media age for journalism, and particularly JET&T in its role and commitment to the mediation and construction of citizenship and identity in a fractured South African society.

**Journalism and the digital sublime**

Owners of journalistic platforms are still battling to institute a profitable model to sell content that was previously made available for free. In turn, journalism schools can be accused of turning out hordes of students for an industry in decline that is offering less and less employment opportunities. Furthermore, if critics such as Hartley (2012) are understood correctly, the “modernist, realist” mind-set of journalism school trainers and graduates is somehow also at odds with the prevailing logic required by popular culture journalism in the digital era.

The question arises how much weight these criticisms and arguments should carry amongst journalism educators and trainers? One can argue that in many intellectual circles, journalism education and training (and journalism studies) is not only on the wrong side of history, but also out of intellectual fashion. Media and cultural studies have to a large extent been founded on opposition to “elite” media, including professional mainstream journalism practice and journalism education and training in the academy.
Those in media and cultural studies, who are already announcing and celebrating the death of professional mainstream journalism, view it as one of the last remnants of “modernism” and its archaic “Enlightenment” commitment to truth and objectivity (Hartley, 2012). As Hartley (2012:20) sees it, the “productivity of the sign” during “postmodernism” has already taken care of the “representative realism” of “modernism”. What is happening now, according to Hartley (ibid.) is a movement past “postmodernism”, which he calls “productivity of the user (socially networked self-representation)” or “digital futures”.

Optimism abounds about the nature of society in these digital future(s). Can one even inquire, if the logic of Anderson’s thesis is (some-what absurdly) reversed, whether the disappearance of print capitalism (and elite journalism) in the digital future might lead to the disappearance of the nation state? Will we then have a truly “network society” in which “we the media/citizen journalists” self-represent our identities and construct global solidarity and conceptions of citizenship beyond nationhood? Does this mean that journalism schools can simply disappear and/or supplant their current curriculum with media and cultural studies?

In a recent article, “How to kill a journalism school: The digital sublime in the discourse of discontinuance”, Michael McDevitt and Shannon Sindorf argue that “journalism’s uncertain identity in academia has made it vulnerable to unreflective instrumentalism in the digital era” (p.113). This follows the discontinuance of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Colorado in the USA in 2011. McDevitt and Sindorf (2012:113) “warn against stakeholders in journalism education internalizing the fear and opportunism implicit in a discourse of the digital sublime, a discourse ultimately in service to discontinuance”.

According to Couldry (2012:109), Vincent Mosco referred “sardonically” to “distorted” accounts of the “transformative potential” and “socially distributed nature” of the internet over the past half century as the “digital sublime”. He continues (ibid.):

Yet, hype or no hype, we must acknowledge that the internet is potentially a major source of institutional innovation because digital communication practises, just like newspapers two centuries ago, constitute resources with the force of institutions.

One should also not assume that all is indeed well in JET&R at this stage. Media-centeredness and an often exclusionary focus on production (by experts) are arguably just two of the areas of stagnation. JET&R can (and do) mitigate or avoid some of these risks to a greater or lesser extent by staying aware of alternatives in a broader communication paradigm, and also of theories and methods from outside its borders. In short, not only are the interdisciplinary origins of communication, journalism and media studies of historical importance, but the continuing “hybridization” of these related field is seemingly vital to avoid stagnation.

Interestingly enough, Hartley (2012) advances a similar suggestion to cure the “intellectual stagnation” (p.28) in cultural studies, and even proposes another name for the newly positioned (inter)discipline: “cultural science 2.0” (p. 31). One of the interesting suggestions by Hartley (2012) is that he calls for a move to follow “science, journalism and realism across from the arts to the sciences, and from print to digital media” (p.26). He continues (ibid.):
Such a move would also challenge the current disciplinary distinctions between humanities (cinema studies has drifted towards literary and philosophical traditions of scholarship) and social sciences (media studies was captured early by social psychologists and political economists) on the one hand and the math-based sciences (particularly evolutionary theory, game theory, and complexity/network studies) on the other.

In other words, cultural science 2.0 is a “digitally literate and unifying alternative” (p.26) if “those who wish to pursue the serious study of communications media wish to avoid the stand-off that persists between print and its latter-day competitors” (ibid.). This paper does not necessarily agree with Hartley (2012) that cultural science 2.0 is the answer to all the problems and challenges that JET&R are currently facing (more about this later), but agrees that the search for alternatives should be broad and multidisciplinary. Interestingly enough, given the traditional mistrust of “postmodern” cultural studies aficionados such as Hartley to the positivistic sciences, Hartley (2012) seemingly now calls for the building of bridges between not only the arts and humanities and social sciences, but also mathematics and the natural sciences. In this respect he joins the interdisciplinary movement of amongst others complexity theorists and critical realists (see Cilliers, 1998; Mingers, 2010)

In the following sections some of the insights, opportunities and challenges of incorporating aspects of cultural science 2.0 in an alternative theoretical paradigm for JET&R will be critically evaluated. In the process Hartley’s suggestions will also be briefly compared to aspects of a particular version of complexity theory (see Cilliers, 1998).

Science and complex systems

According to Hartley (2012:203-204) the cultural science initiative is based on a combination of three interdisciplinary inputs: evolutionary theory – as elaborated in evolutionary or neo-Darwinian economic, complexity theory (i.e. network theory and systems theory) and cultural studies. Seemingly in anticipation that the name of the new initiative would elicit surprise, Hartley (2012:203) states that “when people in cultural studies hear the word ‘science’…they generally reach for their revolvers…Instead of that, we thought we’d do some reading” (Hartley, 2012:203).

Although journalism studies – that is sometimes positioned within the social sciences cluster at universities - may not suffer from the same knee-jerk reaction to “science” as cultural studies, the so-called linguistic turn of structuralism and post-structuralism in the latter part of the 20th century has also influenced scholars and researchers of journalism. This led to an interrogation of positivistic conceptions of “objectivity” and “truth”, while constructivism gained ground at the expense of functionalism in descriptions of journalism practice. Qualitative methods, including content/textual and discourse analysis, supplemented and in many cases even completely replaced the quantitative methodologies favoured by researchers trained in the administrative communication sciences.
It is difficult to say whether journalism studies has also become hostile to “science” to the extent that cultural studies seemingly has, but one certainly should take note of Hartley’s (2012) call for a more open-minded and inclusive approach to theory, research and teaching. Particularly the rise of the digital, information and network society (Hartley, 2012; Castells, 1996; Van Dijk, 2012) has seemingly caused the disruption of many traditional practices and notions of intellectual and academic life. For example, the huge scale of mediated networked technologies and communities has compelled many researchers to use computer-assisted methodologies to deal with ever expanding data sets. Theoretically, as was indicated above, media and cultural studies scholars such as Hartley (2012) are broadening their focus to whole communities, populations and fields instead of individual texts and case studies.

A similar effort to that of Hartley (2012) to bring the natural and social sciences/arts and humanities closer together was made by Cilliers (1998; and subsequently) in a particularly innovative version of critical complexity theory. Cilliers, a philosophy professor and computer scientist, proposed the inclusion of insights from poststructuralist and postmodern theory into complexity theory. Cilliers (1998:viii-ix) describes a complex system as follows:

In a complex system…the interaction between the system and its environment, are of such a nature that the system as a whole cannot be fully understood simply by analysing its components. Moreover, these relationships are not fixed, but shift and change, often as a result of self-organisation. This can result in novel features, usually referred to in terms of emergent properties. The brain, natural language and social systems are complex.

Both Cilliers (1998:138-9) and Hartley (2012:204) refer to the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann, who also saw society as a “complex, self-organising system” (Cilliers,1998:138). Important for this paper regarding conceptions of the role and responsibilities of journalism, Luhmann considered the ethical implications of the fact that we are all part of the system and can never stand outside it. Cilliers (1998:138) states that according to Luhmann “we have no choice but to accept that the system will organise itself in the way best for its survival” and that “the system will ‘evolve’ but cannot be ‘transformed’”. In terms of the role of the media and journalism in a complex society this approach seems to invite a certain determinism and pessimism. Cilliers (1998:139) rejects this “conservative, even positivistic, conclusion” and states:

Traditional interpretations of the temporal nature of a system, including Luhmann’s position, privilege the present. The immense gain of [Derrida’s]… notion of différance is that it reminds us that not only the past has to be considered when we try to establish the meaning of (say) an event, but that since we cannot fully predict the effects of the event, the future has to be considered as well…We have to take responsibility for the future effects of our decisions, but we cannot know those effects, nor can we wait to see what they are. We have to make the decision now.
In his critical complexity theory Cilliers (1998) thus steers away from both a conservative, deterministic and positivistic interpretation of systems theory and the ethical relativism often ascribed to poststructuralist and postmodern theory. But at the same time complexity thinking entails openness towards uncertainty and unexpected and unintended consequences due to the “emergent properties” (Cilliers, 1998:ix) of a dynamic system.

It is clear that Hartley (2012) has fully embraced complexity thinking in his cultural science initiative. Take the following example (2012:54-55):

We need to understand cultural, creative, and knowledge systems across whole populations…How do large-scale systems self-organize when productive agency is adding to their scale and complexity every day? How are individual actions organized into clusters, rules, hierarchies; how are these related to each other, and what causal force does institutional agency exert over the system as a whole? What role do existing institutional agencies play in the emergence and elaboration of the new, especially when such novelties are technologically disruptive? What is the balance between expert elaboration and amateur emergence in the institutional production of the new?

For JET&R the insights and questions stemming from critical complexity theory and cultural science 2.0 present new and exciting opportunities to reconceptualise journalism as part of a dynamic system. A possible first step is to finally put to rest the deeply engrained linear model of communication which still seem to direct a major thrust of professional journalism and JET&R.

A new model of communication

Like Cilliers (1998), Hartley (2012) also argues that linear models are insufficient for complex systems and processes. Media and culture studies (and journalism studies) took over from communication science and cybernetics a model of communication [the linear sender-message-receiver model of Shannon, 1948] that “seemed to express this structurally opposed and even antagonistic difference between producers and consumers”, Hartley (2012: 2) argues. According to Hartley (2012:2) there is “room for duplicity and deceit at each link in the process”:

The ‘sender’ may be a capitalist corporation or a state; the ‘message’ may be propaganda, for consumerism, capitalism or communism; and the ‘receiver’ is a passive individual, often feminized as ‘the housewife’, reduced to ‘behavior’ rather than self-motivated action…The producer may have hidden motives; the message may have hidden meanings; and the recipient may be made to behave in ways that he or she would not otherwise have chosen (media effects).

Hartley (ibid.) concludes that despite much criticism and reworking this model of communication still has a “commonsensical hold over much work in the field, and also across government policy, corporate strategy, and
community engagement in relation to popular media and culture”. As alternative in the “digital, interactive and participatory media” Hartley (2012:2) suggests a “dialogical model of language”. He (ibid.) posits that this model implies turn-taking, mutual productivity, context specific uses, and an example of an almost infinitely complex system – namely language and its ‘institutional forms’ in textual systems such as literature, media, journalism, and science – that is nevertheless continuously produced by a myriad unmanaged and self-organizing ‘users’ or speakers, whose agency is ‘open’ but not ‘free-for-all’.

According to Hartley (2012:3) this dialogical model of communication, in which “everyone is a producer”, is preferable to “one based on behaviourist assumptions that reduce human agency to the status of the lab rat”. For students and researchers, according to Hartley (2012:3), the implication is that “we can extend the study of media and culture from its present fixation with a tiny minority of powerful producers (i.e. industry professionals) to a population-wide focus on how all the ‘agents’, individual or institutional, in a given communication, media, or cultural system act and are acted upon as they use it (i.e. the ‘people formerly known as the audience’)” (original emphasis).

It is clear that the dialogical model poses serious challenges for traditional production courses in JET. Arguably a broad focus on production in and for new and social media platforms will be compatible with a cultural science 2.0 approach, but what will Hartley make of courses in professional news and article writing and editing, for instance? In short, Hartley (2012) seemingly does not provide for any professional gatekeepers in his dialogical model.

In fact, cultural science 2.0 challenges not only journalist studies but even media and cultural studies in its current form, according to Hartley (2012:3):

If media and cultural studies are to transform – from a linear to a dialogic mode; from producer to consumer; from powerful corporation and charismatic celebrity to everybody in the population; from representation to productivity; from structural opposition to dynamic systems; from cultural studies to cultural science – is there anything left we might recognize as media and cultural studies? (Original emphasis)

It is clear that cultural science 2.0 requires a fundamental shift away from production and text centred thinking, and an erasure of boundaries between producer and consumer/user. Although this approach arguably corresponds closely to actual developments in new and social media and the journalism industry, Hartley (2012) does not address the practical implications for JET or provide a framework of implementation.

Public representation, thought, identity and citizenship
While much more elaboration is needed before the value of Hartley’s (2012) initiative for JET can be established, he clearly provides clear insights for research into the role of the media and journalism in the construction of citizenship and identity in a complex, dynamic digital society.

Firstly, Hartley (2012:20) criticises the "apparently natural or self-evident model of signification" of modernism, which he calls “representative representation” or “realism”. Hartley (2012:19) states that the “stories we tell each other in mainstream media involve both a semiotic theory of ‘representation’ and a political theory of ‘representativeness’, each infecting and amplifying each other:

Semiotically, the default setting for signification-in-general is that of representation, where one thing (word, image, sound, phoneme, or ‘sign’) stands for another (meaning referent, signified), often in a realist relationship with one another, where a real object leaves a trace of itself in the sign, as in photography. This realist representation is then caught up in political representativeness, where something stands for something else proportionally, as when an elected politician ‘represents’ in one person many thousands of constituents or voters...

Arguing that this model “belongs to a specific time – modernity – and a specific place – the West” Hartley (2012:20) reconfigures it into a ‘productive’ model’ of “user productivity” and “socially networked self-presentation”.

In outlining his version of critical complexity theory, Cilliers (1998:64) also criticises the “classical theory of representation” as “thoroughly modernist” because it claims that “symbols have abstract, non-contingent meaning”. Cilliers (1998:81) states that “in most semiotic systems the sign acquires meaning by virtue of referring to something – it represents the referent”. He then argues for an affinity between “connectionist models and Saussarian linguistics” and how complex networks “can incorporate some of Derrida’s expansions and critiques of Saussure” (p.123). Cilliers (1998:81) explains:

Saussure...represented us with a system of distributed semiotics by arguing that the meaning of a sign is a consequence of its relationships to all the other signs in the system. Meaning is therefore not a specific characteristic of any discrete unit, but the result of a system of differences. In order to generate the meaning of a sign, not only that sign, but the whole system is involved – the meaning is distributed.

According to Cilliers (1998:41) “at first glance” Saussure’s system of language – “in which linguistic components are not assigned identity by means of rules, but derive their meaning from their relationships with other components” – entails “a fairly radical shift”. He continues (p. 41-41):

However, if one considers Saussure’s insistence on both the stability of the system and the evolution of the system in a linear temporal dimension, it becomes clear that the mechanisms of the system can be given a fairly conventional description...However, complex systems, like language, do not operate near equilibrium, and the relationships between the components of the system are non-linear and dynamic.
Cilliers (1998:81) posits that because Saussure “maintains the distinction between signifier and signified, his system remains representational”. Cilliers (1998:43) elaborates:

Put into the language of systems theory, Saussure still understands language as a closed system, whereas Derrida wants to argue for language as an open system...There is no place outside of language from where meaning can be generated. Where there is meaning, there is already language. We cannot separate language from the world it describes.

Derrida thus criticises Saussurian semiotics and denies a theory of representation by supplanting a general theory of semiotics with a “science” of grammatology, according to Cilliers (1998:81-82). Derrida argues that meaning is “an effect of the dynamics within the system, not of direct relationships between components of the system and objects in the world” (Cilliers, 1998:80). In a system of distributed semiotics the sign is constituted by the sum of the relationship to other signs. Derrida calls the relationship between any two signs, a “trace” (p. 81). The notion of “différance” Derrida uses to refer both to language as a system of differences, but also to the fact that meaning is never produced finally, but is continuously deferred (Cilliers, 1998:44). According to Cilliers (1998:82):

A strong theory of representation will always presuppose the metaphysics of presence. It actually argues for two systems – the signs themselves and, external to them, the meaning of the signs – which are made present to each over through the process of representation. A distributed theory of semiotics problematizes this division. It again argues that there is nothing outside the system of signs which could determine the trace, since the ‘outside’ itself does not escape the logic of the trace.

According to Cilliers (1998:82) the “ease with which we fall for a general theory of representation can perhaps be explained by the importance of the image in our culture”:

A text may have to be interpreted, but an image speaks directly, or so we believe. The notion is strongly resisted by post-structural theory. An argument against representation is at the same time an argument for the textual nature of the image itself...

According to Cilliers (1998:83) “the question concerning the relationship between the distributed system and the world does not...disappear” when “we deny the possibility of a theory of representation”. An answer can be attempted from a connectionist perspective. In a representational system, the representation and that which is being represented operate at different logical levels; they belong to different categories. This is not the case with a neural network. There is no difference between the kind of sensory traces entering the network and that traces that interact inside the network. In a certain sense we have the outside repeated or reintegrated on the inside. The gap between the two has collapsed.

Hartley (2012:25) states that “we are entering the era of user productivity, not expert representation. It is now possible to see in consumer-created content and user-led innovation not further exploitation by the expert representatives but rather ‘consumer entrepreneurship’ (once a contradiction in terms)”. Hartley (2012:25) states:
Already it is evident that all three of print’s unplanned progeny – science, journalism, and realist imagination – have also begun to colonize the web, using it for the ‘higher’ functions of objective descriptions, argumentation and research. Now, however, instead of abstracted individual authorship using spatialized monologue, users can exploit the social-network functionality of iterative and interactive digital media to create new knowledge using such innovations as the wisdom of crowds and computational power. There is of course plenty to resistance to such change. One thing that stands in the way, ironically, is print, or rather a print mentality that, because of suspicion of media by modernists, persists in characterizing ‘new’ media as somehow demotic and unworthy – even untruthful.

In line with his suspicion of modernist expert power Hartley (2012) rejects the popular Habermasian notion of the “public sphere” in relation to the role of journalism. According to Hartley (2012:13):

The public sphere – as an idea – is an unsustainable notion; it needs to give way to the idea of ‘public thought’. Public thought is produced and communicated in many different ways. It cannot be reduced to what a few self-selecting savant think, be they thinkers-on-behalf-of-the-public from academic (intellectual), political (community), or journalistic (commercial) situations. Even so, it is not a case of ‘anything goes’, nor is every member of the public equal in the game of public thought. It is an organized and competitive market…

The reference to the “competitive market” above shows the influence of “evolutionary or neo-Darwinian economics” (Hartley, 2012:203) in cultural science 2.0. Hartley (2012:205) states that cultural studies needs to “account for change from an evolutionary perspective rather than from an oppositional one…".

Hartley (2012:204-105) in fact reject a “by-now standard or everyday focus on structure, opposition, and the politics of difference in cultural studies; a perspective inherited from structuralism, semiotics, and continental Marxism…focusing on identity formation (individual and collective), discursive power, contextualized meaning, and practices of ordinary life”.

Hartley (2012:14-15) refuses to see human identity as an intrinsic property of individuals who then enter society. He claims that “identity, like rational thought and purposive action – emerges – it results – out of social networks and relationships connected via language, culture, social institutions, and various organized forms of collective agency that use ‘social technologies’ (from firms, markets, and the law to media and digital technology) to produce our individual capacity for signalling (sense-making practices), copying (cultural behaviour), and networking (intersubjectivity)…." (ibid.). Hartley (2012:15) continues:

[W]e produce and communicate our identity within a competitive social network and an economy of attention… Individuality proceeds not from inner essence but from species identity. Humanity is the messaging species or Homo sapiens nuntius.

According to Hartley (2012:14), citizenship has changed “by being practised in conditions of semiotic plenty, play, and commercial consumer culture, all of which are amplified, networked, and coordinated anew in online media”. He argues that “while the idea of citizenship is clearly historical, governmental, top-down, and policy-
led, its uptake and practice by those who are about to become citizens – children and young people – appears not to be modelled so much on social theory as on the ‘dance-off’ (ibid.). The “dance-off” of citizenship and identity, according to Hartley (2012:15-16), is supported by
…two overarching claims about contemporary media and culture. First, the current era of digital transformation is one where ‘command and control’ centralization is giving way (often unwillingly) to ‘self-organized’ networked complexity, in which new ideas, public though, entertainment platforms, information archives, and human identity itself are produced by innumerable ‘agents’ in a dynamic process that demands our analytical attention – and requires new analytical tools compared to those elaborated when ‘analogue’ media/cultural studies was started. Second, it is no longer adequate to posit a powerful corporate or state agency as producer and a powerless individual or private consumer in any model of communication, even when the relationship is asymmetrical.
Hartley (2012:16) continues that “consumption or reception is never done by a collective, whether understood as an audience or social group (such as a class, gender, ethnicity etc.), but only by individuals whose choices are also patterned by associations with such collective identities, amongst others”. There is “both individual agency and collective productivity” on both “sides”, producer and consumer, and thus it is a “dialogic relationship” (ibid.). Hartley (ibid.) concludes that
[at] a higher level of integration, it is possible to conceptualize the overall productivity of communication, culture and media through what E.O. Wilson calls ‘the communal mind’… Everyone in homo sapiens nuntius is part of the ‘communal mind’…everyone is a producer, publisher, journalist, scientist, artist…and everyone can use the archived ‘communal mind’ as a resource for identity, citizenship, and public thought…

Hartley (2012:79) states that the question of cultural citizenship “that was once posed at the level of class is now posed at the level of the individual consumer-citizen: what are the prospects for informed, embodied self-representation”:
The very idea would have horrified the pioneers of “commercial popular” journalism, for whom the salient fact about individual bodies was that there were multitudinously too many of them, and that if left to their own devices they would destroy knowledge rather than share and expand it…This tension between democratization and dumbing down still infuses the study of journalism…A question for future research, then, is how do divergent but overlapping energies – for instance globalisation, economic growth, and the agency of myriad individuals located in diverse contexts – enable or inhibit popular self-representation?

**Conclusion**
By all accounts, journalism practice as we know it is ailing, although journalism educators and researchers are seemingly merrily producing students and articles out of habit – much like the shaking lizard’s tail which has not yet realised that it has been shed. Many media studies scholars, maybe due to a more or less obligatory
hostility to mainstream professional journalism, seems thrilled by the reported demise of journalism as a field of practice. Do these media studies scholars think that the disappearance or at least sharp contraction of professional journalism will eventually and at long-last decide the on-going journalism/media studies dual in the academy in their favour, and provide the remaining scholars of “we the media” with much needed gravitas? (Not that journalism educators or researchers were ever rated highly by the academy or industry.)

But media studies scholars should not be too jubilant as yet. One only has to look at the rate of change to what were loosely described as “media” over the last century, and the desperate and often diverging efforts to keep up theoretically, to realise that media studies also run the risk of evaporating in the mist of its own irrelevance. Alternatively, given the seriousness and volume of much academic media studies production without any indication of its relevance to and/or influence on society or any particular industry, the field might just implode under the weight of its own self-importance.

The origins of communication studies can in part be traced back to pessimism about changes from a so-called traditional/pastoral tot a modern (Western) industrial society with it mass media. Some strands in media studies have rejected this pessimism about mass media and popular culture, and at the same time joined enthusiastically in the announcement that modernity itself has passed and modernism is elitist and passé. However, as time went by, it was realised that the “successor” to modernity, post-modernity, is either “late-” or will never arrive (except maybe briefly in a few affluent networked enclaves in North America and Europe).

What seems clear, however, is that postmodernism, the cultural form or logic of this ahistorical epoch so central to many media studies discourses, is gaining in relative obscurity as the first years of 21st century role by – in (some) theory at least. What will this mean for the future of journalism and media studies?

Postmodernism inspired many diverging views and theories, but in its critique of modernism it maintained a neat binary framework against which the perceived ills of the latter could be weighted and discounted. In journalism research, for example, a belief in “objectivity” could be rejected by referring to the alleged epistemological dominance of “subjectivity”. Similarly, media research could be advanced or discredited on the basis that it emphasised “structure” at the expense of “agency” – or vice versa – despite (often contested) claims by structuration theories to have closed this ontological gap once and for all.

Closer to the theme of this paper, postmodernism was influential in the popular dissemination of media studies concepts such as cultural “diversity” and “difference” (sometimes preferred in French to mean something [profoundly or slightly] different), which could be used as discursive missiles to knock down one or other theoretical straw person, such as “identity politics”. Research could focus on media content to establish what the dominant identities under construction were, or whether and why some groups were marginalised in media representation. Regarding citizenship the media could then be normatively evaluated: Whether it was advancing democratic and civil engagement or hampering it.
References


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On the use of play theory in analyses of online public commentary

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper contests empiricist (as in ‘natural science’) and instrumentalist biases that prevail in sampling evidence of public opinion in studies of citizenship and identity on grounds that they derive from an implausible philosophical anthropology. As such, the paper offers an argument for Stephenson’s *Play Theory* that may be a viable alternative to those given in the literature of communication methodology generally, and public opinion in particular. The paper posits that appeals Huizinga’s *ludenic* influence in Stephenson do not offer good enough reasons to take him as seriously as his theory deserves. Instead, the neglected influence that Thomas Szasz had on Stephenson offers far more cogent reasons, particularly in critical scholarship that draws on the Romantic legacy in modernity. To support the argument, the paper provides a discussion of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor’s criticism of epistology and other similar elements that make up Stephenson’s intellectual history.

One of the lesser-known legacies of the Enlightenment period of of the mid-1700s is the prospect that public opinion can be scientifically explained, predicted and controlled. The period was one in which the power of monarchies began to decline, and political reform movements developed in tandem with the rise of the middle classes and the emergence of greater public involvement in government. As an age of science, it was also that of reason along with the notion of a common will arising out of reasoned debate acting as public check on government actions. Rousseau along with utilitarians Milton, Bentham and John Stuart Mill were the combined source of this idea of democratic government grounded on public opinion.

History provided good cause to lack too much faith in reasoned debate as the engine of the modern dispensation. A competitive marketplace of ideas was more plausible. A century later, Enlightenment faith in public opinion and democratic government had given way to mass society theories that deeply questioned whether public opinion and majority rule could ever be a viable basis for ‘popular’ government. Mass society theory gave Harold Lasswell enough to speculate about why propaganda could so successfully mobilise massive armies (and their supporters) during World War One. Both he and Edward Bernays used this experience (and Freud) to develop promotional communication techniques main for the benefit of commerce. The concomitant belief that the media were all powerful vehicles for public opinion spurred on media effects research. Allport’s Attitude Theory in the 1930s posited that public opinions were expressions of underlying attitudes. Research set to measure attitudes with the further development of sophisticated survey research
techniques (questionnaires, interviews and statistical methods to analyze data) to measure public opinion. Belief in an all-powerful mass media suffered with Paul Lazarsfeld's finding decade later that voters were more likely to be influenced by face-to-face conversation than they were by what they read in the papers. Yet the belief held firm that public opinion was a dynamic phenomenon formed through some type of communication process.

Media effects research in the 1950s and 1960s only reconfirmed Lazarsfeld's findings of mass media persuasively impotent in any bid to manipulate mass audiences. Political and corporate funders who kept this research going held out the hope that the magic keys to maintain their economic and political dominance might some day emerge. This seemed not far off with the cognitive turn in media theory in the 1970s. Information was something processed, most of which happens below the level of consciousness. The significant break is well expressed in Maxwell McCombs's agenda-setting theory, which marked a shift from seeing mass media as injecting thoughts into audiences (telling them what to think), to telling them what to think about. Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory fits within the same cognitive turn, as do other theories that go towards explaining public opinion.

**Enlightenment rationalism**

Enlightenment rationalism threads through public opinion research. Notwithstanding the inclusion of Freudian theories in the 1920s, confirmations of reason (and media power) provided high points whereas refutations inspired the opposite. Even Habermasian theories of the public sphere, together with theories of participative and deliberative democracy, rest on a fundamental distrust in the ways that media and political elites shape public opinion. Even as participative theorists call for changes in opinion formation as a necessary condition for improving democracy, they do so on the belief that newsreaders and other media consumers are rational agents in these pursuits. Nonetheless, it remains fair to say that empirical research since the 1960s has not given cause to doubt that mass media have only a limited ability to form public opinions and attitudes.

Given this legacy it remains strange that William Stephenson's (1967) Play theory of mass communication "has not been widely and favourably received" (Glasser 1982: 102). Glasser reiterates his view of Stephenson's "now mostly forgotten" theory by calling it "a fresh and compelling alternative to – and in many ways a convincing refutation of – conventional explanations of media consumption" (Glasser 2000: 23). Glasser offers his view in the context of a symposium ('What is journalism studies?') of prominent scholars in the field, published in the inaugural edition of the Sage journal *Journalism*.

Arthur Asa Berger describes Stephenson's book as "one that offers some offbeat and interesting ideas" (1995: 19). The play theory of mass communication argues that audiences select and use media primarily according to the subjective pleasures they afford. In short, newsreaders do not engage in rationalist acts of 'information acquisition', but principally *play* with the media (Glasser 2000: 24). The factors that define play include freedom, self-satisfaction, enjoyment and expression — which are all basic *motives* of human behaviour. He
argued that reading the newspaper is play and that people read the newspaper because it is pleasurable in the same way that a child’s game is pleasurable. “Where many critics of mass communication have gone wrong, Stephenson asserts, is in studying it as essentially and agent of persuasion rather than as an agent of entertainment and pleasure” (Berger 1995: 20).

The allusions to Freud’s “pleasure principle” are not coincidental. Stephenson (being a psychologist himself) drew copiously on Freudian psychological principles of pain and pleasure in proposing and empirically supporting his play theory of mass communication theory which maintains that audiences manipulate their media to serve their own needs. Such manipulation may indeed include aberrant or negotiated meanings, considered intellectually, but more to the point it holds that, in pursuing media, audiences are engaged in pleasurable, ritualistic, and self-serving activities that are essentially play-like. Play theory, and the psychological principles on which it is based, posits that individuality is preferable to being forced to work and to conform to the expectations of others.

Stephenson’s application of the concept of play to everyday reading, viewing, and listening invited us to think beyond the rational, utilitarian, extrinsic, and almost always instrumental reasons individuals give for their attention to, and interest in, the programs and publications — and now web-sites — of their choice. Stephenson’s claims about play pointed to the importance of understanding the appeal of news and other forms of popular culture in ways that would account for the habits of media consumption, an appreciation for the richly symbolic rituals of communication that engendered experiences more or less impervious to what were then the prevailing methods of audience analysis: surveys and experiments (Glasser 2000: 23).

Similarities to other theories are approximate at most. There are resemblances to McLuhan’s work of what people do with media and the not-so latently rationalist uses and gratifications theory; however, Stephenson’s theory is primarily concerned with the subjective pleasures of and motives for media use. People select media according to subjective pleasure. But more importantly, that pleasure is not external to the media use. It is in their use — as in reading the morning paper, finding ‘nothing much’ in it, but enjoying having having read it. Again, Stephenson uses the distinction between work and play. Politics is work for politicians, but it is play for the public. Participation in online news forums bears this out in so far as these provide spaces for (often anonymous) communication pleasure. Similarly, mass media ‘work’ for people, but people ‘play’ with media.

The two main influences on Stephenson’s theory are the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga (1950) and the Hungarian-emigre psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1957). Others include Wilbur Schramm and Sigmund Freud. Huizinga’s book, *Homo Ludens*, defines the main thrust of Stephenson’s understanding of play. Supporters such as Glasser (1982) and many other scholars who use Stephenson’s Q-methodology in their research of subjective opinion, attitudes and belief systems, generally argue in favour of using play theory to study mass communication on the basis of its occurrence in actual use.

That mass communication scholars have not taken play theory seriously may have a lot to do with its association with games, children and other things not considered sufficiently rational and adult-like. For this
reason perhaps, Stephenson's play theory has been readily adopted by the new and growing field called Game Studies. Again, research here draws mostly on Huizinga's influence in Stephenson's theory. But this does not leave us with a satisfactory explanation as to why play theory remains neglected and unappreciated in mass communication theory. A plausible answer lies with the other influence on Stephenson, Thomas Szasz.

While Stephenson (1967: 50-58) uses Szasz explicitly to provide a better theory of pleasure than that offered by Schramm, it is another connection between Stephenson and Schramm — their mutual criticism and rejection of naturalistic behaviourism in psychology — that I believe has continued to make play theory unattractive to mass communication theory in general, and public opinion research in particular. Public opinion research has drawn upon the Enlightenment (empiricist) legacy, but has neglected the Romantic (expressivist) strand of modernity. In this respect, Francis Hearn’s (1976) paper, Toward a critical theory of play, helps to illuminate the critical theory (and Cultural Studies) dimension of Communication in a manner that ought to raise the standing of Stephenson's theory in public opinion and mass communication scholarship.

**Online forums**

Any survey of online news forums can leave one wondering whether the quality of public opinion is in decline, or whether in fact these raw and spontaneous online interjections are a truer version of 'letter to the editor' — its the rational, controlled and carefully crafted counterpart. This condition poses a challenge to public opinion research, particularly when it takes a rational and objectivist view of its subject matter. A researcher of public opinion may choose to ignore 'irrational' online commentary, or may choose to apply whatever process is necessary to distill (or reify) what can then be taken from it to represent 'public opinion'. Compared to online sources, analyses of news reports and letters to the editor have the advantage of finding opinion in an already clarified (and edited) condition.

Objective and sociologically-derived frameworks used to sample public opinion generally assume that citizens at least attempt to express their views about matters of political importance in a rational and deliberate manner. Where such clarity is not forthcoming, our sampling methods are tuned in order to clarify that expression, and to make usable data. As such, consumers are assumed to seek news for rational, utilitarian and extrinsic purposes. Surveys of what they read and why they do so adopt a compatibly mentalistic view of their newsreading behaviour. Accordingly, what studies of public opinion attempt to measure is either a sociological equivalent of attitude, or an extract from that.

Debate over public opinion and citizenship has a long history, and one that has actually constituted the Communication discipline. As such, the Lippmann-Dewey debate could be seen as the founding act of Communication – Lippmann having no faith in an active citizenry, and Dewey finding elites to be the problem with modern democracy, yet holding the belief that 'publics make democracy'.

These positions more or less mirror the differences between Plato and Aristotle. In Aristotle’s view the public “had an organic quality: the coming together of separate ideas which, through the process of rational discussion or consideration, emerged as something greater than the sum of its parts” (Lewis 2001: 22). For Plato, the citizenry was a wayward and malleable rabble. Public opinion in Aristotle’s view is considered as episteme (universal knowledge, the property of philosophers), whereas for Plato it is doxa – mere opinion according to the fickle caprice of the mob.

The Lippmann-Dewey debate set off a chain of media research associated with Blumer (and G.H. Mead), Gerbner, Noelle-Neumann, McCombs, and more recently reaching what seemed to be a kind of exhaustion in Putnam’s notion of “bowling alone”. While there are good enough grounds to contest whether the breadth of Communication bears the full genetic imprint of the Lippmann-Dewey debate (Craig 1999, 2007; Peters 2001), there are equally good grounds to argue that the framework in which questions of citizenship and public opinion have been researched were skewed decidedly towards Lippmann – notwithstanding criticism of the empiricist (and positivist) sociological paradigm (naturalism) this helped to reinforced in Communication until at least the late 1970s. This naturalist tendency yielded somewhat to interpretivist research from around this period until quite recently. Hilary Kornblith (1999: 158), a defender of naturalism in social science, has this to say about it:

Naturalism in philosophy has a long and distinguished heritage. This is no less true in epistemology than it is in other areas of philosophy. At the same time, epistemology in the English speaking world in the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by an approach quite hostile to naturalism. Now, at the close of the twentieth century, naturalism is resurgent.

One outgrowth of this sociological bias was the tendency to see the press as having socially beneficial ‘functions’. These are traditionally given as information, education and entertainment. People read newspapers, watch television news bulletins, and listen to radio newscasts to gain the public knowledge (information) necessary to perform as citizens (Schudson 1995). That is, newsreaders seek out news reports in a utilitarian fashion to be informed. The same audiences turn to the inside pages or tune in to non-news broadcast material to be entertained. Features and similar broadcast programmes they may find to be more educational. Such a model of the self is as Cartesian (rationalistic and mentalistic) as its survey counterpart is empiricist. Likewise, it must dismiss anything that cannot be measured as irrelevant. Emotions, feelings, play and the like are all dismissed.

Another way of drawing out these dichotomies is to point not only to the differences between the natural and the social sciences, but also to the continuing tendency for the former to be a template of the latter. There is a view that the natural sciences create their own phenomena, whereas the social sciences do not. Osborne and Rose disagree: “[T]he social sciences, we argue, have played a very significant role in making up our world, and the kinds of persons, phenomena and entities that inhabit it” (1999: 368). They examine the history of public opinion research to tease their argument, which may be summed up in their statement: “The
phenomenon of opinion is an artefact of the technical procedures that are designed to capture it” (1999: 382). Unlike the Thomist view of opinion, which could be true or false given an objective reference in knowledge or concrete fact, the ‘instrumentalist’ object called ‘opinion’ is a social fact and a statistical construct in itself. The twentieth-century science of opinion … related less to a procedure of knowledge than to a kind of conceptual object, a social fact, called opinion. Opinion here hardly referred to anything beyond itself; it became, so to speak, something that was thing-like in itself, something that existed in its own right and, with the right technical resources and procedural methods, could be known and measured. In other words, opinion was something that simply emerged as a fact in its own right from the collectivity of people’s individual opinions. And as an indicator of this emergent existence, note in this context the comparative rarity – because rather anomalous – of attempts to measure opinions by some more objective standard of truth that would be an ‘improvement’ on opinion itself (Osborne and Rose 1999: 387).

Against epistemology

[...]

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References


THE NATION, NATION-BUILDING AND DIVERSITY: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN ALL THIS?
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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the concepts and discourses regarding the nation, nation-building and civic solidarity in particular with regard to diverse societies. Attention is given to different conceptualisations of the concept “nation” which coincides with diverging viewpoints on nation-building and how nation-building should be approached as well as different models on how civic solidarity could be achieved in heterogeneous societies. A distinction is drawn between Jacobinistic and syncretistic approaches towards nation-building as well as between constitutional patriotism, liberal nationalism and deep diversity as models for achieving feelings of belonging, patriotism and social cohesion in heterogeneous societies. Attention is furthermore given to diverging viewpoints of sub-national groups (ethnic or racial groups) within these approaches as well as the implications of the concomitant strategies for such groups. Nation-building in Africa and South Africa – and the implications thereof for sub-national groups – are furthermore considered. In the last instance the role of the media in nation-building, on the one hand, and the accommodation of diversity, on the other, are considered. The article ends with a number of conclusions and recommendations for South Africa as well as other heterogeneous societies in Africa.

Key words: Nation-building; diversity; civic solidarity; Jacobinistic nation-building; syncretistic nation-building; constitutional patriotism, liberal nationalism; deep diversity; Africa; South Africa; media
1. INTRODUCTION

In the period after World War II processes of nation-building have been taking place in many countries of the world (Vorster 2005). This has in particular been the case in developing countries – also in Africa – in the post-colonial era as well as in Eastern European countries since the Cold War. Discourses on nation-building have furthermore proliferated due to the fact that fewer and fewer countries can be regarded as ethnically and culturally homogeneous due to, among others, the demographic changes brought about by increased immigration in a fast-globalising world. In this world the term “nation-building” has become a catchphrase used not only by politicians and political analysts, but also by community, sport and business leaders. Also in the media it is often portrayed as the panacea to solve most of the problems associated with intergroup relations in diverse societies.

Processes of nation-building have also played an important role in the post-apartheid South Africa. In South Africa ethnic and racial identities have been manipulated and reified through processes of social engineering during Apartheid (Ramsamy 2007). Although all legal segregation have been wiped from the law books after 1994 and the unity of the country has been reinstated by incorporating the former so-called “homelands”, it was widely believed that – due to Apartheid manipulation – South Africans lacked a common sense of nationhood at the advent of new dispensation. Nation-building was widely perceived to be the logical step to fill this gap (Eaton 2002).

The ideals of nation-building are reflected in the Preamble of the South African Constitution: “We, the people of South Africa, believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”

The metaphor of the Rainbow Nation has however become the most popular symbol of nation-building in South Africa (Ramsamy 2007; Blaser 2004). The common interpretation of this metaphor is that the colours of the “rainbow” are reflective of the various ethnic and racial groups residing in South Africa who are united in a harmonious whole within the new democracy.

However, despite the high ideals encompassed in the Constitution and in the Rainbow Nation metaphor, South African society has remained fractured along racial and ethnic lines (Ramsamy 2007). National unity remains a challenge as is evident from numerous conferences and symposia held on the “national question” since 1994. Moreover, the term nation-building is often used – in particular in the media – without people really understanding what it entails and what we are aiming for when we talk of building a nation. In this article the meaning of nation-building, the controversies surrounding it, various forms of nation-building and ways of fostering civic solidarity, and some of the implications of nation-building for Africa, South Africa and the media will be explored.
2. THE CONCEPT “NATION”

One of the major problems when trying to understand what nation-building entails is the fact that the term “nation” has acquired different meanings and is used differently by analysts within particular schools of thought.

According to Degenaar (1990) the term has originally developed from the Greek natio which refers to a group of people who are blood relatives. In this sense the term refers to people of a common descent characterised by a shared history, culture, language and sometimes also religion (Stephenson 2005). As such it has been used, in particular in Europe, almost as a synonym for ethnicity. When the meaning of nation in terms of a common descent and cultural homogeneity has become associated with political power, the ideology of nationalism evolved (Song 2011). Nationalism refers to members of an ethnic group that have become conscious of themselves as a group and believe that sovereignty is based in all the members of the group and not in a monarch. It is furthermore associated with attempts of a group to achieve sovereignty and self-governance within a particular territory.

However, today the term nation is commonly used for all the people who live in a particular territory under a single constitution such as in the case of the member states of the United Nations (Degenaar 1990; Stephenson 2005). In this sense the term does not indicate cultural homogeneity. Although the term “civic nation” is sometimes used in this regard, Degenaar holds the opinion that it is better to refer in this case to a state or state nation, namely the people living in a particular territory who have a single government that holds power over all the inhabitants of the territory. The term “patriotism” is furthermore used for loyalty towards a civic or state nation.

Although the current author believes that it is more correct to use the term nation for referring to a self-conscious ethnic group, the civic usage of the term has become so common that it is difficult to avoid. In this article the significance of the term therefore needs to be interpreted in terms of the context or school of thought within which it is used.

3. NATION-BUILDING

Due to the different meanings attached to the concept nation, the concept of “nation-building” has also become controversial (Stephenson 2005). The term originated during the 1950s and 1960s among historically orientated political scientists such as Karl Deutsch and William Foltz (1963), Charles Tilly (1975) and Reinhard Bendix (1996). These theorists have focused primarily on processes of national integration and consolidation that contributes towards the establishment of the modern state (Nation-building n.d.). Thus nation-building is perceived as a process of social transformation to bring underdeveloped, poor and parochial groups into a modern state characterised by peace, equal opportunities and economic viability (Vorster 2005).
The traditional, pre-modern state is perceived to have existed of isolated groups with insular cultures at the lower end of society and a distant and aloof state at the top (Nation-building n.d.). It is believed that through processes of nation-building these two spheres are brought into closer contact with each other. Members of disparate groups are drawn into the larger society through education and political participation. The state, on the other hand, expands its obligations to the larger society by offering an extended range of services and integrative networks. For example, the subjects of a monarch became active and participatory citizens of the nation-state.

Thus nation-building implies a process through which traditional, familial, religious and ethnic authorities are replaced by a single, secular, nation-centred authority (Rokkan 1968). Most importantly, loyalty to and identification with substate or subnational groups (eg ethnic groups) become less important, lose their political relevance and are superseded and replaced by loyalty to and identification with the larger entity, namely the state or nation state. Nation-building consequently entails processes of “assimilation”, “acculturation” or “amalgamation” in the process of forging of a single culture, identity and language. This model of nation-building – which used to be the dominant model and feature of the modern civic state – is often referred to as modernist or Jacobinistic nation-building (Dersso 2008; Simpson 1994).

Deutsch and Folz (1963) draw a direct relationship between nation-building and modernisation. They believe that the proliferation of networks for communication and transport, together with increasing urbanisation and industrialisation, would result in the assimilation of citizens from far-off regions and parochial groups into the mainstream of national life, the dissolution of ethnicity and the shifting of loyalties from disparate ethnic groups to the state. Communication networks are believed to be of paramount importance (Rokkan 1968). Thus the degree of nation-building in a particular country is often measured by the extent to which the speakers of ethnic languages have become speakers of the “national” language as well as the extent to which members of traditional and locally bound networks have become integrated into a broader, urban en even nation-wide system of social communication.

Central to modernist nation-building is the formation of an overarching national identity that supersedes parochial ethnic, cultural and racial identities (Blaser 2004). In this sense national identification is perceived as a sense of belonging and attachment to the civic (or state) nation created through nation-building. Such a “national” identity is furthermore enhanced by the promotion and use of national symbols.

4. CRITICISM OF AND ALTERNATIVES TO MODERNIST NATION-BUILDING

During the mid-1970s criticism against modernist (or Jacobinistic) nation-building began to proliferate (Nation-building n.d.). One of its most important critics, Walker Connor (1994 – first published in 1972), notes that the nation-building literature almost completely ignore cultural diversity or the possibility of the continued existence of ethnic groups within a civic state. Since nation-building usually implies assimilation into the larger society and the denial of and/or the eradication of ethnic diversity, Connor holds that the
social engineering associated with nation-building could imply the eradication of ethnic diversity and thus the destroying – rather than the building – of nations.

Various analysts furthermore point to the fact that the efficiency of the social engineering associated with nation-building has often been overestimated (Horowitz 1991; Simpson 1994). The one-to-one relationship drawn between modernisation and nation-building is questioned and proponents point out that it is not self-evident that modernisation will result in the dissolving of ethnic identities. It is rather often the case that social engineering towards nation-building is counter-productive and results in a backlash of ethnic revival. Furthermore, all over the world attempts to eradicate ethnicity and other forms of diversity have been largely unsuccessful. Simpson (1994) points out in this regard that the period after the Cold War have been characterised by an upsurge of ethnicity not only in many of the newly independent states in Eastern Europe and Africa, but also in Western states that are long believed to be “stable” democracies such as in Quebec, the Basque country, Catalonia, Scotland, Wales as well as renewed tension between the Flemish and Walloons in Belgium. Tambini (cited in Blaser, 2004) furthermore holds that that people hold multiple and evolving identities. The hierarchies of these identities are furthermore difficult to establish as they are constantly changing.

Connor’s (1994) criticism of nation-building theory was taken further in different directions. Analysts such as Benedict Anderson (1994), Tom Nairn (1997), Ernest Gellner (1990) and Eric Hobsbawm (1990) emphasise the myth aspect of the nation. Modern civic nations are described as “imagined communities” in the sense that members of the group do not know each other personally and therefore can only imagine to be members who are in a communion with one another. Gellner and Hobsbawm take this idea even further by associating the idea of an imagined community with “fabrication” and “invention” and “social construction”. In essence this view holds that most group identities – so-called national identities as well as ethnic and racial identities – are not static or fixed, but dynamic and fluid. Identities are furthermore influenced by social and political processes and changes in the environment.

Connor (1994) furthermore points to another fundamental flaw in nation-building theory, namely the terminological confusion due to the diverse meanings attached to the term “nation” and the tendency to refer to the total population of a state without taking into account whether it is ethnically diverse or not. He points out that less than ten percent of the member states of the United Nations can be regarded as true nation states that are ethnically homogeneous. A new generation of analysts such as Anthony Smith (1992) and Kymlicka (1995) prefer to use the term “nation” only when refering to ethnic or cultural groups – thus emphasizing the ethnic aspects of a nation and giving a “neo-primordial” notion to the term. It is furthermore believed that in societies that are deeply heterogeneous, nation-building should be associated with an ideological commitment to pluralism, cultural tolerance and the logic of the ethnic situation.
This viewpoint perceives cultural diversity as beneficial to and a valuable asset of a society as well as a safeguard against tyranny (Kymlicka 2003). It is believed that society should not be directed by the ideology of unity, uniformity and assimilation, but rather by respect for diversity. This approach – also known as syncretistic nation-building – recognises and values the reality of various ethno-political communities and groups within the realm of the state (Dersso 2008). Instead of emphasizing assimilation, various mechanisms are forwarded to accommodate not only to accommodate group interests, but also to actively nurture ethnic cultures as well as to promote the allegiance of the members of such communities with the state. Ethnic identities are given recognition through various institutions and policies that provide public space for their recognition, while a common national identity is simultaneously promoted through common institutions and shared values and symbols. This has become a common mode of nation-building in a number of modern multiethnic states such as Switzerland and Canada.

Brubaker (1996) distinguishes a tripartite typology of state models that coincide with diverging viewpoints of diversity and nation-building:

• Firstly there is the civic state, that is where the state is there for its citizens irrespective of their ethnic membership

• In contrast, the existence of two or more core ethno-cultural groups are recognised in a bi- or multinational state

• Alternatively, in the hybrid model the state is not understood as a national or a nationalising state. Members of minority groups not only enjoy individual rights as citizens, but also particular minority group rights that protect them against potential nationalising tendencies of the state.

Whereas ethnicity and minority cultures have no place in the civic state, they do have public and political significance in the bi- or multinational state. In the civic state the constitutive elements are individuals; in the bi- or multinational state ethno-cultural groups. The hybrid state, on the other hand, contains elements of both.

5. MODELS OF CREATING AN OVERARCHING IDENTITY AND CIVIC SOLIDARITY

It has been noted in section 3 that the creation of an overarching identity and inclusive civic solidarity stands central to modernist nation-building efforts. Such solidarity is regarded as important for various reasons (Song 2011). Firstly, civic solidarity is regarded as integral to winning support for the social justice efforts of the welfare state such as redistribution from the rich to the poor, housing subsidies, income supplements and long-term unemployment benefits. It is believed that people support social benefit schemes when they believe that the people who receive these benefits are similar to themselves in certain respects; with other words when they are able to identify in a meaningful way with the beneficiaries. Solidarity is furthermore regarded as necessary to address the problem of motivation in the democratic state. Not only must citizens be motivated to participate in democratic processes, but they must also be
willing to moderate their claims based on self-interest in order to find common ground on which decisions can be based. Lastly, it is believed that if an overarching sense of belonging and identity do not exist, intolerance, racism and ethnocentrism will prevail. Song (2011) distinguishes the following three models or approaches for the fostering of solidarity in heterogeneous societies.

5.1 Constitutional patriotism

Habermas (1996, 2000a, 2000b) is one of the main proponents of the idea of constitutional patriotism which he calls in German Verfassungspatriotismus. Although the idea developed from a particular history, namely the history of Germany after World War II, Habermas believes that it can serve to foster social cohesion in all liberal democracies, as well as in supra-national institutions such as the European Union.

Constitutional patriotism is based on beliefs that political communities can be created and sustained by agreement on shared values and principles (Song 2011). It is furthermore believed that people’s loyalty and feelings of attachment should be redirected from what Habermas calls so-called pre-political communities of descent (such as ethnic groups) to the ideals reflected in a shared political culture. Shared ideals and principles, and not a shared ethno-cultural identity, should form the basis of civic solidarity and a common national identity among the citizens of a state. These principles are embodied in the constitutions of liberal democracies. Thus constitutions are perceived to be more than sets of regulative ideals for the constraining of government power; they become national symbols that foster civic unity and inspire loyalty to the state.

Habermas (2000a, 2000b) points to the United States as a prominent example of a state where constitutional principles serve to create a political culture of which individuals become members without speaking the same language or belonging to the same ethno-cultural group.

For Habermas (1996, 2000a, 2000b) constitutional patriotism is a way to motivate citizens to support the principles enshrined in the constitution and to inspire them to co-operate in civic efforts. Overall, constitutional patriotism is regarded as a substitute for nationalism, that is loyalty to ethnic groups, and makes a call on citizens to abandon their attachment to particular ethnic groups and to cultivate a common sense of belonging based on shared values. Thus the loyalty of citizens is steered away from so-called pre-political communities to a shared political culture (Song 2011).

Song (2011) raises various points of contention to the ideas embodied in constitutional patriotism. Firstly, she points out that it is misleading to typify ethnic groups as pre-political as ethnic groups are in essence social and political constructions. Furthermore, although examples such as the USA demonstrates that it is possible to foster a sense of community and unity based on shared principles, in practice ethnic, cultural, religious and racial elements have proved to be too seductive in narratives of belonging to be replaced by constitutional patriotism. Song furthermore believes that it is not possible, as Habermas (1996, 2000a, 2000b) claims, for a civic political system to avoid all traces of ethno-cultural elements. It is, for example, possible for a state not to have a religion, but it cannot avoid giving preferential treatment to one
culture in the choice of language for governmental institutions. Language is however never culturally neutral. In so far as a single language is used in governmental communication, the state cannot proclaim to be practising a neutral political culture.

Song (2011) draws the conclusion that constitutional patriotism should be understood as a form of nationalism that gives preference to shared values and ideals, rather than something that can replace ethnic nationalism altogether. Furthermore, when we acknowledge that it is not possible to avoid ethno-cultural elements in a civic political culture, it is important to establish which and how ethno-cultural elements are to be accommodated in a heterogeneous state.

5.2 Liberal nationalism

David Miller (1998), one of the main proponents of liberal nationalism, holds that civic solidarity should be based on a shared national culture and a common national identity. According to Miller a common national identity has the following foundations: shared beliefs among all members of the community that they belong together; historical continuity stretching over generations; attachment to a particular territory; and a shared set of characteristics on which a national culture is founded.

Thus Miller (1998) does not regard a common national identity as sufficient to sustain civic solidarity; a national culture – which he also calls a common public culture – is regarded as essential to cultivate social trust. However, Miller avoids pinning down what a national culture really entails and rather indicates what he believes it does not entail (Song 2011). First the shared characteristics are not based on biological descent as this would he believes will lead to racism. Also, a common public culture is regarded as reconcilable with the existence of diverse ethnic and racial groups as long as members of all groups “buy into” the common public culture. Miller also does not believe that immigration poses a problem as long as immigrants adopt the shared public culture and contribute their own unique characteristics to it. Miller conceptualises a national culture as not only containing cultural elements and religious beliefs, but also social norms and political principles (Song 2011). It should however not be monolithic but all-embracing. In the end it should entail a shared understanding of how a group of people should conduct their life together.

The issue of language lies at the heart of Miller’s (1998) conception of a national identity and culture. According to Miller, sharing a culture – and particular a language – enables communication and consequently fosters trust, while social trust will be weakened in the absence of a common language (Song 2011). According to Miller liberal nationalism differs from ethno-cultural nationalism linked to ethnic languages in the sense that ethnic nationalism is exclusionary as it is based on biological descent, while liberal nationalism is open to anybody willing to adopt the national culture and learn the national language. Thus all one needs to do to become a member of the civic nation is to express a willingness to live by die
ideals of the political community, to learn the national language and to adapt to important aspects of the national culture.

Song (2011) points to various voids and discrepancies in the theory of liberal nationalism. According to Miller (1998), a country like Canada cannot be regarded as multinational as Anglophones and Québécois share a common Canadian national identity. Thus he distinguishes between two types of national identity – the one based on a common ethno-cultural language (e.g. French for the Québécois) and other cultural attributes and a more capacious national identity that is not based on a common language and culture. According to Song it is furthermore difficult to determine empirically to what extent a common language and a common public culture enhances or serve as a prerequisite of social trust.

A more important question is, however, how open national liberalism is to ethno-cultural diversity (Song 2011). National liberalism requires assimilation to the national culture without explicitly asking questions on how the national culture has been constituted or which or whose culture is reflected in the national culture. Various authors point to the fact that it is not possible for a civic nation to achieve ethnic neutrality (Kymlicka 1995; Smith 1968). They point out that every civic nation has an ethnic core which is strongly reflected in its national culture; transcending ethnicity is therefore a Western mirage, reality-as-wish (Song 2011). In a recent analysis of American identity, Samuel Huntington (2004), for example, unabashedly admits that American national culture is largely influenced by the Anglo-Protestant culture of the core pioneering group. Even in immigrant countries such as the USA and Australia the national culture reflects the language and myths of the dominant pioneering communities. The ethnic core of civic nations is therefore problematic.

A further question is why ethnic communities that do not form part of the core should assimilate to its culture and language (Song 2011). In reality, in many heterogeneous countries ethnic groups outside the core often do not wish to embrace and assimilate into the national culture. An example in point is Muslim identity in contemporary Europe.

5.3 Deep diversity

According to Song (2011:26), constitutional patriotism and liberal nationalism deals with “first-level diversity”. A uniform mode of belonging, with other words common ideas of what it means to belong to a particular country, stands central to both models. In the case of constitutional patriotism, people of different linguistic, cultural and/or religious backgrounds all share the same set of values and ideals. In national liberalism they share the same relevant cultural attributes of the national culture.

The model of deep diversity as proposed by Taylor (1993) and Kymlicka (2003, 2010) deals, on the other hand, with a second level of diversity. Second level diversity acknowledges not only that people may have different languages and ways of life, but that they may also differ in the way they belong to or wish to
belong to a particular country (Song 2011). Thus deep diversity implies greater inclusiveness, especially for
countries with different kind of groups. Both Taylor (1993) and Kymlicka (2003) discuss deep diversity in the context of Canadian society. Canada is often perceived as an immigration country receiving immigrants from all over the world where immigrants enjoy individual rights in a rich cultural mosaic. This is however a one-dimensional vision of Canadian reality. Quebeckers, for example, see themselves as belonging to a distinct national community (in the ethnic sense) within the larger Canadian society. First Nations such as Inuits identify with Canada as well as with their aboriginal communities. Thus belonging to Canada is different for Quebeckers and Inuits than for immigrants (Song 2011).

Many countries all over the world are similarly diverse not only because of (fairly) recent immigration, but also because of a multitude of historical factors that have brought people of different ethnicities, cultures, languages and religions together within the borders of a single state (Dersso 2008; Song 2011). Kymlicka (1995, 2010) consequently proposes a strategy of group-differentiation. He distinguishes between two types of heterogeneous states, namely multinational and poli-ethnic states. A multinational state is defined as a state where two or more nations reside which Kymlicka perceives in the primordial sense as a historical community occupying a particular territory or homeland who shares a distinct language and culture and has developed a number of institutions to support their language and culture. Examples of multinational countries are Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, the USA and many more across the world and also in Africa. A second source of pluralism is immigration. So-called poly-ethnic countries will become diverse if they receive large numbers of immigrants from other countries and cultures. Examples are Australia, Canada and the USA. As indicated by these examples, a country may be both multinational and poly-ethnic. Canada, for example, not only receives a large number of immigrants, but also encapsulates two divergent acculturated groups, Anglophones and Quebeckers, as well as a number of First Nations. Thus Kymlicka (2003) proposes that the unitary civic state needs to be replaced by a multinational and multilingual state with the following characteristics:

• Any ideas that the state “belongs” to a single, homogeneous group or any majority group living within the realms of the state should be repudiated. It is important that the state should be seen as belonging to all its citizens including all racial, ethnic and cultural groups. That means that citizens do not need to hide or deny their ethnic or other identities or to assimilate to a national culture in order to enjoy full rights of citizenship.

• The state has the obligation to render the history, language and culture of minority groups the same recognition and accommodation than those of the core ethnic group(s).

• The state furthermore acknowledges injustices done to any group and should manifest a willingness to offer some form of remedy or rectification.

The model of deep diversity furthermore holds that the state not only recognises that its citizens are different with regard to culture and language and hold different identities, but also that these citizens are different in
various ways which means, among others, that they strive to have different relations with the state by means of different forms of multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka 2003). For some groups multiculturalism may imply the removal of all forms of discrimination and all barriers to their integration into the mainstream society, while for others it will mean the advancing of powers to render them some form of self-government. Thus, in becoming a multinational and multicultural state, a state should transform itself to accommodate various forms of multicultural citizenship.

Thus the model of deep diversity suggests that citizens do not need to share either political principles, such as is the case for constitutional patriotism, or a national cultural as liberal nationalism proposes (Song 2011). Citizens might have different political ideals, hold different cultures and ways of doing things and speak different languages. The question then is: what holds them as citizens together? Kymlicka (1995) holds that it is highly possible that some degree of unity will develop and that citizens will view themselves for some purposes as members of the larger (state) nation. He offers the example of the Swiss who retains a strong sense of common loyalty and Swiss identity despite the cultural and linguistic diversity inherent to Swiss society and the various ways in which these diversity are accommodated. In fact, Kymlicka believes that some multicultural states such as Canada, Belgium and even the European Union survive and retain their unity only because of extended measures to accommodate diversity. However, he points out that patriotism in a multicultural state might be based on loyalty to the country rather than on loyalty to the other people living in the state. Song (2011), on the other hand, foresees that common experiences in a common country will, in the end, result in a common history that can form the basis of a bond between citizens. However, Song believes that the model of deep diversity will only work when the majority of people in a country accept first level diversity; in other words, if people are tolerant with regard to cultural and linguistic differences, but also wish to belong to the country in a different way. In the end respect for diverse ways of belonging implies in the first place respect for diversity itself.

Song (2011) points out that the three models contain some common elements. The acceptance of common values stands central in constitutional patriotism, while national liberalism requires commitment to particular political principles. In the same vein the model of deep diversity emphasises acceptance of the value of diversity. However, as the chances are high that elements of the core culture will in the end dominate when the models of constitutional patriotism or national liberalism are followed, as well as the fact that it is doubtful whether these models will override the lure of ethnic loyalties, Song regards the model of deep diversity as the most promising for diverse countries. She points out, however, that whereas Canada currently serves as the best example of the practising of deep diversity, there has been a retreat from multiculturalism to uniform forms of belonging in countries such as Britain and the Netherlands. The accommodation of diversity and the integration of immigrants not only in the West, but also in Africa, thus calls for a constant critical reflection on models of belonging and solidarity especially in heterogeneous societies.
6. THE CHALLENGE OF NATION-BUILDING IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA

The problem of the heterogeneous and diverse nature of their populations has been one of the most important challenges facing many African countries at the advent of independence. According to Dersso (2008), this problem has been particularly formidable due to fact that the borders of most African states have been determined by colonial adventurism with the result that the borders of most countries include numerous and unequal groups and communities with separate languages, cultures and histories. Problems associated with diversity have furthermore been aggravated by weak institutional capacity as well underdeveloped economies and infrastructure.

In an attempt to find solutions for these problems, the imagination of most African leaders has been captured by the civic state and Jacobinistic models of nation-building (Dersso 2008). In Africa, due to many factors – among others the liberal constitution tradition – this model has had the appearance of being the natural choice for addressing issues of diversity. In accordance with 19th century liberal thinking, it has been widely believed that a single, homogeneous identity is a prerequisite for democratic government and political stability. It has furthermore been believed that the smooth functioning of the modern state requires a culturally (and linguistically) homogeneous society so that citizens can conduct transactions with each other, the bureaucracy can be run effectively and the same court system can be used for all. Another important reason is the fact that African ethnicity is strongly associated with tribalism which is commonly believed to be an impediment to modernisation and development.

Thus most African states have embarked on assimilationist and integrationist nation-building strategies (Dersso 2008). The emphasis has been on homogeneity and oneness. Constitutions, laws, and development policies have all become instruments in the hands of highly centralised governments to further and enforce homogeneity and unity. According to Francis Deng (1997:28), a prominent African scholar, “…[u]nity was postulated in a way that assumed a mythical homogeneity amidst diversity”.

The centralisation of political and economic power has become one of the most important forces in suppressing pluralism (Dersso 2008). A common theme running through most constitutions and political discourses in Africa has been the refusal to give legal, political or institutional expression to distinct groups and the abrogation of any form of group protection. Ethnicity is furthermore believed to be a divisive force that undermines national unity. Expressions of ethnic solidarity and political mobilisation on an ethnic basis have thus been proscribed. In doing so, the governments of African states have hoped to eradicate distinct ethnic loyalties in order to transform their states into “a nation-state proper and hoping to live happily ever after” (Dersso 2008:571).

Living happily ever after, in the words of Dersso (2008), is unfortunately not what has happened. Nation-building policies have had dire consequences for ethnic groups and their members in Africa. Firstly, unitary and highly centralised forms of government have resulted in the domination of the state machinery by particular dominant groups resulting in wide-ranging socio-economic disparities between groups and regions.
In many cases this situation has engendered, on the one hand, competition (instead of cooperation) for control of the state and, on the other hand, the marginalisation and alienation of minority groups. Within the political realm, violence – often armed violence – has often been the bitter result of nation-building. In a country such as Sudan inter-ethnic violence finally led to secession and the creation of two new states, Sudan and South Sudan.

On the cultural level, nation-building in Africa has resulted in the nationalisation of culture and languages in order to reflect the “unity” of the country (Dersso 2008; Moyo 2003). In most African states the two major colonial languages – English and French – serve not only as the symbolic languages of national unity, but have become the lingua franca and languages of the government and economy. Where recognition has been given to indigenous languages, preference has been given to the languages of dominant groups. Many minority indigenous languages have consequently become limited to the family, church and the smaller community resulting in the marginalisation, denigration and decay of these languages and cultures. Although the former Organisation of African Unity (OAU) – now the African Union (AU) – already in 1986 initiated a Language Plan of Action for Africa that calls for the recognition of indigenous languages and the encouragement of their increased usage on all levels of society, Moyo (2003) draws the conclusion that little has come of this initiative in many African countries. This has particular been the case in sub-Saharan Africa.

7. NATION-BUILDING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Since 1994 South Africa has followed a similar path than the rest of Africa. Whereas nation-building in other African countries have often been motivated by beliefs that ethnic divisions are the result of colonialism, nation-building in South Africa has primarily been motivated by the legacy of the Apartheid dispensation and the concomitant manipulation and reifying of diversity (Ramsamy 2007). Thus both politicians and social analysts have believed nation-building to be a logical step to overcome the divisions of the past and to create an overarching national identity and a common sense of nationhood and solidarity. This ideal is also reflected in the Preamble of the Constitution quoted in the introduction as well as in the popular metaphor of the Rainbow Nation. In order to create unity and patriotism and to advance the nation-building project, a number of new national symbols – among others a new national anthem and flag – have furthermore been introduced (Bornman 2006).

In 1994 South Africa has become a constitutional democracy – a civic state – in which the Constitution serves as the founding stone for the creation of a new (civic) nation (Vorster 2005; Wiechers 2010). In accordance with the main premises of constitutional patriotism, the Constitution – and the Bill of Rights in particular – encompasses the common values and ideals that are believed to form the basis of civic solidarity in South Africa (Habermas 2000a, 2000b). The diversity of South African society is acknowledged in the Bill of Rights which guarantees South Africans freedom of association, the right to use their home language and to
participate in the cultural life of their choice. The Constitution does not, however, stipulate any form of group rights indicative of a multinational state. However, similar to the rest of Africa, the nation-building project in South Africa has also been controversial and has been criticised on various fronts. According to Naudé (2010), the main problem with nation-building in South Africa is that it is difficult to understand how the government sees nation-building and what they are aiming for. Ramsamy (2007) holds that this confusion is the result of the fact that the ANC-government has indeed embraced different models and strategies for nation-building at different stages. The doctrine of non-racialism was the dominant strategy during the advent to a new political dispensation and in the period thereafter (Ramsamy 2007). Within this doctrine ethnic and racial identities are perceived as vestiges of the apartheid policies of divide and rule. It furthermore assumes that all South Africans are united by common historical experiences, shared ideas and a common destiny. Although it is admitted that ethnic, racial and other sub-national identities could play a role in the personal lives of South Africans, these identities are not seen as relevant factors in the social and political life of the country. The non-racial viewpoint is perhaps best reflected in a comment made by Nelson Mandela: “We have no whites, we have no blacks. We only have South Africans” (cited in Ramsamy 2007:471). Non-racialism has its roots in the alliance of people of all races and backgrounds that was formed during the Apartheid struggle (Ramsamy 2007). It took root gradually and was not a founding principle in the Freedom Charter – regarded by many as the blueprint of ANC doctrine. Instead, the Freedom Charter reflects a multinational and multicultural stance towards nation-building and national unity. It furthermore does not imply that ethnic and racial identities should be abolished for the sake of nation-building, but accepts the existence of diverse identities and emphasises their equality.

The acceptance of distinctive identities in earlier years is furthermore reflected in the fact that the ANC was organised along racial lines and had an exclusive Black membership during its formative years, while similar organisations were formed to mobilise opposition against Apartheid among Indians and coloureds (Ramsamy 2007). Since the 1940s black, coloured and Indian organisations explored multiracial alliances in the struggle against apartheid. It was however only after the banning of ANC leaders since the 1950s that the organisation began to shift from a multicultural and multiracial approach towards an ideology of inclusiveness and non-racialism.

The doctrine of non-racialism soon became central to the discourse and strategies of nation-building and became the dominant ethos in the post-apartheid South Africa. In essence the stance on non-racialism represents an emphasis on the creation of a civic nation that is based on allocating individual rights to all citizens regardless of their creed or origin (Blaser 2004). The emphasis on a common history and common
ideals and values as reflected in the Constitution furthermore represents the premises of constitutional patriotism as voiced by Habermas (2000a, 2000b, 2001).

However, the reality of the continued existence of distinctive racial and ethnic identities in the post-apartheid South Africa confronted the ANC soon after the advent to a new political dispensation (Ramsamy 2007). Nelson Mandela, in particular, was worried about the fact that the ANC failed to draw significant numbers of whites, Indians and coloureds as members. His ideal was that the ANC should become the political party of choice for all South Africans, but that simply did not happen. He consequently perceived of ethnic and racial identities as a threat to the new dispensation.

The metaphor of the Rainbow Nation represents a compromise between the ANC’s commitment to non-racialism and the continued existence and politicisation of ethnic and racial identities in post-apartheid South Africa (Ramsamy 2007). Instead of denying the existence of sub-national groups as voiced in non-racialism, this metaphor implies the acceptance of the continued existence of these groups. It furthermore acknowledges that these groups form the building blocks of the new nation. The Rainbow Nation metaphor does not however imply a shift back to the multicultural stance as voiced in the Freedom Charter (Blaser 2004). It also does not imply a shift from a civic nation towards a multicultural or multinational conceptualisation of the nation. Unity and the creation of a common loyalty and a dominant overarching national identity remains the overarching ideal.

Various analysts furthermore point to an Africanist shift in the nation-building discourse since the Mbeki era (Blaser 2004; Eaton 2002). This conceptualisation of the South African nation is voiced by former president Thabo Mbeki (ANC 1997:para 44) as follows:

But it is critical that the overarching identity of being South African is promoted among all those who are indeed South African, as part of a process of building an African nation on the southern tip of the continent. The affirmation of our Africanness as a nation has nothing to do with the domination of one culture or language by another – it is recognition of a geographic reality and the awakening of a consciousness which colonialism suppressed.

Blaser (2004) does not regard the shift towards Africanism as a surprise. In fact, he points out that overarching pan-Africanism has been present in all anti-colonial movements in Africa. The pan-Africanist ideal is furthermore already embodied in the title and first stanzas of the new national anthem — Nkosi Sikilel’iAfrica (God Bless Africa). It reflects an anti-colonial sentiment and a thrust towards creating a truly African state. It has been further motivated by the realisation that South Africa is still a divided country characterised by large-
scale inequalities between blacks and whites. It has consequently served as a new impetus to overcome the legacies of Apartheid.

In essence, the African shift implies a drive towards African hegemony (Blaser 2004). Thus the nation becomes culturally defined in terms of an African culture. The aim of nation-building becomes the creation of a single nation with a dominant African identity that should become the primary identity of all South Africans. Similar to other African countries, the colonial language – English – has become the lingua franca and language of national unity.

Thus nation-building in South Africa come to reflect elements of both constitutional patriotism and national liberalism. While the premises of constitutional patriotism are reflected in the common values embodied in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the premises of national liberalism can be observed in the fact that the dominant culture – an African culture – is defined as well as the fact that a dominant language – English – is proclaimed, albeit unofficially.

As elsewhere in the world, the nation-building project in South Africa has met with criticism and opposition. Even before the advent to a new political dispensation, one of the most prominent experts on ethnicity in the modern world, Donald L. Horowitz (1991), warns against ideas that ethnic, racial and other sub-national identities will simply vanish in a democratic South Africa. According to Horowitz, the experience in other divided societies have shown that such identities not only survive, but even thrive, in a more equal democratic dispensation and that they continue to provide a feeling of belonging and solidarity to their members and, given the right circumstances, serve as the basis for political mobilisation. Horowitz holds that the same will probably happen in South Africa.

According to Degenaar (1994), the mere usage of the term nation-building in a divided society such as South Africa is in itself dangerous. Nation-building encourages uniformity in a country where diversity and individuality should be respected. It furthermore serves to create wrong expectations and do not prepare people for the long and difficult road to foster a democratic culture in a pluralist society. According to Degenaar the term nation-building furthermore almost always imply a degree of Jacobinism where it is accepted that the state has the power to destroy identities and to make use of the state machinery to create an overarching national identity. He furthermore points out that intergroup relations in a divided society cannot be solved once and for all without destroying or completely assimilating groups. Instead, it is a process that needs to be managed on an ongoing basis.

O’Malley (1994) points out that, although the Constitution – based on the non-racial and non-ethnic perspective of the ANC – protects ethnicity and culture on a private level, no acknowledgement is given in the South African state to diverse identities on a constitutional and political level. Wiechers (2010) also identifies the lack of group rights as a shortcoming in the Constitution.
Various authors furthermore point out that the acceptance and popularity of the Rainbow Nation metaphor does not imply a deep-ranging acknowledgement of the existence and relevance of sub-national groups. According to Gqola (2001) this metaphor creates the image of a false unity and serves to maintain racial and class inequalities (in Blaser 2004). Although the South African Constitutions acknowledges 11 official languages, Neville Alexander (2000) criticises the ANC government for allowing the dominance of English as lingua franca in the new civic state – in order to create a sense of unity – instead of adopting a truly multilingual policy in which African languages, in particular, are promoted. According to Alexander the laissez faire policy that in the end results in the dominance of English are catering for the needs of the middle-class only and inhibits empowerment on a broader base.

The shift to Africanism has furthermore deepened the discrepancies in the nation-building discourse (Blaser 2004). It exerts hegemony in an essential multicultural and multilingual society. Whereas adherence to a dominant South African identity is one of the main aims of nation-building, the Africanist viewpoint – in accordance with national liberalism – holds that this identity should include and reflect an African culture. Naudé (2010) also points out that the acknowledgement of the social and political reality of racial and ethnic groups usually implies that power and finances is diverted to regions or ethnic and racial groups. That is currently not happening in South Africa. Power is instead highly centralised. Thus ethnic and other minorities find it difficult to protect their interests in the current political system as it does not guarantee the rights of minorities despite the emphasis on rainbowism. An overview of research on patterns of social identification and intergroup relations conducted after 1994 brings Bornman (2012) to the conclusion that sub-group identification as well as intergroup tension abounds in the post-apartheid South Africa despite the attempts towards nation-building and the non-racial and non-ethnic stance of the ANC government.

8. THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The role of public broadcasters and the national press has not only been to inform, educate and entertain. Within the civic state model, one of the central tasks of these institutions has been to promote a national identity and to foster nation-building (Habermas 2001). In fact, Habermas holds that national consciousness as a modern form of social solidarity is the product of the development of new forms of communication and especially mass communication. The fact that the mass media have been enabling all citizens to hear, read and see the same messages, serves to create and foster unity and an overarching identification with the civic state. Governments usually also expect from the media to fulfil a role in fostering a sense of unity.

However, diversity-related problems in different parts of the world have resulted in a re-consideration of the role of the media (Zayani 2011). Not only are numerous multicultural states experiencing an upsurge in ethnic consciousness, but – due to increasing immigration – many countries are also confronted with intolerance toward immigrants as well as demands by immigrants for the recognition of their right to culture. Thus, in
writing about the transformation of the BBC, Stuart Hall (1993:35) holds that the media are currently being called to foster and promote a “new more plural, diverse, culturally differentiated conception of the ‘nation’ by representing its diversities.” This new role implies, among others, that the media should no longer reinforce “sacred” sources of cultural autonomy or reproduce “old” cultural hierarchies. Within this alternative framework it is expected of the media not only to present the “changing face of the nation” — that is an alternative to the one state, one nation viewpoint — but also to promote a broader discourse on multiculturalism, to foster tolerance for diversity and to diversify its contents, control and ownership (Rodríguez 2009:168).

However, an analysis of scholarly writing on diversity in the USA media brings Rodríguez (2009) to the conclusion that the media tends to reinforce the status quo albeit subtly or tend to be crisis-orientated by focusing on intergroup conflict. In the USA, for example, prize-winning articles tend to focus on the idea of the “American dream” and the concomitant values. This is done, for example, by relating success stories on how some immigrants were successful or still hope to realise this dream. They did however found that a number of articles displaying an alternative viewpoint and depicting, for example, African American culture as a “nation within a nation” (p. 180). Rodriguez nevertheless draws the conclusion that diversity writing often fails to address the most disturbing and complex challenges associated with heterogeneity and to promote a broad discourse on the deeper and more fundamental issues related to diversity.

Although few scholarly analyses have been done in South Africa, the available evidence suggests that the South African media have probably also stood in the service of the nation-building strategies of the South Africa government since 1994 without any critical reflection on the implications of nation-building for a diverse country such as South Africa. This tendency can at least partially be ascribed to the legacy of Apartheid as most media have been eager to play a role in overcoming the divisions of Apartheid and some also to make amends for the role that they played in entrenching Apartheid. The South African government probably also expects from the national media to promote an overarching South African identity in particular during major sports events such as the Olympic Games and the 2010 Fifa World Cup. The nation-building discourse in the South African media is perhaps no better illustrated than by the caption of a report published in the Afrikaans newspaper, Beeld, on 15 August 2012 on the home-coming of the country’s Olympic team: “Julle het ’n nasie verenig, geïnspireer” (You have united and inspired a nation – p. 3).

There is currently little evidence that the alternative role of the media in promoting diversity and multiculturalism as visualised by Hall (1993) has taken root in South Africa. When diversity is covered in the South African media, it is often characterised — similar to the USA — by a focus on intergroup conflict and the denouncement of any form of racism or racial discrimination. The media furor surrounding the comments of the Afrikaans author Annelie Botes that she did not like blacks and felt threatened by blacks is but one example (Wanner 2010). Whereas discourses in the USA is dominated by the ideology of the American dream, in South Africa it is probably the case that any attempt towards critical reflection on nation-building by the
legacy of Apartheid, the “miracle” of our democracy and the wonder of our newly established “unity”. Kymlicka (2010) warns against discourses on diversity being drowned by national narratives which create the myth of being a post-ethnic unitary state, while ignoring the inherent heterogeneity of the society and the needs and aspirations associated with sub-group membership. Although the South African media have to be hailed for playing a role in denouncing racism and racial discrimination in South African society, they have up to now failed to play a leading role in promoting a broader discourse on the deeper and more complex issues related to the heterogeneous nature of South African society.

9. CONCLUSIONS

While the rest of the world has been struggling with the accommodation of the increasing diversity of the populations of the majority of states, most African countries and South Africa are doggedly persisting with policies aimed at creating a civic state and suppressing sub-group identities and aspirations through processes of nation-building. These policies have had dire consequences for Africa and its population. Today Africa is characterised by international strife, conflict and war which in some instances have been associated with episodes of ethnic cleansing. Africa needs a better way. According to Horowitz (1991) there are however no quick fixes for the diversity of a society (or a continent) and the lack of recognition of that diversity by its leaders. International experience has shown that it usually takes a long and bitter road before governments – and their opponents – are willing to radically change their viewpoints and strategies. Although there is no single solution that applies to all countries, there are today examples of modern states that succeed in sustaining unity, while simultaneously having extensive measures in place to accommodate a diverse population. Deep diversity offers a workable alternative for many African states. According to Naudé (2010) the first step will however be to acknowledge the social and political reality of groups. In order to achieve this, we need an in-depth discourse on diversity that goes further than popular myths and mere commentary on sensational events. In promoting such a discourse the media should play a leading role.
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Who is South African/Who is African? A re-reading of Thabo Mbeki’s ‘I’m an African’ speech in the context of the banned (later unbanned) Nando’s TV commercial.

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Abstract

On the 1st of June 2012 flame-grilled chicken company Nando’s released a 52-second advert under its so-called ‘Diversity’ campaign. The advert shows people of various races and ethnicities vaporising into thin air one after the other, leaving a lone San Bushman in traditional clothing who declares ‘I’m not going anywhere. You f*#@ng found us here’ and runs off into the distance with his bow and arrows. SABC, DStv and eTV initially banned the advert, citing fears of xenophobic backlash. In May 1996 South Africa’s former president Thabo Mbeki, who was deputy president at the time, delivered a speech at the adoption of the South Africa Constitution Bill in Cape Town. The speech, which has become known as the ‘I am an African’ speech, begins with the words ‘I am an African’, a phrase which is repeated five times during the speech. In the speech Mbeki appears to codify ‘Africanness’ into a consciousness not just of history but a shared history: he is a child and grandson, he says, of the Khoi and San from the Cape, migrants from Europe, Malay slaves from the East, ‘warrior’ men and women whom Hintsa and Sekhukhune led, the ‘patriots’ that Cetshwayo and Mphephu led into battle, soldiers of Moshoeshoe and Ngungunyane; remembering that he is a child of Nongqause, he mentions Isandhlwana, Khartoum, Ghana, Ashanti, the Berbers of the desert, the Boer graves at St Helena and the Bahamas, India, China, Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, Burundi and Algeria. The conceptual reach of his speech seems to imply that everyone who may share South Africa’s history is somehow South African and African – men, women, children, the old, the disabled, taxi drivers, farmers, migrants, the dead, the living, ancestors, warriors of old, the formerly enslaved and colonised, the former colonisers, liberators, liberated, former foes, beggars, prostitutes, street children, people across the oceans. In short, everyone is South African and African! The paper argues that the Mbeki speech and the Nando’s advert, taken together, force us to explore the richness and poverty of citizenship in South Africa and Africa, and the potential benefits as well as the potential pitfalls and contradictions of claiming South African and African citizenship in this way. The paper uses textual analysis of Mbeki’s speech to read the Nando’s commercial and vice versa. The context is supplied by a sampling of twenty-two randomly selected online comments from the News24 website.

Keywords: African; South African; citizenship; citizen;
Introduction

A key phrase in the Preamble to the South African Constitution is that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it” (Emphasis added). With a land surface area of 1 219 090 km$^2$, this assertion represents the preferred definition of what constitutes a South African: “all who live in it”. It is a broad, sweeping and inclusive definition. The emphasis on “all” is as bold and radical as it is problematic. Who is “all”? In what sense does South Africa belong to these “all”? That is, how does a land mass belong to all who live in it? What does belonging “to all who live in it” mean exactly? What does it not mean? The 2011 census shows that there are 50,59 million people living in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2011). In essence, South Africa belongs to all these 50,59 million people. How exactly does a country belong to 50,59 million people? How is belongingness measured? How is 1 219 090 km$^2$ parcelled out amongst 50,59 million? Clearly, from these questions, it cannot just be a question of physically living in South Africa that confers one with citizenship. The notion of “living in” must simultaneously be broadened and qualified. It must be broadened to include how the 50,59 million people “live in it”. Even the much trumped fact that South Africa is “united in diversity” (11 officials languages and a current population estimate of 79, 5% African, 9% coloured, 2, 5% Indian and 9% white) does not go far in telling us who is South African. The everyday, lived reality of the 50,59 million people easily eludes this official statistical citizenship. The reality of how the 50,59 million people relate to and treat each other is not only difficult to guarantee in constitutional provisions, but is perhaps the real measure of the embodied definition of a South Africa. This paper draws attention to the questions that statistics leave aside. In order to do so, it uses a speech by former president Mbeki in which he sought to define a South African through the notion of being African. Mbeki repeats the assertion that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it”. To bring currency to the issue, the paper uses the Nando’s banned ‘diversity’ commercial which purported to provoke issues about South Africa’s diversity.

In May 1996 South Africa’s former president Thabo Mbeki, who was deputy president at the time, delivered a speech at the adoption of the South Africa Constitution Bill in Cape Town. The speech, which has become known as the ‘I am an African’ speech, begins with the words ‘I am an African’, a phrase which is repeated five times during the speech. “I am an African”, he says, “and none dare contest that assertion”. In the speech Mbeki appears to codify ‘Africanness’ into a consciousness not just of history but a shared history: he is a child and grandson, he says, of the Khoi and San from the Cape, migrants ‘who left’ Europe, Malay slaves from the East, ‘warrior’ men and women whom Hintsa and Sekhukhune led, the ‘patriots’ that Cetshwayo and Mphephu led into battle, soldiers of Moshoeshoe and Ngungunyane; remembering that he is a child of Nongqause, he mentions Isandhlwana, Khartoum, Ghana, Ashanti, the Berbers of the desert, the Boer graves at St Helena and the Bahamas, “those who were transported from India and China”, the pain of “violent conflict” in Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, Burundi and Algeria. The conceptual reach of his speech seems to imply that everyone who may share South Africa’s history is somehow South African and African – men, women, children, the old,
the disabled, taxi drivers, farmers, migrants, the dead, the living, ancestors, warriors of old, the formerly enslaved and colonised, the former colonisers, liberators, liberated, former foes, the young, the old, the disabled, beggars, prostitutes, street children and people across the oceans. In short, everyone is South African and African. “All this I know and know to be true because I am an African!” proclaims Mbeki.

Mbeki’s speech is powerful at two levels. Firstly, it writes South Africa back into Africa. Because the realities and practices of apartheid in South Africa had literally sealed off South Africa from the rest of ‘jungle’ Africa (“our drift to the periphery”, according to Mbeki), it made sense to rescue the notion of South African citizenship from this historical sequestration. Mbeki does this by weighting the “Africa” in South Africa in such a way that it is not the direction (“South”) that matters but the originary memory (“Africa”). This is the meaning of the popular anti-apartheid slogan, “mayibuye Africa”. “Mayibuye Africa” meant “come back Africa”. In essence, those who chanted this mantra were literally holding on to their memories of Africa: the memory that South Africa inalienably belongs within Africa. As Mbeki says, “On an occasion such as this, we should, perhaps, start from the beginning” (Emphasis added). Africa is that beginning. Where apartheid marked South African citizenship minus Africa, “Mayibuye Africa” represented a reinsertion. By reinserting South Africa into Africa (“my continent” as Mbeki calls it) Mbeki rehabilitates South African citizenship from the memory losses of apartheid. In the end, being South African is being African.

Secondly, Mbeki’s speech does not make a blind ‘return to the source’. Rather, it acknowledges that this return can only be partial: South Africa has its own distinct realities and histories which complicate and frustrate the full and complete reintegration into the “rest of” Africa. As such, Mbeki envisions South African citizenship whose relationship with Africa is essentially one of intersection. Such a relationship of intersection, therefore, meant that Africa turns out to be only one of many intersections into which South African citizenship could be inserted and reinserted. To this end, Mbeki envisions South African citizenship that is both global and local. This glocality is illustrated by the incessant name-dropping that Mbeki instigates: the Khoi and San from the Cape (“ancestors of the generations”), migrants from Europe, Malay slaves from the East, Hintsa, Sekhukhune, Cetshwayo, Mphephu, Moshoeshoe, Ngungunyane, Nongqause, Isandlwana, Khartoum, Ghana, Ashanti, the Berbers, the Boers, St Helena, the Bahamas, India, China, Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, Burundi and Algeria, and so on. There is a re-coding of Africanness into a starting point for a far-flung identity. Hence Africanness, and by extension South Africanness, is both a porous border and a moving target. In this regard Mbeki pronounces “we refuse to accept that our Africanness shall be defined by our race, colour, gender, or historical origins”. At the same time, he realises that the return to Africa signifies boon as much as it does burden. Hence he reflects that “The dismal shame of poverty, suffering and human degradation of my continent is a blight that we share.”
The limits of Mbeki’s appropriation of Africa as the originary moment for the recasting of South African citizenship are found at several aporetic levels. The aporetic, according to Derrida (1993: 15-21), is ‘the impossible’, specifically ‘the possibility of the impossible’, an ‘uncrossable border’ or an invisible border or limit. One interpretation of the meaning of aporia is to see as a blind-spot, a ceaseless unseeing. Reading citizenship in South Africa though the figure of “diversity” or “rainbow nation” is bound to be aporetic – since diversity always leads back to the prison-house of sameness. The first aporia finds emphasis in the fact that Mbeki, his speech, refuses to disclose exactly what he means when he reiterates that he is “an African”. That is, his Africanness is made to remain abstract to the point where it could mean anything. Because it could mean anything, it also could mean nothing. If everyone is an African, then perhaps no-one is African. Africanness hence turns into a bottomless identity. The text of the speech turns on a level of abstraction that reflects deep relativism. In any case, it does not seem as if Mbeki fully engages the terms of the conceptual trade-off: how exactly does a South African turn into African? Not only is substance constantly bled by the flourish of the rhetorical knife, but virtually nothing is called into question. Beyond asserting that he is an African, Mbeki leaves everything as he found it. The fly has not been shown the way out of the Wittgensteinian bottle. Though he had said that “we should, perhaps, start from the beginning”, he does not historicise the beginning. Actually, his beginning – and his present and future – is a call to the dangerously unsustainable concept, “diversity”.

Diversity is a weasel word linked to apartheid. Apartheid first codifies “diversity” through the Population Registration Act of 1950. The Population Registration Act of 1950 formally divided South Africans into four race groups, Whites, Indians, Africans, and Coloureds (Coloureds were “not a white person or a native”, further sub-divided into “Cape Malay”, “Other Coloureds”, Khoisan, and so on.) Diversity, as a marker of citizenship, means that “we are different but equal”. The word masks its closeness to “separate but equal”. It retains its weasel word status in the present, though its meaning is perhaps more sinister in that it suggests that we are “different but the same”. The fallacy of diversity allows all manner of top-down hegemonies of citizenship to be used to exclude and exclude. In this sense, diversity should be seen as augmented apartheid. It works by ceaselessly deferring definition. Xenophobia, for instance, can be seen as the result of this failure to define citizenship. Mbeki, for instance, speaks of South African citizenship as if it were already-decided. Hence the second level at which Mbeki’s “I am an African” speech fails is in its deliberate failure to define citizenship or to allow its emergence. That is, Mbeki is unwilling to define the limits of citizenship, and hence to define what citizenship really entails. Instead, he uses “citizenship” as an amorphous, undecidable weasel word with which to run rings around the realities of a historically un-rainbow nation. Mbeki’s speech manufactures hegemonic consent around the meaning of citizenship: citizenship is defined as the taking of one’s place in an already-made, already decided “rainbow nation”. People are not given the choice to be diverse; rather, diversity is
made an **official** requirement. The costs, burdens, losses, ethics and responsibilities of citizenship are glossed over.

**The Nando’s “Diversity” advert: We were all foreigners once**

The Nando’s “Diversity” advert starts with the ambient sound of a birds chirping as the sun is rising. The camera zooms to a sign on a fence pointing to “Arrivals”. Beside the sign is a hole in the fence through which several border jumpers sneak. A voice over asks: “You know what’s wrong with South Africa? All you foreigners.” Immediately all named foreigners start to vaporise, leaving a puff of white smoke. The full text of the commercial is as follows:

You know what’s wrong with South Africa? All you foreigners. You must all go back to where you came from. You Cameroonian, Congolese, Pakistani, Somalis, Ghanaians and Kenyans, and of course, you Nigerians and you Europeans. Let’s not forget you Indians and Chinese, even you Afrikaners. Back to Swaziland all you Swatis, Lesotho for you Sothos, Tswanas, Zulus – everybody! (A San Bushman male character says “I’m not going anywhere. You [expletive] found us here”) Real South Africans love diversity. That's why we have introduced two more items. The new peri-crusted wings (R19.00) and delicious new trinchado and chips (R24.00)

A Nando’s statement explained that “The advertisement is aimed at addressing a social ill and our approach is one that seeks to have South Africans take a stand against these prejudices by encouraging them to embrace the diverse inhabitants of our land.”

Despite this, the advert was taken off air by South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), eTV and DStv. SABC spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago is reported as explaining that the national broadcaster had reasoned that the advert had a “xenophobic undertone” and “would incite attacks on foreigners”. Kganyago rationalised that “By the time they (the audiences) get to the diversity message, people could have interpreted it in any which way.” The SABC’s assumption that its viewers will think the way the broadcaster thinks they will think is, of course wildly illogical. At the same time, it is interesting to ask whether it is possible that an advert whose purported intention is to prevent – or at least tackle – xenophobia could be interpreted as inciting xenophobia. Nando’s statement contended that “Either way you look at it we...
were all once foreigners in SA, except for the Khoisan of course”. According to Channel24, cheeky and provocative” advert “is part of Nando’s Diversity campaign, where the flame-grilled chicken brand forces South Africans to question xenophobia and intolerance”.

**A “Diversity” of Comments**

Online comments regarding the contents of advert and the ban were varied. Most comments suggested that the advert was “brilliant”. Most of these did not say why they thought the advert it was brilliant but some did give reasons. Others disapproved of the video for various reasons. Below is a sample comments culled from the News24 website that featured a story on the banned advert. The sample contains twenty two randomly selected comments which I have categorised as “approving” of the discourse of citizenship carried by the Nando’s advert:

**Comment 1: “HeH HeH....absolutely brilliant.....facts is facts (sic)....LOL...all true”**

This comment regards the Nando’s advert as carrying and deploying factual discourse – a discourse linked to truth (“all true”). By arguing that “facts is facts”, the author of the comment appears to assume that history is made of uncontested “facts” – facts which it is futile to argue against. The author hence finds futility of arguing against the existence of incontrovertible facts to be the source of the humour of the advert, hence “LOL”. The comment postulates a form of “citizenship by facts”, without really stating what such facts are or how one can contest them.

**Comment 2: “How could anyone find this offensive......its so South African, once again brilliant Nandos”**

Comment 2 takes a defensive few. It seems to be reacting to other comments or discussions elsewhere defends that may have described the Nando’s advert in question as “offensive”. The author of the comment is unable to see how an advert of this nature could be construed to be “offensive”; the reason for the inoffensiveness of the advert is that its discourse is “so South African”. A prism which generalises “South Africanness” into things that are typically South African is developed, but without elaboration over what being “so South African” really entails. There is also no illustration of what exactly is “so South African” in the advert itself. However, consent has already been manufactured via a loosely patriotic typology set in place to regulate discourse: surely nothing that is “South African” could be offensive. It is suggested that only non-South African

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attributes should be criticised. At the same time, it is difficult to test for or prove things that are “so South African” with any degree of certainty.

Comment 3: “Nando’s Adds (sic), South Africa’s tongue in cheek institution of laughs that provoke thought always good for a laugh.”

Comment 3 inserts the banned commercial within the institutional “tradition” of other Nando’s commercials. It is suggested that all Nando’s adverts are stylistically, aesthetically and ideologically homogenous: tongue-in-cheek commentary meant to provoke reflection and to arouse laughter. The assumption is that these characteristics operate uniformly in all Nando’s adverts, including the latest one. The statement “always good for a laugh” suggests that all Nando’s adverts are always funny – hence harmless. The notion that Nando’s adverts are harmless appears to undercut the action by SABC, eTV and DStv to ban the advert. Why ban such a funny, harmless item? The effect is to place the “censors” in bad light. They come across as irrational and panicky and paranoid. There is a contradiction, however, between this perpetual “funny harmlessness” and the suggestion of seriousness underlying the point that the adverts “provokes thought”. Clearly, the harmlessness is a container of other matters that may be serious enough to draw the attention of the censors and regulators.

Comment 4: “I thought this ad was hilarious! I'm sure most South Africans will find it funny, too, because it includes all other races except the Khoi San ppl (sic). I think this may even encourage us to be more inclusive. Worth airing, I think.”

Comment 4 emphasises the “funniness” of the advert. The author of the comment expresses the hope that a majority of other South Africans will find this “funniness’. The interesting aspect, however, is the reason given for hoping that other South Africans would be readily inserted into the advert’s discourse of “funny”. The reason is that the advert is assumed to have deployed a kind of racially inclusive humour. Barely concealed in this comment is the anxiety about South Africa’s “other races”. This anxiety is carried within the expectation of inclusivity. Revealed is the spectre of exclusivity (read apartheid) that haunts certain modes of discourses and conversations within South Africa. The notion of “most South Africans” is shown to be linked to “other races”. Ironically, the “Khoi San” are represented in this comment as not causing anxiety – even if they were excluded or ridiculed. The writer hopes that the airing of advert may lead to South Africa being “more inclusive”. The underlying message is that South Africa has “inclusion” issues. Worth noting, also, is the unexamined assumption that what South Africa needs is to be “more inclusive” and that this would be a good thing. Finally, the funny-serious dichotomy observed in comment 3 is also at play here.
Comment 5: “A majority of Coloured, White and Nguni people have San blood, so besides the San themselves, that makes almost everyone about equal wrt (sic) land entitlement, strange but true”.

Comment 5 deploys a discourse of genetics. Underpinning such a discourse are two ideas. The first is the “who-was-here-first” paradigm, which has its basis in a linear and ladder-like understanding of the processes of history and citizenship. Those who came first have the more authentic claims to citizenship and the more authentic identity. The second is the idea that “Coloured, White and Nguni” South Africans all have a shared and equal claim to land ownership in South Africa and hence, indeed, to the ownership of South Africa itself.

The author of the comment reasons that since he or she believes that these three groups have “San blood”, therefore all three have equal claims to citizenship and to “first-ness”. Hence, at base, all are “original” South Africans. This rationale seems to concede that the “San themselves’ are the originary claimants whose “first-ness” is indisputable. On the basis of being descendant from the San, however, “Coloured, White and Nguni” can press a claim that is as valid as that of the San. On another level, this claiming of San blood ironically undermines the “authenticity” of the San – since everyone is now San! That is, there is now nothing special about the San’s first-ness because the others can be genetically proven the children of the San anyway. By privileging the San initially, and then undermining this privilege, the author of the comment creates a discourse of South African citizenship that preys on the San for authenticity in order to subsequently rob of this very authenticity. Furthermore, following this theory, an artificial sense of harmony and brotherhood is fostered between “Coloured, White and Nguni”. Such harmony only lasts as long as the genetic theory.

Comment 6: “we’ve already had two Khoi presidents Margie - Remember Nelson (his facial features gives him away), Thabo the Philosopher King?”

The discourse of the South African gene pool is furthered in this comment, which however brings a radically new significance to the “gene theory”. The argument made is that South Africa’s first two presidents – Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki – were in fact “Khoi presidents”. The implication is that if these two were Khoi, then surely the Khoi-ness of South Africans is far deeper than is conventionally imagined. Khoi becomes a hidden (genetic) transcript which can pop up at any time in anyone anywhere. Not only are all South Africans therefore Khoi, but the meaning of being South African is transformed into a kind of “citizenship by Khoi”. “Citizenship by Khoi” endorses the assumptions “who-was-here-first” paradigm.

Comment 7: “If you were born in South Africa, then you are born South African. But all of our ancestors, except for the San perhaps, originate from somewhere else.”
Comment 7 short-circuits the “who-was-here-first” “genetic school” of citizenship by emphasising citizenship by birth. A South African is any person who was born in South Africa. This condition, however, is unconstitutional; the South African constitution ideally states that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it”, not just those who are born in it. Having guaranteed the citizenship of those “born-here”, the author of the comment appears to feel empowered to “confess” or “admit” that “all of our ancestors” were not South African. Rather, they originated “from somewhere else”. The exception is the San, whose origin – it is assumed – is not “from somewhere else”. There is a sense in which the admission that “all of our ancestors” are not South African is meant in fact to buttress the claim of “citizenship by birth”. The problem with this admission is that it uses the notion of “somewhere else” as a history-cauterising and history-removing agent. Where is “somewhere else”? Where does “somewhere else” begin and stop? Why “somewhere else”? Indeed, when and how is “somewhere else”? The notion of “somewhere else” seems designed to frustrate “citizenship by ancestors”.

Comment 8: “This is what has happened to the San (Bushman) too, and not only in South Africa, in countries like Botswana too. San are the most marginalised people—embrace the San—they were the “first people” in Southern Africa”.

Comment 8 sees in the advert an opportunity to make claims about “justice”, and to relate justice to citizenship. The comment moralises about the mistreatment of the San in South Africa and Botswana and urges the need to “embrace the San”. Hence the citizenship of South Africans will only be validated after “embracing the San” (whatever this means). Embracing the San is – rather oddly –proposed as the remedy to the unjust treatment and marginalisation of the Bushman. Once the San are “embraced”, then citizenship will become guaranteed. One senses that this comment was written by someone suffering from what seems to be an uncomfortable, guilty conscience and that “embracing the San” is in fact a veiled form of guilt expiation. They hope to replace “citizenship of guilt” with a “citizenship of embrace” where a (shallow) form of acknowledgement is shown. The intention, however, is to validate one’s citizenship via the “first-ness” of the San.

Comment 9: “Just in case some one wants to lie and say the advert support Pieter Mulder’s claims, this is only a accurate (sic) assertion of who came to South Africa first!”

Pieter Mulder of the Freedom Front Plus infamously claimed in February 2012 that “Bantu-speaking” are foreign to 40% of South Africa. “Africans in particular never in the past lived in the whole of South Africa. There is sufficient proof that there were no Bantu-speaking people in the Western Cape and north western Cape”,

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Mulder is quoted as saying, “Technically, no one can lay claim to land in SA. We have got a complicated system. Nobody can say this is my total land … When whites arrived [in the Western Cape], there were Khoi people, not blacks.” Comment 9 uses the Mulder episode as reference to ‘citizenship by first-ness’ and as a form of defence of the Nando’s advert’s discourse on citizenship. Like comment 1, this comment assumes that the Nando’s advert is deploying factual discourse about South African citizenship. It also turns, like comment 5 and 6, on the notion of “citizenship by first-ness” or “citizenship of who-was-here-first”.

Comment 10: “LMAO! Quite literally eradicates the entire new ANC re-written history books in just seconds AND SLAPS THE "NOT" YOUTH ANCYL and NYDA thieves in the face too.”

Comment 10 is “Laughing My Ankles Off (LMAO)” because it raises the Nando’s advert into an arch-debunker of what it regards as official history. The advert is privileged into a robust refutation of post-apartheid black national political claims to authenticity and automatic ownership and citizenship.

Comment 11: “Politicians should eat NANDO’s maybe they will get some much needed brains, logic, tolerance (sic), amnesia from apartheid, build not destroy!!!”

Comment 11 delves into a “gustatory” defence of the Nando’s advert’s discourse. It regards the advert to contain all the qualities that “politicians” lack. These qualities will be transferable through food – through eating Nando’s grilled chicken. Oddly, Nando’s food is imagined as containing brains and logic and even tolerance. The most bizarrely revealing suggestion, however, is that politicians should eat Nando’s chicken in order to acquire “much needed” amnesia about apartheid! The form of citizenship it advocates can be called “citizenship by amnesia”.

Comment 12: “I couldn’t agree more…People neglect the fact that we are foreigners but we are here best (sic) we make it work, together!”

Comment 12 is an appeal to “foreign-ness” or, more specifically, “citizenship by foreign-ness”. The comment seems, initially, to “acknowledge” that “all are foreigners”, and to urge that this fact (or status) not be neglected. However, it seems to immediately undermine the legitimacy of this compulsory foreignness just after setting it up as the a priori condition. By stating that “we are here” and “best we make it work” the


comment appears to base citizenship not on a priori foreign-ness but on “being-here”, or “citizenship by being here”. This second appeal to “being here” appears to come closest in meaning to the constitutional ideal that expects South Africa to “belong to all who live in it”. However, it seems to lack any sense of lived and embodied citizenship.

Comment 13: “Well done to all you blacks that are big & honest enough to see the humor (& truth) in this ad.”

Comment 13 turns on an explicit announcement of race as a signifier of citizenship, hence “citizenship by race”. The comment explicitly mentions “all you blacks” and congratulates them on their supposed maturity and honesty in seeing the “funniness” factor of the Nando’s advert. As an afterthought, it seems, the author adds truth, in brackets, to the qualities that “big and honest” “blacks” may also see in the advert. Humour and truth as made to exist as collocates, which blacks must see if they are to validate their maturity. Only then can they become “citizens by maturity”. This kind of citizenship, it must be said, is honorary. It also seems the most patronising, bordering on the racist. Because it is explicitly racial, it is given only to those who are prepared to shed the immaturity of their race and assume the maturity of the other race. It is in the other race that they are meant to find “citizenship” through honorary legitimation.

Comment 14: “Brilliant ad, saw it last night for the first time. But my question is ‘Where did the Khoisan come from then long before ‘we’ all got here?’ LOL!”

Comment 14, like most of the comments in the “approving” category, sees the “brilliance” of the Nando’s advert. However, it brings a critical question to bear on the discourse of “citizenship by first-ness” that the Nando’s advert manipulates for effect. By asking for evidence of where “the Khoisan” came from, it demands a pause in the hermeneutic circle created by the advert’s claim that everyone is a foreigner except the San. This question exposes an aporia in the discourse of citizenship that radically calls into question the grounds for positing citizenship based on where-one-was at a certain spatio-temporal point in history. The important question becomes: where, when, how and why does citizenship begin (and end)? This is not a question that can be answered merely resorting to San Bushman for an ideal starting point as Nando’s does, or to so-called diversity as both Mbeki in the “I am an African” speech and Nando’s in the “diversity” advert do. In the short-term, the blind-spot is indeed alleviated by positing that South Africans are Africans. In the long-term, however, even this alleviation is undermined by a new set of aporias that beset the very definition of an African. Hence what seems to be a solution, as proffered by Mbeki, is in fact a prison-house. South Africans who claim South African citizenship by claiming African citizenship find themselves facing identity detours imposed by the very real pitfalls of defining “Who is African?”.
Comment 15: “They have been here for a very long time. From Wikipedia: ‘The San are one of 14 known extant "ancestral population clusters" (from which all known modern humans evolved)”

Comment 15 is a non-response to the question raised in comment 14. Saying that the San “have been here for a very long time” is, really, to say nothing. The question is only deferred. What is “a very long time”? They have been here: where? How have they been here? None of these questions are addressed in this comment. Instead, the comment further disembodies the San from the present, citing them as an “ancestral cluster”, whatever this ultimately means.

Comment 16: “I just spent like 10 mins reading through some these comments, why oh why people must you always react in this way?? See this add for what it is, a excellent bit of media that encourages South Africans to "embrace the diverse inhabitants of our land."

Comment 16, like comment 2, is unable to comprehend why certain comments are not favourable to the discourse of citizenship assumed by the Nando’s advert. It immediately escapes into the conundrum of “citizenship by diversity” from which there is no easy conceptual exit except by positing “citizenship by sameness” as comment 17 below does.

Comment 17: The ad is ‘laughing’ at our perceived difference. The point is, we are all immigrants to this land (except perhaps the San) and we are not that different. It is trying to bring us together. But obviously there are many people who do not understand the advert, so maybe it must be taken off air for now. We’ll still find it on YouTube.

Comment 17, like comment 16 above, is caught in the aporia of “diversity”. Unlike comment 16 which is immobilised by the force of the blind-spot, comment 17 here tries to solve the puzzle by positing sameness (“we are not that different”) as a conceptual U-turn. It forces differences to seem to be “perceived” instead of real. However, comment 17 cannot make a conceptual U-turn without acknowledging that “we are all immigrants” (foreign-ness/diversity/difference), an action which renders the U-turn pointless. “Sameness” is seen to be trapped in the aporia of “diversity”, and “diversity” in the aporia of “sameness”. Comments 16 and 17 (and 18 below), taken together, do indeed go some way to showing that “diversity” and “sameness” in fact come from the same aporetic place.

Comment 18: “Africa is for African people. If you born in Africa whether pink or green you are African (full stop). White and Black will never come together as long as we still see each other as white and black and not just plain South Africans. It’s enough.”
Comment 18 reinforces the perception acquired above that the discourse of “just plain South Africans” is plain propaganda. Not only is identity never “enough” but “coming together” is a more or less meaningless term. Like comment 17, comment 18 tries to find a way out of the aporia of ‘diversity” by denying that differences are real: they are only perceptions of difference.

Comment 19: “I don’t see anything xenophobic about this advert, Nando’s its known for being the only food brand that is not afraid to express its views and now they are xenophobic? No man it’s just a way to show that South Africa really is a diverse country. I love the advert!”

Comment 19 illustrates, again, the inside of prison-house of “diversity”. Here “diversity” is seen as the antidote to “xenophobia”, such that a “diverse country” cannot be xenophobic.

Comment 20: “I think the point is that they are attacking xenophobia and trying to show how nobody can claim entitlement to this land (except maybe the San). Unfortunately some people are too simple-minded to understand the message and think it’s promoting xenophobia. The censors ban it for fear too many will misunderstand the message. It's a pity because it's designed to make us laugh at our perceived differences and bring us together”.

Comment 20, like comment 19, regards diversity as the natural antidote to xenophobia. Like comment 17 and 18, it drives home the point that “our” differences are “perceived differences” and that the Nando’s advert is “designed to make us laugh at our perceived differences”. How does one laugh at perceived differences? Repeated, also, is the assumption that people can be “brought together”.

Comment 21: Nice Add (sic) Nando’s you always keep it REAL and fact based.Every1 claims to being dispossessed of their ancestral land, but the fact of the matter is that there is only One Victim, The KhoiSan Nation, Southern Africa’s Aboriginal Origin. Affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people (UNDRIP), protected under International Instruments such as ILO Convention 169 and World Bank definition of Indigenous people. Our ancestors has (sic) accommodated (sic) everyone on our ancestral lands and today we find those one oppressed other foreigners like if they are the true owners of this land. KhoiSan First Nation and Aboriginally Yours!!!

Comment 21 is the extreme culmination of the “diversity” aporia: it claims that “there is only One Victim, the KhoiSan Nation”.
Comment 22: “@Franklin.davies1 it'll be great to break it down some more... those of English, Scottish and Irish descent probably have very little Khoisan blood, as does the Venda and Tsonga/ Shangaan. The Afrikaners Khoisan count has been estimated at being around 6%, while Xhosas, Sothos and Tswanas go up to 60% . The so-called Coloured have an interesting phenomenon, settler dads and khoisan mothers -with the result that their khoisan infusion hovers around 50% and more. The Ngunis have around 20-40% (excluding Xhosas)”

Comment 22 adds percentage ranges to the “citizenship by Khoi” aporia.

What about the Bushman?
Before the San Bushman character left standing by the side of the road declares that he is not going anywhere, the voice-over says “let’s not forget you Indians and Chinese, even you Afrikaners…Tswanas, Vendas, Zulus – everybody!” The Bushman is made to fall outside the status of “everybody”. Nando’s therefore shows “Bushmen” as harmless signifiers and non-citizens whose claim to being the original “citizens” of South Africa is uncontested and – hence – outside discourse. They are set pieces and extras who fill up space in the background of the unfolding contestations of South African citizenship.

The San “Bushman” is literally the last man left standing in South Africa in the Nando’s “diversity” commercial

Nando’s portrays Bushmen as falling outside “diversity” as they do not change and have not changed. The character depicted in the video still carries bows and arrows and wears animal skins. He runs off into the distant horizon for no apparent reason (presumably to hunt?), skipping over a barren, stony terrain fit for a minimal existence. This representation is a clear denial of modernity to the “Bushman”. It is as if the Bushmen have not changed since time immemorial, are trapped in (their own parallel) time and have no movement to exhibit since everyone found them “here” and – moreover – they “are not going anywhere”. There is no context given to explain the notion of “being found here”. How were the Bushmen “found here”? Who “found” them here? Where is “here”? Where does “here” begin and end? The history of the San is reduced not just to “being
found” but to “being found here”. “Here” could be anywhere, everywhere or nowhere. It seems Bushmen are useful to the narrative of contested citizenship as they cannot speak. The Bushmen cannot speak in the sense that they are made to have only abstract claims to the ownership of South Africa and to South African citizenship. That is, they are the harmless, unthreatening “owner” of choice whose claims to “owning” South Africa pose no real, concrete threat to those now owning South Africa. There is a sense in which Bushman claims cannot be seriously entertained beyond the yardsticks of pre-modernity. Their only claim to citizenship – and to humanity – is that they were “found here”, minus title deeds. Beyond this, they are made to seem as if they have not actively participated in the dramas that shaped South Africa up to the present. This is illustrated by their being shown in stone-age gear. That Bushmen “fought” in the Anglo-Boer war and in the South African Defence Forces Border War(s) mainly as trackers, and were needed for their labour as “farm-boys”, for instance, is conveniently elided in the video. The Nando’s advert, therefore, seems to mock and patronise the Bushman, marking him as sanitised, history-less and unthreatening. The effortlessness and near sense of relief with which the Bushman is “found” to be the real “owner” of South Africa in the video and in some of the online comments itself suggests that the San Bushman’s candidature has no relevance in, and does not threaten, the present day status quo.

In contrast to the timelessness of the Bushmen, the “other South Africans” are imbued with mobility and agency as they come and go, and live and work in cities or farms. The Bushman’s value in the Nando’s commercial is in his so-called “first-ness”, a status that partly alludes to the somewhat flawed discourse of “first peoples”. By being positioned as “first”, he is being placed at the fossil level of human development – as belonging to that primitive time, according to Joseph Conrad, “when trees were kings”. The bushman is therefore the “Rosetta Stone” against which South African citizenship is measured. Its lot is not to move, to remain in the same place. If it moved, South African history would lose its primitive peg and its sense of neat linearity. It is also quite interesting in this regard that the dog in the passenger’s seat of the Afrikaner farmer character’s car and the San Bushman are the only two living life forms that do not get vaporised into plumes of white smoke. The other living things are the birds twittering at the beginning of the video, and these we only get to hear without seeing them.

**Humans as delicious roasted trinchado**

When all is said, however, there appears to be a residually disturbing and sinister subliminal message in the Nando’s advert. Firstly, it is euphemistic to say that the “foreigners” in the video disappear. More precisely, they are blitzed and vaporised as if by a guided laser missile. Hence, the “disappearance” of the foreigners in the video is in fact of a graphic nature. The undertone is already violent. Secondly, the last three frames of the video display chickens and chicken parts, two as part of the menu and the last showing the charcoal black chicken Nando’s logo. If one looks closely, they will observe that the Nando’s chicken at the end also gets
vaporised in similar fashion to the human beings. The sinister note in the advert comes to the surface when the Nando’s chicken is shown as part of menu, placed in a plate, all grilled and roasted. By showing us the vaporised Nando’s chicken, we get a disturbing semantic prosody: this final image of a grilled and roasted Nando’s chicken creates semantic prosody with the images of Ernesto Nhamuave, the Mozambican immigrant who was “roasted” and “grilled” in the same manner in Alexandra in May 2008. Since the advert urges us to laugh at ourselves, it begins to seem more and more likely that Nando’s is using the advert to subliminally laugh at victims of xenophobia. It is not clear whether this effect is consciously sought by the editors of the video. However, we know that the central and lasting image of the 2008 xenophobic killings is the so-called “burning man”. Nhamuave is roasted like a chicken in front of the glare of media cameras. Along comes Nando’s, with an advert that is aimed square at discrediting xenophobic violence. The advert ends with a roasted chicken. This writer contends that this is too huge a coincidence. An advert that purports to “tackle” the vaporising of people also ends up with a vaporised, grilled chicken. Below is a picture of Ernesto Nhamuave, a real human being who was set on fire for not belonging, juxtaposed with the Nando’s image of a grilled chicken which the advert subliminally scorches into in the viewer’s unconscousness.

The macabre picture of the so-called “burning man” Ernesto Nhamuave burnt alive in the xenophobic attacks of 2008 juxtaposed with “flame-grilled” wings being marketed in the diversity Nando’s advert.

This subliminal scorching makes sense since Nando’s is a fast food franchise looking for ways of literally branding the image of its grilled chicken into consumers’ intuitions and psyche. What better way to literally brand roasted chickens into the national psyche than by using an emotive subject such as citizenship, belonging and xenophobia! It is at this level that the Nando’s advert comes across as being particularly dark and unethical.

Conclusion
It is apartheid that first codifies “diversity” through the Population Registration Act of 1950. The Population Registration Act formally divided South Africans into four race groups, Whites, Indians, Africans, and Coloureds. As such, ‘diversity’ is a creation of apartheid. The constitution of South Africa entrenches this “unity in diversity” in its “Preamble”, as does Mbeki in the “I am an African” speech and Nando’s in the “Diversity” advert. However, as the paper has contended, ‘diversity’ is an aporia. The notion of aporia, in particular, brings a critical interpellation to bear on the discourse of “citizenship by first-ness” that the Nando’s advert manipulates for effect. By asking for evidence of where “the Khoisan” came from, it demands a pause in the hermeneutic circle created by the advert’s claim that everyone is a foreigner except the San. This question exposes the aporia in the discourse of citizenship, hence radically calling into question the grounds for positing citizenship based on where-one-was at a certain spatial and temporal point in history. The important question, rather, becomes: where, when, how and why does citizenship begin (and end)? This is not a question that can be answered merely resorting to San Bushman for an ideal starting point as Nando’s does, or to so-called diversity as both Mbeki in the “I am an African” speech and Nando’s in the “diversity” advert do. In the short-term, the blind-spot is indeed alleviated by positing that South Africans are Africans. In the long-term, however, even this alleviation is undermined by a new set of aporias that beset the very definition of an African. Hence what seems to be a solution, as proffered by Mbeki, is in fact a prison-house. South Africans who claim South African citizenship by claiming African citizenship find themselves facing identity detours imposed by the very real pitfalls of defining “Who is African?”

Nando’s imagines an entity called ‘Real South Africans’. According to Nando’s, all South Africans – with the exception of San Bushmen – are all foreigners or were once foreigners. “Either way you look at it” so goes the Nando’s vision of citizenship in South Africa, “we were all once foreigners in SA, except for the Khoisan of course” *We were all* once foreigners – and then what happened? Who is “we”? Who is “all”? How do we get to become this homogenous “we” “all”? What is the meaning of “We were all”? It seems that Nando’s, through this un-explanatory framework, is promoting an ahistorical sameness. Through this question-quashing discourse of “we all”, history is nullified: it does not matter who you are, what you did, or where you are from, you were *all* foreigners once. At a stroke, South African citizenship is accorded by the equalising trope of foreign-ness. The fact of having been foreign *once* is made into a justification for nation-ness. To be South African, therefore, is to have been foreign once. This is Nando’s definition of what it means to be South African: *once a foreigner*.

If we were all once foreigners, what does “foreigner” mean? How foreign were “we” then? How foreign are “we” now? The Nando’s delexicalises the term “foreigner”, turning it into a meaningless word. There is no explanation how “we were all once” foreigners? Who is “we”? When was this *once*? How did we move out of this *once*? Nando’s argument seems to be that xenophobic South Africans fail to realise that even *they* are
foreigners. One point repeated on the online comment thread on the News24 site regarding the discourse of citizenship carried by the Nando’s ad, for instance, is that “everyone came from elsewhere”. The question that does not get asked, again, is: Where is elsewhere? What historical and epistemic conditions produce these elsewhere? Where do elsewhere go? The level of suppression of lived, embodied experience is high at these moments of heightened vagueness.

The Nando’s commercial’s tag line – “Real South Africans enjoy diversity” – not only equates, and hence trivialises, the diversity of South Africans to the diversity of Nando’s chicken menus but essentially suggests that “real” South Africans emerge through the trope of “foreign-ness”. It is as if the fact of not-belonging makes South Africans to belong. Diversity according to Nando’s typology therefore translates into a type of recognition of the essential non-South Africanness of South Africans: hence clearing the ground for a generalising sameness. In making South Africanness null and void, Nando’s is clearing the ground on which the advert wants to stand: the ground that we are all South Africans. The assumption that “we are all South African” is fraught with contradiction to the point of being self-terminating fallacy. It is an assumption, as we have seen, that is shared both by Mbeki and Nando’s. Their illogical assumption that the ideal of citizenship (“the rainbow nation”) is made real via generalising sameness has serious consequences for ethnic and race relations in South Africa. It fails to sign-post how diversity has never been the issue, but, rather, how citizenship has been constantly won and lost, and negotiated – without ever losing its contradictoriness. The costs, burdens, losses, ethics and responsibilities of citizenship are not meant to masked, repressed or glossed over. Diversity, on the other hand, turns out to be a meaningless weasel word.

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The media and the projection of Africans as the “child race”: The Marikana Case

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Abstract
For enslavers and colonialists to justify the degrading and dehumanizing treatment of Africans in Africa and abroad, they had to invent the notion that Africans were irrational sub-human beings. While the struggle for freedom enabled a discourse that sought to repel such misconceptions, the task of eradicating the misrepresentation of the African image and personality was not fully accomplished. The coverage and analysis following the Marikana massacre, whose reportage revealed that a certain muti had man encouraged South African mine workers to confront police guns with the assurance that the muti would make them invincible to police bullets, exposed that some in the media continue to see Africans as uncritical superstitious beings. The South African media, failed to embark on a mission to unmask the “medicine man”. Instead the media exposed Africans to appear as gullible and irrational. This article argues that an initiative on the part of the media to investigate the “medicine man” would have revealed whether or not the “medicine man” existed. Beyond that an investigation would have given the media an opportunity to interrogate the basis of these claims if they existed at all.
Introduction

On August 16, 2012, the world witnessed, through the media, a massacre of 34 South African mine workers who died under a hail of bullets fired by the South African Police Service members in the country’s North West Province (Tau, Ndaba & Sapa, 2012:1). What later came to be known as the Marikana Massacre amid a strike by Lonmin’s platinum mine when that started ten days earlier when the workers demanded from their employer an increase from R5 000 to R12 500. According to a newspaper’s report (Tau, Ndaba & Sapa, 2012:1) the shooting began as the group of protestors moved down from a hill they were occupying towards a nearby informal settlement. The police, according to the report, began advancing towards the workers. Consequently, the workers scattered, some running into the open field, and others towards an informal settlement. The report noted that helicopters hovered overhead and the police – some in armoured police vehicles, others on horseback – followed in hot pursuit. The police reportedly used water canons, teargas and live ammunition. According to the police they fired because they were shot at first (Tau, Ndaba & Sapa, 2012:1).

In earlier incidents since the strike began, ten people – including two security police officers, two security guards and three National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) shop stewards – died (Segar, 2012:4). The violent killing of the ten people was blamed on the striking mineworkers (Seale, Ndaba, Seegar, Tau & Maphumolo, 2012:1).

One of the striking miners, Tholakele Dlunga, told journalists (Seale, Ndaba, Seegar, Tau & Maphumolo, 2012:4) that armed police acted aggressively towards the workers without provocation. He said that the workers were sitting on the hilltop when they suddenly noticed that the police were encircling the workers with barbed wire. When some of the workers confronted the police about it, the officers opened fire without any warning shots. While the workers were armed, Dlunga said none of the workers fired any shots.

In its report, three days after the incident, the *Sunday Times* (Sibongakonke Shoba & Isaac Mahlangu, 2012:5) reported that a “mystery” sangoma (traditional doctor) was “believed” to be behind the “foolish courage” that caused the workers to confront the police. The *Sunday Times*’ report further noted that it was said that the man, who was from the Eastern Cape, had provided muti (herbal medicine) to the protestors and “made them believe it would make them invincible”.

On the same day that the *Sunday Times* published its report, another Sunday newspaper, the *City Press* (Ledwaba, 2012:4) also reported that a medicine man allegedly hailing from the Eastern Cape, had instructed the mine workers to strip naked and stand in a single file while he sprinkled them with herbs. These procedures, the *City Press* further reported, were believed to be part of a process to prepare for battle and “to make the men invincible against the enemy”.

Wondering aloud why the workers, with spears and pangas in their hands, who were seemingly no match for the police and their weapons and armoured vehicles charged at the police, the *City Press*’ reporter, Lucas Ledwaba, concluded that the answer might lie in the statement made by Lieutenant General Elias Mawela at a
media briefing: “We were dealing with people who looked possessed, or believed the bullets would not work on them.”

The reported claim about the existence of a sangoma who wielded a powerful influence on the Marikana mineworkers took such a centre-stage in the Marikana discourse to an extent that the City Press’ Editorial (2012:22) found itself compelled to ask: “Why did adults believe a concoction of herbs could make them invincible?” The impression created by the City Press’ question was that no responsible, mature “adult” could believe that they would be protected by herbs. If adults believed that, then the conclusion would be that the adults were infantile and inane. The City Press seemed to echo the Sunday Times’ report which reduced the mineworkers’ acts to that of “foolish courage”. Reference to Africans as being “foolish” when they do things that are incomprehensible to those who do not share their cultural worldview is historical. In this article, the author argues that such a dismissive and contemptuous attitude to Africans has been made a basis for the subjugation of Africans, especially by the European world, with disastrous consequences for the Africans, mentally, spiritually, emotionally and physically. By making reference to the narrative of Nongqawuse, an Eastern Cape seer, this author will demonstrate how Africans’ belief system was used to mislead them with dire consequences, leading to them being condemned as “foolish” with little or no effort to understand their cultural context. The Nongqawuse narrative is being made a reference point so as to argue that by referring to the victims of the Marikana massacre as childish and foolish, the media are re-inflicting and reopening Africans’ historical pain and wounds.

The “foolish” belief in Nongqawuse’s prophecy

In April 1856, two strangers standing in a small bush, called out to Nongqawuse, a 15-year-old girl, and told her to tell her community that departed souls would rise from the dead, and that all cattle now leaving should be slaughtered because they had been reared by contaminated hands whose people dealt in witchcraft (Peires, 1989:79). When Nongqawuse, who was accompanied by Nombanda, a 10-year-old girl, related this to the community, the message was dismissed. When the following day the two girls returned to the same spot, the same strangers appeared and enquired how the message was received. On hearing that it was dismissed, one of the strangers instructed Nongqawuse to go to her uncle, Mhlakaza, a seer as well, and tell him that the strangers wanted to see him, and that before doing so he should kill a beast and wash his body clean as a preparation to meet them in four days’ time.

On the appointed day Mhlakaza set out to meet the stranger. They told him that they were the people spoken of by seers such as Nxlele and Mlanjeni, who would in the course of time render amaXhosa assistance in driving colonial whites out of their land (Peires, 1989:79). The pre-condition, however was that amaXhosa would have to kill all their cattle, so that they would receive new cattle that would be free from any disease.
On June 28, 1856, responding to his wife, who observed that writing a report for the government about Nongqawuse’s cattle-killing movement was “nonsense”, Charles Brownlee, a 19th century Christian missionary, told his wife that “[t]his is no foolish story” (Mostert, 1993:1188). Demonstrating insight and foresight, Brownlee pointed out that his wife would realise that the cattle-killing movement, which was gaining momentum at that time was either going to result into a war or in “men, women and children dying like dogs about your door”. Indeed, as Brownlee anticipated, his predictions came true. On 18 February 1857, the day that the departed would arise, nothing of the sort happened. The sun rose and set like any other day. Instead, as Mostert (1993:1215) observes

They watched the waning moon and the dawn of every sun, until gradually the most vulnerable, the aged, the infirm, the very young, began to topple from hunger. One old man was found dead with his head overhanging his corn pit. He had gone with his last breath…to see if it had been filled, and lacked the strength to rise again. Others climbed down into the deep new corn pits to see if any corn from the spirit world had materialized there. They were, however, too weak to get out again and died slow, agonizing deaths from both hunger and thirst.

Mostert (1993:1215-16) goes on to describe in detail how bones that had been cast away when carcasses lay rotting in the veld were collected and gnawed by the poverty-stricken amaXhosa. Throughout the bushes, heaps of one, two and even twelve people were found at one place, covered with animal hides “crouched together for their last sleep” (Mostert, 1993:1216). Mostert further notes that the hungry ones who reached the soup kitchens and other relief centres were living skeletons, many of who collapsed yards from where a meal was being offered, or even as they put food into their mouths. The land of amaXhosa became desolate, the kraals standing empty, their occupants being dead and gone. In a land that was full “thousands of bellowing cattle, its joyful children and singing women” stillness descended and there was not even “a cock left to crow”. The question is: how could adults do such a “foolish” thing as killing their cattle which was their life-blood? What informed the passion of the cattle-killing movement to the extent that its adherents were prepared to allow amaXhosa to go through divisions that tore families apart? What was it that drove women of the cattle-killing movement to be prepared to divorce their husbands if the former refused to join the movement? (Mostert, 1993:1209). What inspired their conviction to the extent that the cattle-killing movement people chose to cut ties with their kith and kin to an extent of taking a stance not to “even eat or drink in their company” let alone eating the meat of the “unbelievers”? History (Mostert, 1993:1205) informs us that in this division between the “believers” and the “unbelievers” the Xhosa code of obedience to the chief was broken when those owing loyalty to unbeliever chiefs, such as the Christian Kama, ignored his commands to cultivate and not to kill. The sons of chief Maqoma and Mhala defied their fathers while wives defied their husbands and
refused to cultivate. Sutu, the mother of chief Sandle and his wives threatened to desert him for refusing to join the cattle-killing movement (Mostert, 1993:1211).

Arguing that the attitude of merely dismissing the act of the cattle-killing movement as “delusion” and “superstition” is unhelpful, Peires (1989:123) observes that it is better “to look rather more closely at the central beliefs of the movement”. Peires (1989:30) notes that amaXhosa religion is primarily a this-worldly religion, more concerning with guiding people’s behaviour in the existing world. Peires further observes that amaXhosa had no priests as such; the amaXhosa doctors (amagqirha in isiXhosa and izangoma in isiZulu) being the ones spending their time dealing with practical matters such as omens, medicines and the relationship between the people and their ancestors. The ancestors are experienced in the way they interact with the living: reward for those who venerate them and punishment for those who neglect them. Mostert’s (1993:1191) observation is very helpful in shedding light on why Nongqawuse won the people’s hearts in an ominous situation:

Ancestral spirits occupied the most important position in Xhosa religious thinking. There was no worship of them. They were regarded as mediators between the living and the great unknown deity whose existence Xhosa accepted. The Xhosa always thought of the dead as those who had gone on ahead to join the majority, who were all very much alive in the realm of the shades and who were closely interested in the well-being of their successors in the world. It was the startling force of the revelation of their return that fired expectation, an innovative prophecy that went far beyond anything spoken of before, and that helped to bring the wondering pilgrims to Nongqawuse.

Mostert further observes that many years later, survivors of the cattle-killing movement their “excitement arose from hearing that the departed were near at hand”.

Failure to contextualise these beliefs into a historical context would render an analyst unable to appreciate the cattle-killing movement and the Marikana tragedy as we shall see below.

The historical context

It should be borne in mind that when the “revelation” came to Nongqawuse, two promises were made to amaXhosa if they killed their cattle. One was the receiving of new and healthy heads of cattle, unlike the ones they had, which were suffering and dying from lung sickness. The second promise was that if they complied, whites would be driven away from their land. Let us first examine the issue of the lung sickness. Peires (1989:124-5) notes that it “cannot have been a coincidence” that “[e]verywhere lungsickness went in Xhosaland, cattle-killing followed”. Mostert (1993:1190) also notes that the “belief was strongest where the
lung-sickness was rife”. Confronted with lung sickness, amaXhosa blamed it on witchcraft (Peires, 1989:125). When the execution of witches failed to halt the spread of the lung sickness, amaXhosa looked elsewhere for their misfortune. They concluded that the ancestors must have been displeased with them. Against this background Nongqawuse’s call to kill their cattle as a sacrifice to rectify wrong, made sense. Hence, when the promise failed to materialise, the rationale by Mhlakaza that the failure was due to people selling their cattle instead of sacrificing them was accepted (Peires, 1989:104).

Linked to the desire to appease the ancestors, was the second reason, this being that the ancestors would drive away their nemesis – the white colonialists. One of the major boosts for the cattle-killing movement was a declaration of support by amaXhosa king, Sarhili. Mostert (1993:1189) notes that the “decisive point of the phenomenon came when Sarhili declared himself a Believer”. Peires (1989:94) observes that the “news…was quite enough to convince most ordinary Xhosa as they sat in their homesteads. The official sanction of King Sarhili removed the last doubts of those who wanted to believe.” The inclination by amaXhosa to follow their king into embracing Nongqawuse’s message was not out of fear for their ruler but obedience to a king “who was loved by his people” (Peires, 1989:82). He enjoyed what Peires calls “spontaneous loyalty” because he was an “accessible ruler, unfailingly pleasant and courteous”. He was a king, Peires further notes, whose decision were “renowned for their fairness and tact”, who “made a point of softening a harsh judgement with words of humour and sympathy”. Once a Christian missionary observed him listening patiently for three days to a complainant’s case “as if it were a case on which depended the welfare of the whole tribe” (Mostert, 1993:1184). In having these qualities, King Sarhili, was conforming to the expectations of African people which are dictated by African culture. To this end, Bujo (2009:393) observes that in many African communities, the chief or king is not purely a secular ruler but also a mediator between the ancestral world and his people. It is the chief, Bujo further points out, who increases the life force, the “role model for his people, transmitting the vital power from God via the ancestors”. In traditional Africa the “chief had to remain faithful to the principle that he should serve as a role model for his people. The people expected him to be exemplary.” Taking Bujo’s observation into consideration, it appears that King Sarhili was conscious of African cultural dictates and rose to the occasion. But a more important question is: what drove this wise man to embrace Nongqawuse’s message? This question is important considering Mostert’s (1993:1189) that it “remains inescapable that both men [Sarhili and Mhlakaza believed absolutely in the prophecies. Mhlakaza was to die of starvation after he had killed all his cattle and destroyed his corn. He and Sarhili ultimately sacrificed too much, Mhlakaza his own life and Sarhili the power and independence of his people, indeed of the whole Xhosa nation, for there to be any doubt about their own sincerity or belief.”

As a young man, Sarhili had seen his father, King Hintsa shot dead by British colonialist soldiers, who after killing him cut his ears off as military souvenirs, something he “never forgot and…never forgave” (Peires,
According to Mostert (1993:1185) Sarhili’s greatest longing was to see the end of British presence in South Africa and with it the end of the “white man’s most intrusive and destructive influence upon Xhosa life, customs and territorial integrity”. Nongqawuse’s message that the ancestors would help amaXhosa drive away the white colonialists held promise for the fulfillment King Sarhili’s quest. Taking this historical background into consideration, Mostert (1993:1195) notes that those who failed to appreciate the force that drove the cattle-killing movement had

“failed to see the phenomenon as being, at bottom, a consequence of territorial confinement, the national despair of a people who saw no way out of their losses and defeats and the cultural onslaught of the past half century, and who, confronted additionally by the havoc of the lung-sickness, had turned, as Christians themselves did in dire extremity to the shades”.

This observation by Mostert is very useful for two reasons. The first reason that Mostert’s observation strikes a chord is his recognition of the existence of “national despair” that drove the cattle-killing movement. This “national despair” is a common factor between the cattle-killing movement and the Marikana casualties. This “despair” on the part of the Marikana casualties was highlighted by the Sowetan (Mabuza, 2012:2) newspaper whose report recorded that a defiant mineworker, who was lying on the ground bleeding from a gunshot wound, kept on swearing at police and urged them to finish him off, saying “Kill us too, please abelungu [white people].” Just like the cattle-movement, which was frustrated by white domination, the bleeding Marikana casualty expressed the same vulnerability, which made him defiant to death. The Sowetan further reported the mineworkers felt that the leaders of the Union of Mineworkers (NUM) to which they once belonged to was “collaborating with their enemy, the employer”. Added to the perception of being betrayed by the NUM, rival union, Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union president, Vusumuzi Mathunjwa, told the workers that “journalists who are covering the strike are controlled by NUM” (Mabuza, 2012:2). While the Sunday Times’ report showed indifference to the Marikana casualties’ “despair” the Sunday Times’ Editorial (2012:4) showed sensitivity. Arguing that “the state is no longer trusted by the poor”, the Editorial further points out that

They [the poor] continue to live in conditions of abject poverty with inadequate service delivery and little prospect of economic advancement. Their children attend schools where even the cynical 40% pass rate is unobtainable due to the collapse of the education system. Their hospitals and clinics fail to deliver on the promise of basic health care.

The second is that it shows that those who subscribe to African traditional beliefs are not unique in believing in mysteries – other faiths, Christianity, in particular, have their own mysteries. The Marikana people’s beliefs in their sangoma – if at all – is nothing unique, and does not merit being called “foolish” as the Sunday Times did.
Historically, Peires (1982:66-7) notes that traditional wardoctors (a type of isangoma) were credited with the ability to “tie up” the enemy and nullify his weapons. On this basis (Peires, 1982:67) argues that if one believed that spears could be tied up, in other words “rendered harmless”, “it requires no great leap of faith to believe the same of bullets”. If this is a historical reality, and if there was a sangoma that promised the Marikana casualties that they would be invincible to the police bullets, then their case is not unique at all. History reveals that izangoma have played a great role in making and breaking people. The Zulu King, Shaka, noticed that izangoma, in times of crises, had falsely accused people of witchcraft, and the accused were put to death (Kunene, 1979:162-3). Recognising that there were those who were genuine and charlatans, he smeared goat blood on the beam of his house and summoned diviners to point out the culprits. All except one, who pinpointed Shaka for the misdeed accused innocent people. Shaka had the izangoma themselves put to death. In Lesotho, a chief and seer by the name Mohlomi, who was later to become BaSotho King Moshoeshoe’s mentor, warned people against deceitful diviners (du Preez, 2004:52). Once he hid his shield and reported it missing, whereupon he called diviners to point out the thief. Like in the case of Shaka the diviners accused innocent people until Mohlomi exposed them for their lies. In later life, Moshoeshoe often played the same trick on some of his senior advisors (du Preez, 2003:17).

While in the case of Mohlomi and Shaka, there are successful stories of charlatans being exposed, in the case of the cattle-killing movement and Marikana, the truth has not been established about the claims of the izangoma. In the case of the cattle-killing movement, it is known that when the believers were beginning to be wary of the claims, another prophetess, Nonkosi, confessed to being asked by Xhosa Chief Mhala’s councilor, Nkwitsha to claim that she had met the ancestor spirits in the river who told her to tell amaXhosa to kill their cattle in the same was as Nongqawuse had instructed (Mostert, 1993:1208). Nkwitsha himself confessed that he had bellowed like cattle, while holding a pair of horns as he walked in the rushes for Nonkosi’s benefit. He had dived into the water, and pretending to be the voice of the ancestor spirits, he had called out: “We are rising, we are rising.” What this reveals is that behind the cattle-killing movement, in as much as there were sincere advocates, there were impostors and charlatans. Historians have helped us establish this fact. Has journalism, as the first draft of history helped shed light on Marikana about the existence or otherwise of isangoma that was allegedly behind the bravery of the Marikana casualties?

**The media and the missing historical context**

In the early 60s, a view was disseminated in the European academic world that there was no African history – the only history in existence in Africa being that of the Europeans in Africa (Mbeki, 1994; Thompson, 1993:vi). Those were the days, according to Davidson (1973:25) “when white men in Africa were contemptuous of ‘natives,’” insisting “on their own superiority,” thinking that “Africans had no history, culture, or civilization of their own”. So powerful was the generalised assumption that Africa had no history of her own that the pioneering scholars of African history “had to begin somewhat defensively; it could barely have been
otherwise” (Davidson, 1994:5). The views expressed by the Eurocentric academic had precedence. In the mid-1940s, a chief social administrator in the then Belgian Congo, Dr Léopold Mottoulle, observed in his diary that “the colonizer must never lose sight of the fact that the Negroes have the minds of children, minds which are shaped by the methods of the educator” (Davidson, 1994:10).
REFERENCES


“‘Fatty Boom Boom’: Die Antwoord’s Blackface Misogyny”

Adam Haupt

I will interrogate what the concepts of democracy and social justice mean in relation to neo-liberal economics in SA as well as arguments about social media's assumed potential for democratisation. I will argue that Die Antwoord's global appeal tell us a great deal about the continued appeal of colonial discourse and I will also contend that newer forms of media technology do not necessarily narrow divides, but potentially widen them.
This paper contends that Die Antwoord’s recent music video, “Fatty Boom Boom”, literally embraces blackface minstrelsy, possibly in an attempt to subvert criticism of their earlier work. Elsewhere, I argue that their debut music video, “Enter the Ninja”, offers an example of blackface minstrelsy in popular culture (Haupt, 2012). I also argue that their performance of “Doosdronk” at a music festival in the rural Western Cape appears to mock the legacy of the dop stelsel (tot system) and gender-based violence on farms (Haupt, 2012). Die Antwoord’s use of ‘white’ Afrikaans working class and ‘coloured’ working class stereotypes and cultural expressions amounts to cultural appropriation despite arguments that their performances embrace parodic and ironic strategies in order to engage their audiences. My analysis of “Fatty Boom Boom” concurs with Sarah Woodward’s interpretation of Die Antwoord’s earlier work. Woodward contends that “the myth that Die Antwoord has created in their performance identity has become so integrated into every part of their performance that it loses the knowingness of parody” (2011: 22). I argue that the band’s parodic work does not entail Linda Hutcheon’s understanding of postmodern parody; that is, a double process of inscription and subversion of its subject (1989). Instead, its use of blackface as well as its misogynist representation of Lady Gaga inscribes conservative racial and gender politics, but does very little to subvert such politics. It is in this sense that their work does not constitute the knowingness of parody. Instead, their work is perhaps better understood via Lisa Colletta’s discussion of postmodern irony and satire in the work of US TV comedians Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert. Colletta argues:

Postmodern irony does not aim to get us to turn off the television, but to entertain us into staying tuned and to be consumers of all cultural product, all the while reassuring us with a wink that we are in on and somehow superior to the giant joke that is being played on us. (2009: 857).

Die Antwoord’s approach is not very different from mass media strategies to keep audiences tuned in and to ensure that they keep consuming cultural products. Their work operates in the mode of Jean Baudrillard’s simulacrum, which revels in the free play of the signifier without resort to a signified and inaugurates “a liquidation of referentials” (1994: 2) – hence the band’s affinity for mythmaking about ‘zef’, their origins and the band members’ identities.

Die Antwoord describe themselves as a ‘zef’ rap rave crew. The origins of the term ‘zef’ are debatable and have become a key part of their mythmaking strategy. They went viral on social media platforms in 2010 and toured extensively in the US, UK and Europe. They also signed a record deal with Interscope, owned by Universal (one of four holding companies that hold about 80% global market share), but then left the label at a later stage. Die Antwoord are Ninja (Waddy Jones), Yo-Landi Vi$$er (Anri du Toit)) and DJ Hi-Tek, who has been played by different people in their videos. Jones’s previous rap projects include Original Evergreen, Max Normal, Max Normal.TV and Constructus Corporation. These English rap ventures were not particularly
It wasn’t until Jones adopted the Afrikaans working-class persona, Ninja, that he became really successful. As Sean O’Toole points out, Jones is neither working class nor Afrikaans-speaking (2012). In fact, an analysis of the lyrics to “Enter the Ninja” reveals that the song’s crossover appeal lies in the fact that it is largely written in English and contains Afrikaans phrases and cuss words (Haupt, 2012). Although they make questionable claims about leading the ‘zef counter-culture movement’, it is interesting that they link the term – which apparently means ‘common’ or ‘kitsch’, but now means ‘cool’ – to eighties ‘white’, working-class culture. Ninja borrows heavily from male, ‘coloured’, Afrikaans-speaking working-class stereotypes from the Cape Flats. Ironically, Cape Afrikaans and Xhosa rappers have not achieved local and international success on the same scale as Jones. In fact, Cape Afrikaans rappers, such as Prophets of da City and Brasse vannie Kaap, did he a great deal to pave the way for Afrikaans and African language hip-hop in the 90s and early 2000s (Haupt, 2012). Die Antwoord’s ambiguous allusion to both working-class ‘white’ and ‘coloured’ stereotypes could be read as cultural appropriation, and is an indication that it is class, and not race, that accounts for commonalities between ‘white’ and ‘coloured’ identities. Apartheid’s attempts to employ race as a marker of difference is subverted by the dynamics of class and poverty – hence the National Party’s post-war project to fast-track ‘white’ Afrikaners’ class ascendance through institutions like the Broederbond. Elsewhere, I analyse “Enter the Ninja” to suggest that the crew’s use of Cape dialects of Afrikaans, prison gang tattoos and other stereotypical markers of ‘coloured’ masculinity amount to blackface (Haupt, 2012). In his work on the history of blackface, Eric Lott reveals that blackface minstrelsy took shape nineteenth-century America when “white men caricatured ‘blacks’ for sport and profit” by painting their faces black and by performing exaggerated, ‘white’ racist caricatures of ‘black’ subjects for ‘white’ audiences (Lott, 1993: 3). These performances were so popular with ‘white’ audiences that ‘black’ artists themselves were not as successful at these kinds of performances as their ‘white’ counterparts, thereby highlighting the idea these were ‘white’, racists projects of blackness that had little to do with the lived experiences of ‘black’ subjects during and after the era of slavery in the US. Jonathan Hart frames this racist tradition in terms of the unequal relations of power between slave owners and their slaves as well as between ‘white’ landowners and employers and their ‘black’ employees: “The debate over cultural appropriation is about whether speaking for others or representing them in fictional as well as legal, social, artistic, and political work is appropriate or proper, especially when individuals or groups with more social, economic, and political power perform this role for others without invitation” (1997: 137). Die Antwoord’s most recent music video, “Fatty Boom Boom”, literally embodies this racist theatre and cinematic tradition when Yolandi’s body is painted black. As Claire Scott’s analysis of their performance of ‘white’ identity suggests, “while their performance places South African whiteness under the spotlight, it also obscures the inherited privileges that white South Africans retain and claim unquestioningly” (2012: 758). In his discussion of music history and cultural appropriation, Perry Hall holds that ‘white’ artists and fans’ fascination with ‘black’ cultural expression has been “obscured or distorted by racist habits of thoughts and association that provoke suppression and denial” (Hall, 1997: 34). In essence, Die Antwoord’s ability to convert the
situations and cultural expressions of ‘coloured’ and ‘white’, Afrikaans and ‘coloured’ communities into symbolic capital underscores their own position of ‘white’ class privilege in post-apartheid South Africa, something that they do not actively acknowledge in their appropriation of these marginal communities’ shared experiences and expressions. In the video we see Yolandi’s entire body painted black; her yellow baby doll dress, yellow eyes and bleached hair accentuate her black body paint. These shots alternate with images of Ninja, Yolandi and their dancers in white body paint and then in black. How do we read Yolandi’s blackened body? How do we read their invocation of a racist tradition of theatre, music and cinema in the US and South Africa’s history of the coon carnival? Are they deconstructing our racist past, or is it a publicity stunt – a shot at another viral YouTube video? A clue to these questions may be found in a remark by Jones in an interview: “God made a mistake with me. I’m actually black, trapped in a white body” (van Wyk, 2012: online). This statement some of the lyrics from the song “Never le Nkemise” (off Ten$ion): “Ninja, die wít kaffir / Ja, julle naaiers / Skrik wakker” [Ninja, the white kaffir / Yes, you fuckers / Wake up] (Die Antwoord, 2012). Like Wikus of District 9, Yolandi and Ninja ‘go native’ by blackening up for profit and sport. They have the means to convert marginal subjects’ cultural expressions into symbolic capital.

The music video “Fatty Boom Boom” differs from their earlier work because the band’s blackface politics goes beyond the conversion of marginal subjects’ cultural expression into symbolic capital via their appropriation of language, music genres and stereotypes. In this video, Yolandi is literally painted black, thereby directly referencing the history of blackface minstrelsy without offering any indication of the ways in which this history is being critiqued or subverted. This lends credence to the idea that these sorts of references merely amount to pastiche, and do not constitute postmodern parody, as Hutcheon defines the term. It is unknowing or blank parody. The Yolandi’s lyrics also offer is little clues about the subversive potential for literal reference for blackface in the video:

Hi my name is...
Yo-landi fokken Vi$$er! Fight fight fight!
Kick u in da teef! Hit u on da head wif da mic!
Dere’s a rumble in da jungle I’m bubbling 2 da beat
I’m not looking 4 trouble but troublez looking 4 me
My pockets r fokken swollen but nuffing jus cum 4 free
I used 2 beg borrow or steal jus 2 hustle sumfing 2 eat
Souf Afrika used 2 b 2 dwankie 2 notice me
Suddenly u interested cause we blowing up overseaz
Making money money money! Yes yes yes!
Zefside represent! U fucking wif da best
I'm a upper! Dwankiez get popped like a sucker
Baka baka! Yipee kaiyay muddafucka!
I'm a big deal! Yo krazy money get thrown at me
Now I'm having so much dat I can't even go 2 sleep!
Yo-landi! Wat? Where u at? Here I am!
Spitting fokken lyric like bam bam bam!
(Die Antwoord, 2012; transcription obtained from http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/dieantwoord/fattyboomboom.html)

The invocation of violent rhetoric aside, Yolandi’s lyrics employ a ‘rags to riches’ cliché to describe her rise from obscurity to international fame, complete with the familiar gangsta rap narrative of hustling the streets for money; a narrative which embraces neo-liberal economics and valorises the individual accumulation of capital at the expense of collective wealth and welfare. This is reminiscent of Richard Shur’s comparison between gangsta rappers ‘bling’ politics and slaves during the era of slavery. Shur asserts that both slaves and hip-hop artists are/were excluded from the market economy, respectively. It is for this reason that hip-hop’s aesthetics “re-enacts the slave narratives’ desire to become the subjects of property law” – if they were the objects of property law, they could not possibly be full subjects (Schur, 2009: 8). In a music market that is dominated by four holding companies that dominate about 80% of global market share in a historical context where the cultural appropriation and commercial exploitation of ‘black’ music was common place, it is ironic that Die Antwoord would employ hip-hop narratives about hustling, the struggle for acceptance in the music industry and the obsession with money. This is especially ironic because Jones is neither ‘white’, Afrikaans or ‘coloured’ Afrikaans working class and comes from a privileged, English background – he has the sufficient social (and economic) capital to convert marginal subjects’ cultural expressions into commercially successful projects. Analysing the operation of blackface in gangsta rap, Michelle Alexander contends that “today’s displays are generally designed for white audiences” – this may explain Die Antwoord’s references to gangsta rap (2010: 168). Significantly, it is hard not to read their work in relation to these sorts of arguments about cultural appropriation, as presented by K.J. Greene: “A strikingly consistent characteristic of cultural appropriation is its one-way direction – white performers obtaining economic and artistic benefits at the expense of minority innovators” (199: 368). No doubt, their lyrical performance is a key part of the band’s overall presentation of its members ‘in character’ and attempts to defy any recourse to the signified, instead revelling in endless signification in order to frustrate attempts to pin them down – simulation, in other words. However, the signifiers that they employ are marked by a very specific kind racial and gender politics that reference our racist and sexist past and present.
The video apparently pokes fun at stereotypical Western perceptions of Africa. Hence, we see a male Lady Gaga impersonator – wearing Gaga’s now-infamous meat dress – in a ramshackle minibus taxi as she is taken on a tour of presumably inner city Johannesburg. Her tour guide / taxi driver points out wild animals in Rockey Street before they get hijacked. Gaga escapes the hijack scene and enters the surgery of a dentist / gynaecologist, where she gives birth to a large cockroach, which South Africans, specifically Johannesburg residents, would probably link connotatively to its nickname, Parktown Prawn. This is also a reference to the alien ‘prawns’ in South African sci-fi movie, District 9, which won an Oscar. Later, a lion kills Lady Gaga, still in her meat dress. Their attempts at parody and contempt for Gaga, who wanted them as an opening act, can hardly be missed. Clearly, she is the ‘fatty’ who is mocked in the chorus; Gaga reportedly picked up weight recently. In an op ed on the music video’s gender politics, Talia Meer contends that “amid tabloid skinner about Lady Gaga’s weight and her disclosure of her struggles with anorexia”, “this video reaffirms that the best way to bring a girl down to size is to pick on her size” (2013: online). Meer develops her insights into the scene with the African gynaecologist when she argues that “the depiction of vaginal mucous and the removal of an insect from the vagina are loaded in a global culture that vilifies women’s bodies and sexuality and portrays vaginas as requiring douching, perfuming and bejewelling” (2013: online). She goes on to link the stigmatisation of the female body to the prevalence of gender-based violence in South Africa by asserting that “this music video is yet another depiction of women’s bodies as sexualised, violated and diseased” (2013: online). By the time the lion has attacked her Gaga, the punch line is that she asked for it: “the mini-meat dress and the lion, and the miniskirt and the sexual predator, invoke the already pervasive view: it is her fault” (2013: online). The punch line resonates with conservative explanations for women’s experiences of violence: that the victim of gender-based violence is somehow to blame for the act of violence through her behaviour or attire. Therefore, Die Antwoord’s parody of Gage does not amount to a double-process of inscription and subversion. It is merely inscribing gender politics onto the female body which becomes the terrain upon which the band fights its ego battle, thereby enacting and legitimating yet another media representation of femicide. It is in this sense that their work does not constitute knowing parody, body merely invites endless signification that encourages audiences to stay tuned in order to consume commodities. In essence, we see the potential for social media platforms (like YouTube, where the video was released) to act as spaces for subjects to be producers, and not just consumers, being reduced to commercial mass media’s tendency to interpellate subjects merely as loyal consumers and, thereby, purchase consent for hegemonic representations of women.

Die Antwoord’s conservative race and gender politics should be read in relation to broader concerns about the role of the media in a relatively functional democracy. Arguments about cultural appropriation, continuing ‘white’ minority privilege and the persistence of misogyny in entertainment media beg the question about whether enough is being done to ensure more diverse access to media and cultural platforms, be they mass or social media production tools. One answer to this question does not necessarily lie in the censorship of
cultural production or the media, as a whole, but to rework structural mechanisms, such as economic policy, that prevent wider access to the tools of production and distribution. Wider access would ensure that our democracy is enriched by diverse political and cultural expressions in order to promote robust debates and challenges. Die Antwoord’s local and international success underscores the fact that South Africa’s class divisions are still racialised and that privileged artists are able to go ‘viral’ and overcome the limitations of Africa’s digital divide by virtue of the social and economic capital that they continue to access to the exclusion of more marginal artists, such as Hemel Besem, Jitsvinger, Burni Aman, or Soundz of the South, for example. In the end, the sensational challenge to Lady Gaga – who is signed to their former music label Interscope – is anything but a local David versus the global monopolist Goliath. Instead, it is evidence of seemingly endless misogynist and racist signification.

References


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Thanks to Oliver Laughland of The Guardian UK for inviting me to write a response to “Fatty Boom Boom” in October 2012. This paper draws on some aspects of that brief op ed as well on research for the book Static: Race and Representation in Post-apartheid South African Music, Media and Film (HSRC Press, 2012), which did not analyse “Fatty Boom Boom”.

Endnotes
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I have elected to place all references to race in inverted commas in order to draw attention to the contention that race, including ‘whiteness’, is socially constructed. For an elucidation on race as social construction, see Erasmus, Z. (2001) ‘Introduction: Re-imagining coloured identities in post-apartheid South Africa’. In Z. Erasmus (Ed.) Coloured by history, shaped by place. Cape Town: Kwela Books and SA History Online.

For an excellent critique of blackface in contemporary popular culture, see Lupe Fiasco’s “Bitch Bad” at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3m3t_PxiUI. The rap video is dedicated to Paul Robeson “and the many black actors who endured the humiliating process of blackface in America.” The video references 50 Cent, Lil Wayne and Nicki Minaj in its criticism of sexist and racist representations of black men and women in popular music videos and lyrics.
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE NEGOTIATION OF MEDIA POLICY

Viola C Milton
(DRAFT PAPER)

ABSTRACT

Much have been written about the SABC – the South African Broadcasting Corporation - over the years and scholars such as Ruth Teer-Tomaselli (1995, 1998, 2001, 2008) and Pieter J Fourie () and Jeanette Minnie (2000) provide a comprehensive overview of its development and significance as South Africa’s public (service) broadcaster. This paper takes a slightly different approach towards historicising the SABC by exploring the ways in which civil society - through social media networks - makes sense of the SABC’s cultural, industrial, economic and legislative encounters. It deals more with “talk about” the SABC and the laws that govern it, than it does the broadcaster itself, arguing with Newcomb (2000, p. 13), that these discourses reveal how changes in television (in this case public (service) broadcasting) have exposed the multiple mechanisms and practices that go into the making and distributing of television in any historical moment, and that one result of this exposure is the discussion of television-making as a complex process of cultural, industrial, economic, aesthetic, legislative, and individual encounters. Looking at media and citizenship from the vantage-point of civic engagement, this paper argues that social media act as a central site for the production, management and sharing of media activism and the negotiation of media policy. It therefore considers the changing legislative framework for the SABC from the viewpoint of social media, civil society and civic discourse, asking in short, “how are transformations in the Broadcasting Act and recent crises at the SABC explored and discursively constructed by civil society through their involvement in social media networks?\(^{24}\)”

To this end, the focus here will be primarily on the negotiations regarding amendments to the South African Broadcasting Act as it pertains to Public (Service) Broadcasting.

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\(^{24}\) For this paper, social media refers to media used for social and networking purposes.
INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that the SABC is in a deep and very public crisis, regarding not only its finances, but also its board selection protocol and the day-to-day operations of the organisation. Add to this the impact of shifts and changes in the South African political sphere on attempts to control and legislate broadcasting in South Africa as well as the struggle towards digitalisation, and it is little wonder that civil society is stepping up to the challenge of reclaiming public broadcasting for the public it professes to serve. While attempts to regulate and control the broadcaster is being speculated about in the print media, civil society has organised itself to respond to the deepening crisis at the SABC, explicitly stating their desire to “save our SABC”. This paper analyses this response as it relates to the “SOS: Support Public Broadcasting Coalition’s” (hereafter the SOS) negotiations regarding the introduction of the 2009 Public Service Broadcasting Bill (hereafter the PSB Bill). The point of reference for this discussion is the discourses surrounding PSB Bill as they are played out on the social network site Twitter (through @SOS_ZA and #sabc) and the SOS’ Google groups pages (http://groups.google.com/group/SOS-relay).

The objective of this paper is to understand key aspects of contemporary discourses surrounding the SABC and public (service) broadcasting in South Africa as it relates to the negotiation of media policy and as articulated by the SOS-Coalition. The first half of the paper contextualises debates about the public broadcaster and broadcasting policy in South Africa between 2007 and 2010. The second half of the paper is comprised of a textual analysis of the manner by which the SOS responds to the deepening crisis at the SABC with a strong focus on their negotiations for a revision of the PSB Bill of 2009. The paper concludes with some thoughts regarding the role played by civil society in influencing South African broadcasting policy and media practice in relation to the SABC.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING, MEDIA POLICY AND POLITICS

It is often argued that broadcasting is key to the creation of a democratic public sphere and hence crucial to the transition to democracy and the ongoing process of democratization in former autocratic societies (Dahlgren 1995, Garnham, 1993, Horwitz, 2001). It is therefore not out of place to examine a public broadcaster’s role vis-à-vis the democratic fabric of a society and in terms of the media-politics relationship. South Africa’s ruling party, the ANC, has gone through interesting shifts and changes since coming into office. These changes were not only documented by the media, but also shaped the South African media in very specific ways. In this respect, it is especially South Africa’s public broadcaster, the SABC, which can be seen as a microcosm of the shifts and changes in South African politics and media-state relations.
At the time of writing this, South African civil society and media entities are reeling from a perceived onslaught of attacks by the ruling ANC on media freedom. Attempts by the ruling party to fast-track the implementation of an under-studied broadcasting bill (the PSB Bill), to institute a media regulatory body in the form of a Media Appeals Tribunal (the MAT) as well as the proposal of a very controversial Protection of Information Bill (the POIB), have media commentators questioning the future of media freedom in South Africa’s fledgling democracy. The issues divided commentators, lawmakers, political parties and government along the lines of those who assume that the above mentioned moves will strengthen the fabric of media freedom in South Africa, while leading to a more responsible media industry, and those who argue that the very notion of a MAT, coupled with the stringent restrictions proposed for the POIB, will destroy media freedom and impact negatively upon the media’s ability to operate independent from undue influence. Moreover, the debates about these issues have uncovered serious fissures in the ruling ANC, not yet fully recovered from the massive fall-out of the party’s 2007 caucus in Polokwane. The post-Polokwane South Africa is experiencing a greater divide between ANC (party) and ANC (state) as divisions within the party become ever more apparent. There are widespread divisions within the party (and between the party and its alliances) about several issues of governance – ranging from the economy, to education and also communication. It is especially the discourses about the latter, particularly as it relates to broadcasting, that is of interest here.

In spite of the big-scale changes to the South African broadcasting landscape that marked the end of the state monopoly of broadcasting as well as the introduction of policies designed to generate “procedures for accountability, transparency and public participation in communications policy” (Barnett, 2003, p. 175), there is now a growing concern for the editorial independence of the public broadcaster and indeed the sustainability of public service broadcasting in an increasingly commercialised media environment coupled with developments in the South African political sphere that threatens to erode the progress made in this regard. Seismic changes within the ruling ANC directly impacts upon the functioning of the media - and specifically the SABC as the country’s only public broadcaster (Duncan, 2008a). While care should be taken not to overstate the case of government interference in broadcasting in SA, it would appear that a number of high-profile incidents between 2002-2011 are suggesting an ironic shift for the SABC from public broadcaster back into “his master’s voice”. These include (but are not limited to),

- allegations of political interference designed to cloud political judgment, through suspect news editing behavior (self-censorship);

25 Polokwane, is the flagship city of the Limpopo Province in South Africa. The city served as host for the controversial 2007 ANC national caucus, which ended in a very public split in the ranks of the ruling party resulting in former president Thabo Mbeki being dethroned by Jacob Zuma as president of the party (and eventually also the country). “Polokwane” as used in this paper refers both to the city as well as that specific period in South African history.

26 Consult Louw & Milton’s (in publication) New Voices over the Air: The Transformation of the South African Broadcasting Corporation in a Changing South Africa for an outline of the ideological agendas implicit in the SABC’s mutations under the different SABC boards between 1990 and 2009.
the blacklisting of certain political commentators deemed to critical of government; and

• allegations of direct government interference in the selection of the SABC Board.

To contextualise the 2009 - 2010 policy negotiation process from the perspective of the SOS, it may be helpful to briefly speak to the allegations of political interference and the accusations that the SABC is once again becoming a state broadcaster instead of being a public broadcaster. In this respect, unpacking the unfolding of the SABC crisis that led to the introduction of the PSB Bill is informative. While the SABC has been beset by problems since the selection of the first “representative” board in 1993, the year 2007 arguably can be singled out as one during which the political pot literally boiled over, leaving the broadcaster - and the broadcasting legislative process - in shambles. Since 2007 the broadcaster has been embroiled in a downward spiralling crisis of governance and petty politics that, amongst others, includes 3 board changes as well as five new CEOs. While previous Board selections stirred their fair share of outrage amongst observers, the selection, appointment and eventual removal of the 2007 Board reduced the SABC to “…a soap opera… albeit…an educational one” (Berger, 2009). In fact, the selection and appointment of the 2007 SABC Board was also one of the clearest indicators of the extent to which the ANC’s leadership battle has divided the party and usurped South Africa’s public broadcaster.

In 2007 it came to light that ANC members of the parliamentary committee, notwithstanding their screening of candidates, had consulted party headquarters about their preferences for a new board, and have allowed themselves to be over-ruled on four names (Berger, 2009). Calling the selection process “toxic”, the Sunday Independent notes that “[a]fter bitter battle within ANC, candidates favoured [sic] by presidency in ‘toxic’ selection process are endorsed” (Quintal & Carter, 2007). The news report further states that “…the ANC component of the assembly’s communications committee was handed a list of 13 names from Luthuli House, six of which were sitting board members seeking reappointment and who were non-negotiable…MPs were told that a further seven names were Luthuli House’s preference, but could be discussed” (ibid). Clearly, legislation failed by not making “…provision for an affirmative action’ proportioning of seats such that instead of a potential ‘majority-takes-all’, there would be a guaranteed minimum representation of candidates favoured by minority parties” (Berger, 2009). This blatant interference by the ruling party in the SABCs governance structures provided ammunition to opposition parties already complaining about preferential treatment by the broadcaster of the ANC and cemented arguments that the SABC board represents the ANC instead of the South African public. The proposed Amendment to the Film and Publications Act of 1996 (since endorsed with minor revisions) and the ANC’s Polokwane call for a media tribunal that would in essence serve the same purpose as the press ombudsman but be under control of politicians (briefly placed on the back-burner after Polokwane, but resurfaced with force in 2010), did nothing to stem concerns in this respect. Political and civil society groups, as well as disgruntled staff leaving the SABC lobbied extensively for President Thabo Mbeki to
scrap the board nominations and start the process afresh. The President however ignored their motion of no confidence in the SABC board, which resulted in the MPs engineering a change in law to compel him to follow their lead. The pro-Mbeki Ministry of Communications opposed the law, arguing that a longer and more comprehensive process is needed - which would have taken some pressure off the board (Berger, 2009). Then Polokwane happened.

Polokwane ostensibly signalled a shift in political mood for the country in general, and the ANC in particular and saw former President Thabo Mbeki and his cronies humiliated as the President first lost his position as president of the ANC to Jacob Zuma and just months later, were given his “marching orders” as the President of the country, with Kgalema Motlanthe instated as interim president as the country awaited the next general elections (Berger, 2009). The convoluted route to the legal amendment regarding the appointment of the SABC Board proved unnecessary in the medium-term, however, the law change sought by the opposition also provided for the appointment of an interim Board, without respect for the safeguards that had been built into the process and eligibility for the standing board (Berger, 2009). What transpired next is what prompted Berger’s (2009) metaphorical allusion to the SABC “soap opera”.

Amidst calls for their heads to roll, the newly appointed SABC Board members were adamant that there was no wrongdoing on their part and defended their positions vigorously. In fact, a rather bizarre and expensive process of finger-pointing was set in motion: first SABC CEO Dali Mpofu suspended a key rival within the corporation – the Mbeki-leaning head of news, Snuki Zikalala, supposedly for leaking sensitive documents to the press (Anon, Mail & Guardianonline, 11 April, 2008). Following an appeal to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), Zikalala was then reinstated with Board chairperson, Khanyisile Mkhonza claiming that he had been vindicated, although leaked correspondence later revealed different views within the board over this claim. The Board then suspended Mpofu, who went to court, was reinstated, then suspended again, went to court, was reinstated and was then suspended a third time, went to court again, but in the end, found that his suspension was upheld in court. Berger (2009) notes that one of the key arguments used against Mpofu was that he had lost national football rights to a private broadcaster, but it is widely believed that the underlying reason for Mpofu’s suspension was political, rather than performance-related.

As a result of the governance crisis and the resultant loss of faith in the independence of the broadcaster, the debate on the SABC opened up and in 2008 the Broadcaster underwent (and is in fact still undergoing) parliamentary scrutiny that resulted in an overhaul of public broadcasting legislation in South Africa. Building on the attempts at revising the law to force Mbeki’s hand in 2007, the Minister of Communications now called for a review of the existing broadcasting legislation, including the board appointment process, insisting on a clear delimitation of functions between board and management, while
ruling party MPs proposed a Member’s Bill to give them stronger powers to remove the board as a whole (IOL, 2008). In a move reminiscent of the pre-1994 election period, the crisis at the SABC also prompted a mobilisation of civil society intent on reforming the broadcaster. Taking the lead in this respect was the “Save our SABC’ Campaign” (later redubbed the “SOS: Save Public Broadcasting Coalition”) which brought together various unions, media NGOs, and media activists to call for action to clean up the mess (Berger, 2009). “Their position was that the board was illegitimate and should resign, but also that MPs’ changes to the law should go further than compelling dismissal and include new safeguards against political interference (such as scrapping the corporatisation articles of association that allowed ministerial involvement in the SABC)” (ibid).

The Broadcasting Amendment Bill – giving Parliament the power to recommend the removal of the entire SABC Board instead of just individual members – was introduced into Parliament in July 2008, and brought into effect in March 2009 when interim President Kgalema Motlanthe signed the Amendment Bill into law. While civil society’s calls for more vigorous changes to the proposed law changes were not heeded by either Parliament or the existing SABC board, what did transpire during 2009, following reports of the biggest ever deficit for the SABC, was that one by one, existing board members started to resign as they began to feel the pressure against them mounting. As a result, by the time the Amendment Bill was enacted, giving Parliament the fought-for power to remove the entire SABC Board, Parliament’s recommendation to interim President Kgalema Motlanthe that the Board be removed on the grounds of failure to perform their fiduciary duties, came when the majority of Board-members had already resigned (Lloyd, Duncan, Minnie and Bussiek, 2010). Four months after the enactment of the Amendment Bill, on 20 July 2009, the Department of Communications (hereafter the DOC) published its Discussion Paper for the repositioning of broadcasting for national development in Government Gazette N. 3420 (Notice No. 755). They invited written comments on the paper to be submitted by 20 August 2009, (later extended to 31 August 2009) and upon reflection on these submissions, then swiftly announced that a new Public Services Bill will be introduced. In October 2009, the Department of Communications gazetted what turned out to be a very controversial Public Service Broadcasting Bill and in December 2009, newly instated President Jacob Zuma announced a new SABC Board that came into effect in 2010. While some of the problems that plagued the previous board nomination and selection processes were also present this time round – most notably with the ANC reneging on an agreement with opposition parties to leave four of the 12 places on the nomination list open for them – the general consensus seemed to be that the new Board appeared to be up to the task (Harber, 2009). The list contained a good range of names, skills and experience, including journalists, engineers, labour representatives and experienced business people among them. As can be seen in the 2010 @SOS_ZA tweets however, this Board also did not escape the “SABC soap opera”. The remainder of this paper will unpack the unfolding saga, looking at the process by which broadcasting policy in South Africa is being negotiated through civil society and civic discourse.
Information is the sustenance of revolution. Whether it is conveyed in a note surreptitiously passed hand to hand or in a broadcast the entire world can watch, evidence of corruption and calls for citizens to rally for change can pull individuals together, letting them share a reservoir of truth. This is politically intoxicating and it fuels the collective outrage and courage needed to challenge a government.

(Hoskins, O'Loughlin, Richards, & Seib, 2011:108)

Civil society has an established history of engaging with government over issues threatening media independence in South Africa’s fledgling democracy. The Campaign for Open Media (hereafter COM)’s August 25, 1990 march on Auckland Park (headquarters of the SABC) comes to mind as one example. On this date over a thousand people marched towards the SABC in Auckland Park in a bid to

• attract public attention to the fact that a Task Group\(^{27}\) to investigate the future of broadcasting had been established;

• to present the chairman of the SABC, and also the chair of the Task Group, with a memorandum registering their opposition to the composition of the Task Group; and

• to demand that the restructuring of broadcasting take place on a democratic basis (Louw, 1993, p. 47).

This incident marked the first time that ordinary members of the South African public mobilised around broadcasting matters, and followed the controversial appointment of the Viljoen Task Group on Broadcasting in March 1990. Media activists took issue with the lack of representativeness of the Group’s membership as well as the fact that its deliberations were held in secret. The Film and Allied Workers Organisation (FAWO) and COM forming an alliance in protest against this state of affairs, organised the march and succeeded in placing broadcasting, heretofore treated as an issue that should be “de-politicised”, squarely into the political arena (ibid, pp. 11-12). The August march on the SABC was followed by a series of other high profile public events staged by members of civil society, including the trade unions, civic organisations, cultural and political formations, academics, journalists and media practitioners.

\(^{27}\) This refers to the Viljoen Task Group
On 14 November 1992, the year Nelson Mandela was released from prison and following the release of the Viljoen-report, the COM was replaced by the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting (hereafter the CIB), whose primary aims included

- that it should be acknowledged that broadcasting was a constitutional issue and therefore needed to be dealt with through the process of constitutional negotiations;
- preventing the National Party government and SABC management from taking any further unilateral action in restructuring the SABC, and the film and broadcasting sector;
- putting the issue of the control and regulation of broadcasting firmly on the agenda of the democratic movement as a whole and particularly the ANC;
- challenging the SABC on the questions of its perceived bias in favour of the National Party Government; and
- impacting upon “democratising” broadcasting through the phasing in of new broadcasters to sector (Louw, 1993, pp.65-70).

The CIB’s initial primary focus was on the selection and appointment of the SABC Board, which in June 1993 ended up being rather messy, controversial and ultimately an exercise in futility. Giving voice to the prevailing sentiment at the time, the CIB demanded that an independent selection panel and not the State President appoint a new SABC board representative of South African society. They also called for the establishment of an independent regulatory authority to regulate the broadcasting sector as a whole28.

If the issues tackled by the 1990’s civil society coalitions seem all too familiar to you, the informed post-Polokwane reader of this text, it is because, where the broadcasting debate in South Africa is concerned, the past is present. As outlined in the previous section of this paper, recent years have witnessed an increase in reports and concerns about political interference in the country’s public broadcaster, while the post-Polokwane period saw faith in the SABC’s autonomy dwindling. However, as noted before, the post-Polokwane South Africa also witnessed the rise of a CIB-like coalition of civil society groups interested in “saving our SABC”. As was the case for the 1990’s civil society movements, the current concerns regarding media policy in general and broadcasting policy in particular, seems poised on two primary questions: who should control the SABC and how should it be funded? Thus, not unlike the 1990s, it is civil society that is stepping up to the plate to reclaim the SABC and redefine how public broadcasting should be viewed within a developmental state. Indeed, the past is present.

28 For a more detailed account, read Louw (1993) and Duncan (2008b). While Louw articulates the CIB’s course, Duncan takes issue with what she refers to as the CIB’s naive interpretation of broadcasting policy as it pertains to the SABC Board and aspects of accountability.
Beginning in 2008, civil society organisations started developing concrete policy papers for broadcasting reform. Where the public broadcaster is concerned, it is the SOS-Coalition with its strong resemblance to the 1990s CIB that is taking the lead. According to their manifesto, the SOS is a membership-based coalition representing unions, NGOs, CBOs, community media, independent film and TV production sector organisations; academics, freedom of expression activists and concerned individuals. They aim towards creating a public broadcasting system dedicated to the broadcasting of quality, diverse, citizen-orientated public programming committed to deepening South Africa’s Constitution, particularly the Bill of Rights and socio-economic rights. Specifically, they focus on strengthening the SABC (and also community radio and TV). Their current efforts are geared in particular towards ensuring that new comprehensive legislation is drafted for the SABC (and community media) that ensures their effective governance and funding (S.O.S. Support Public Broadcasting, [http://bit.ly/9EO4oK](http://bit.ly/9EO4oK)).

SOS enters the public arena at a time when the role of social media in civic and civil discourse is widely debated in academic and pseudo-academic settings. Fully aware of the potential of social media networks, they have established a digital presence through their engagement with Twitter, Google groups, Facebook and the organisation’s own website. Through the use of social media networks (which supplement their more hands-on efforts), the SOS provide not only an important context and necessary background about the issues that South Africa’s television-viewing audiences should take heed of, but they also attempt to move audience members to take a stand. The remainder of this paper addresses civic discourse about the SABC and media policy in South Africa through the eyes of the SOS and with a specific focus on their negotiation of broadcasting policy in South Africa between 2009 and 2010.

@SOS_ZA: Saving the SABC in 140 characters...

From a media-history point of view, one advantage of social media such as twitter is that it provides at once a community (for cultural analysis)\(^29\) as well as a digital archive (for curating the work of digital communities). Of course, one of the downsides of attempting to utilise social networking sites such as Twitter and Google groups as “digital archives” is that they are “...rather jumbled - there is a high ratio of news to signal...” (Catone, 2008, [http://bit.ly/qIQbqH](http://bit.ly/qIQbqH)) – this is especially the case with Twitter. For example, a cursory glance at the Twitter page for @SOS_ZA at the time of writing revealed that the Coalition had 427 Tweets, was following 355 “people” and had 197 followers\(^30\). The SOS’ Google groups network on the other hand has 340 members and generated more than 1000 posts. To illustrate what is meant by “jumbled communication” and

\(^29\) Albeit, in the words of Jakubowicz a fragmented community. Although, one could conceivably argue that where advocacy is concerned, there is less of a fragmentation of community, given that those choosing to join (or in Twitter-language, “tweet”), are joined by a common course and a shared desire towards action.

\(^30\) Illustrating the fluidity of this medium of advocacy communication is the fact that by the time I completed work on this paper, the number of active followers for SOS-ZA has increased to \{add number—dependent on final proof\}.
“high ratio of noise”, a quick click on @SOS_ZAs tweets reveals a mix between information to keep people informed about the Coalition's activities:

*SOS_ZA* Kate Skinner

In Parly at comms portfolio comm. New Parly chair welcomes the withdrawal of the PSB Bill. #Sabc #MediaMattersZA
23 Nov, 2010 via Twitter for BlackBerry®
Retweeted by 1

commentary on ongoing media matters:

*SOS_ZA* Kate Skinner

At African media barometer. Assessing media landscape and freedom of expression... Ordinary people need to care otherwise we're in poo!
7 Aug, 2010 Favorite Retweet Reply

*SOS_ZA* Kate Skinner

Civil society orgs refusing to nominate new #Sabc board members until Board, Parly etc commit to good corporate governance.
2 Nov, 2010 via Twitter for BlackBerry®
Retweeted by 1

attempts to solicit debate and/discussion from followers:

*SOS_ZA* Kate Skinner

What do people think of Ben Ngubane's support for the CEO around bonuses?
3 Aug, 2010 Favorite Retweet Reply

*SOS_ZA* Kate Skinner

Read Jeremy Cronin's med tribunal article - not convinced! Actually looks at all the issues the Tribunal won't fix! Well let's debate!
4 Aug, 2010 Favorite Retweet Reply

retweets:
and links to external articles writing about pertinent issues:

[SOS_ZA](http://deck.ly/~YveX9)

5 Jul, 2011 via Twitter for BlackBerry®

In spite of the noise evident in the above examples, what these examples also illustrate is that “… with some specifically directed tweeting or clever use of hashtags, sorting the valuable data from the garbage isn’t very difficult…” (Catone 2008, [http://bit.ly/qIQbqH](http://bit.ly/qIQbqH)). Before discussing @SOS_ZA’s twitter advocacy, it is important to note that Twitter has a 140 character limit, which means that users must be creative in their use of language and characters in order to get their message across. Google groups on the other hand has no such limits, allows anyone within the group to start or respond to postings and may or may not be topically arranged. For ease of sorting, I entered SOS’ Google groups usage via a relay site (called SA Media Critique) whose primary function is to relay messages of the SOS, but does so in a more organised fashion then the SOS’ own pages. With this in mind, how did I sort through the garbage and what did I learn?

My primary interest in the SOS-Coalition’s usage of social networking to effect change, was on their efforts to negotiate the terms of revisions to the existing South African Broadcasting Act, particularly as it pertains to their expressed efforts to retract the gazetted, controversial 2009 PSB Bill. In this respect I was not only interested in what @SOS_ZA tweeted, or wrote about, but more so how their tweets and letters on Google groups framed the discourses about the Bill and how it discursively constructed the SOS’ mission with regards to their broadcasting advocacy activities.

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31 One way to send out a directed tweet is to @mention people who you want to pay specific attention to your tweet and perhaps respond to it in some or other way. To @mention someone, you must include the twitter username of the person you wish to converse with preceded by the at-sign (i.e., “@SOS_ZA”) in your message. You can also create a hashtag to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. Hashtags are generally used to categorise messages ([http://bit.ly/9GJHlO](http://bit.ly/9GJHlO)). A hashtag can be added to any word, but is usually reserved for words for which a tweeter wishes to establish a grouped response. “Twitter [then] displays a ‘feed’ of tweets of users one is ‘following’ (i.e., users you selected to receive tweets from)...[t]his feed of tweets, known as a ‘time-line’, appears when you log into Twitter. The aggregation of a user’s tweets on one’s Twitter page is considered a ‘microblog’, a web ‘log’ that consists of short messages rather than long ones” (Ganesh and Zorn, 2011, pp.781-782).

32 In order to keep the authenticity of tweets intact, wherever tweets are quoted in the paper, they will be inserted unchanged.
By Twitter standards, the amount of tweets generated by @SOS_ZA is relatively modest (only 427 over a period of 12 months), but trying to make sense of 427 tweets and all its corresponding links and references is still a daunting task. As such, it was necessary to limit my scope to directed tweets meant to engage followers on matters pertaining to the SABC and broadcasting reform. In this respect, three hashtags emerged as indicators of the Coalition’s interests: #zamediafreedom (also appears as #mediafreedomza and #zamediafreedomza), #mediamattersza and #sabc. Topically, this paper is most concerned with the latter, given its focus on the public broadcaster. I therefore directed my attention towards the talk about the SABC generated by @SOS_ZA through through a cursory textual analysis of #sabc (which includes references to a selection of linked documents in the tweets regarding public broadcasting policy and the SABC) to find out what was talked about and how it was framed. I focussed primarily on tweets generated between July and December 2010. I conducted a similar exercise for the SOS’ Google groups activity, looking primarily at letters and linked press releases about the PSB Bill from October 2009 until its withdrawal in 2010.

**Google groups: Negotiating Broadcasting Policy Reform**

The existing regulatory framework for broadcasting in South Africa was a direct product of popular mobilizations and pressures of the transition period (Sparks, 2009, Tomaselli & Teer-Tomaselli, 2008, Louw, 1993) which resulted in the Broadcasting Act of 1999 (this Act has since been amended a number of times, most notably in 2002 and 2009 – with all of these amendments primarily addressing issues of funding and governance as it pertains to the relationship between the public broadcaster and the South African government). In terms of current legislation, the key statutes dealing with the licensing and regulation of broadcasting services (and in fact the electronic communications sector as a whole) is the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, No. 25 of 2002 (“the ECT Act”). Allied legislation focused on broadcasting is the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa Act, No. 13 of 2000 (“the ICASA Act”), the Broadcasting Act, No. 4 of 1999 (“the Broadcasting Act”) which deals primarily with public broadcasting services, the Sentech Act, No. 63 of 1966 (“the Sentech Act”) and the MDDA Act of 2002 (M-Net & Multichoice, 2010, p.3).

In terms of the Broadcasting Act of 1999, the SABC became a “public company incorporated in terms of the Company Act, to be known as the South African Broadcasting Corporation Limited” (Section 8A(1) Broadcasting Act, 1999). The Act aims to, among other things, facilitate democracy, the development of society, gender equality, nation building, provide education, and strengthen “the spiritual and moral fibre [sic] of society” (Broadcasting Act, 1999: 9). The Act obligates the SABC to provide a plurality of news, views, information, and wide ranging entertainment and educational programming. To ensure compliance, the Act provides for a number of key players in the governance of the SABC:

- The DOC and the Minister of Communications
- Icasa (Provided for in the Broadcasting Amendment Act of 2002)
The SABC Board
The Executive Committee

The Board, in terms of the Broadcasting Act – “controls the affairs of the Corporation” and is entrusted with the following:

• Compliance with the SABC Charter, which details the distinctive role for public broadcasting in South Africa (Section 6 of the Broadcasting Act)
• Ensuring legislative compliance
• Appointments and oversight of executive members to the Board and senior management
• Strategy development and oversight of the latter’s implementation

In theory, the mandate is a powerful one, but the Board faces a number of structural and practical problems, including (Lloyd, Duncan, Minnie & Bussiek, 2010, pp.110 – 128):

• Lack of clarity with regard to the Charter so it is difficult to ensure compliance thereof.
• The legislation, Articles of Association and Shareholder’s Compact contradict one another. The Articles and Shareholder’s Compact in fact give “interventionist” powers to the Minister of Communications (on behalf of the State as shareholder) and restrict the power of the Board
• Appointments of executive members to the Board remain a vexed issue. In the Articles of Association, it appears that such appointments are ultimately decided by the Minister, thus creating a situation in which the decision-making responsibilities of the Board is curtailed by the Minister
• Finally, in a rather confusing division of responsibilities, the Board is also the accounting authority, giving it particular financial responsibilities and making it accountable for mismanagement. The confusion arises in that management and board responsibilities in this respect appear to overlap, thus actively encouraging the Board to play a more “hands-on” role.

Against this backdrop, the SOS seeks to revive the spirit of earlier media pressure groups in their attempts to negotiate for an improved Broadcasting Policy environment. While the SOS’ available twitter activity only starts in 2010, their available Google groups pages date back to 2008 (with two posts), and an increasingly active presence introduced in May 2009. The spike in activity coincided with yet another governance and financial crisis at the SABC which, led to the eventual decision to place a discussion document for broadcasting reform on the table and the consequent introduction of the PSB Bill in October 2009. There is clearly a need for improved policy and legislation that can deal adequately with the SABC’s funding and governance problems. The PSB Bill of 2009 is government’s response to this need. The PSB Bill can be accessed in its entirety in Addendum A, but for this discussion, it is worth noting that the most controversial
issues raised by the bill is the proposal for a radical change in the SABC’s funding model, inconsistencies in the phrasing of the Bill and the threat to broadcasting and media freedom. In essence, the PSB Bill proposes that in future, direct parliamentary appropriations and television license fees be replaced by an earmarked tax on income. The accrued funds for public broadcasting are to be paid into a Public Service Broadcasting Fund, to be administered by the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA). All broadcasters would be allowed to apply for funding through this mechanism. The Bill stipulates that public broadcasting should be funded from personal income tax (not more than 1 percent), money appropriated from Parliament, contributions from broadcasting services licensees, contributions from business and money accruing to the Fund. It further proposes a cap on commercial revenue, stipulating that this may not exceed the income from the PSB Fund and other non-commercial revenue. The Bill also outlines Board and Chief Officer appointments for the SABC that would make the SABC much more dependent upon the DOC and the Minister of Communications in its decision-making processes. Critics argued that the SABC “is headed for a complete editorial independence meltdown if the Bill is enacted” (Da Silva, 2010).

The SOS in particular argued that the Bill should be put through a proper Green Paper/White Paper process to allow the civic society more time to make substantial responses (Lloyd, Duncan, Minnie & Bussiek, 2010). In fact, as can be gleaned from the SOS’ Google groups pages, their advocacy to get the Bill reviewed started immediately, with the Coalition’s Campaign Coordinator and spokeswoman, Kate Skinner, writing to the 340 members of the Coalition’s Google group on 1 November 2009 that she had

… written a draft letter to the Minister asking for significantly more time for discussion and debate and for a comprehensive (White Paper) policy review process. The Bill calls for fundamental changes to the broadcasting sector (new public funding mechanisms, new roles for the Minister, new charters for public and community broadcasting etc.) These discussions can not be concluded by DOC’s deadline of 7 December. I will be sending you the draft letter shortly. The plan is to have a press conference to highlight the issues included in the letter. Also, just a quick comment on funding - apparently the suggestion that license fees will be scrapped is causing immediate problems for the SABC. Members of the public now think that they don't have to pay their TV licenses. However, this is still a major funding source potentially throwing the SABC into an even more precarious funding situation… (Skinner, 2009, http://bit.ly/olsrfu).

On 4 November 2009 she made good on her promise to send a letter to the minister on behalf of the group. This letter details many of the problems the group identified with the Bill (many of these already outlined above) and takes on the DOC’s assertion that the Bill does not introduce major policy changes:

While the Department claims that the Bill does not introduce any fundamental policy shifts (and therefore a review of the Broadcasting White Paper, 1998 is unnecessary) the Bill does indeed introduce major policy shifts [which she proceeds to then outline in the letter]… These are major policy shifts. They stand to fundamentally restructure the broadcasting environment. The Coalition believes

33 At present, the SABC is funded through a mixed model that includes commercial funding, licence fees, a small percentage from Government funding and a small percentage from “other” sources. See Louw & Milton (in publication), Paper 8 for a detailed discussion hereof.
that what is required now is a thorough and in-depth consultation with all stakeholders to chart a way forward. This includes:

- A review of the White Paper (1998) and a systematic review of the provisions in the Broadcasting Act, 1999 that have proved effective/ineffective. In particular a review must be done as regards those provisions that have directly contributed to the crisis or proved unworkable, as many of these seem to have been reintroduced in the new Bill.
- Access to the research done by the Department so as to effectively comment on the evidence-basis for new provisions made in the Bill. This includes research related to the costs of setting up the fund, administering the fund, predictions as to the amounts of funding required by the broadcasting sector, percentages of funding that will be set aside for the SABC’s public division, versus the community media sector, signal distribution and so forth.
- Finally, we need an indication from the Department that it has in fact received firm commitments from National Treasury that the latter is prepared to amend the Income Tax, 1962 and implement the provisions proposed by the new Bill.

The Coalition is keen to work closely and constructively with the Department in whatever capacity is appropriate to ensure that we have a vibrant, sustainable public service broadcasting system that operates in the public interest. If possible we would like to have a meeting with the Minister to discuss these important issues.

Yours sincerely

These letters not only succinctly contextualise and synthesise the Coalition’s position in relation to the PSB Bill, but they also frame the tenor of their engagement with government on the Bill and the issues about the Bill raised in the letters. In effect, they introduce the process of negotiation in relation to the amendment of broadcasting policy in post-Polokwane South Africa. Primarily the Coalition and other commentators wanted to convince government that the Bill needs more time to be reviewed and that, in fact, even the work on and introduction of the Bill was premature as there needs to be much more research on issues concerning broadcasting (including issues of governance, funding and broadcaster-state relationships) before the legislative revision process can even commence. Their letters to the group and the DOC was supplemented with press releases detailing their position, thus ensuring a wide circulation of the Bill and its malcontents as perceived through civic discourse.

In response to the civic discourse about the Bill, the Minister of Communications (Siphiwe Nyanda) wrote a piece in Business Day, which was then circulated by Skinner (2009) to SOS Google groups members. Skinner opts for not only posting a link to the full article in her letter, but also excerpts of what she sees as the most pertinent issues raised buy the Minister and on which SOS members should focus in formulating a response. In this respect, she highlights that the Minister wants to “set the record straight on the public broadcaster” and that he takes issue with “ignorant responses to the [PSB] Bill”, which he saw as having the hidden agenda of “scaring the public” (Skinner, 2009, http://bit.ly/oIsrfu). The implication here is that
responses such as those generated and publicly circulated by the SOS, were irresponsible and ignorant of the Bills “true” intentions. Skinner (2009) notes that on a more positive note, the Minister also highlighted the intentions with the Bill, including:

- Not wanting to control issues surrounding local content
- Not wanting to control community media
- Not wanting to control the public media
- That the Bill raises several proposals as regards funding and that no decision has been taken yet with regard to the collection of revenue
- That the Department of Communications is fully aware of the fact that it needs to discuss its funding proposals with National Treasury
- That time will be made for proper consultations. In fact the Minister refers to the Bill now as a Draft Bill although it is not gazetted as such (Skinner, 2009, [http://bit.ly/oIsrfu](http://bit.ly/oIsrfu)).

With the lines of communication now not only open, but also reciprocated, the SOS-Coalition then responded to the Minister in a follow-up open letter, noting their satisfaction with the above stated principles and intentions, but reprising their call for:

- a proper policy review process
- Substantively more time for consultation - that at the very least this needs to be the end of February because December and January are holiday periods.
- Access to the research done by the Department as regards the Bill.
- Broadbased publicity re: the Bill including the dates for deadlines for submission of proposals etc. (including public service announcements on radio and advertisements in mass circulation newspapers).

In later posts, they also express surprise at the Minister’s reference to the Bill as a “draft” Bill, noting that nowhere in the gazette pages is the Bill labeled as such. The distinction between referring to it as the PSB Bill and a draft PSB Bill is an important one, as the latter signals intent to discuss and negotiate the terms of the proposed Bill as opposed to presenting the public with a fait accompli to which they may respond, but if not a “draft” their responses may not impact upon the eventual enactment of the Bill. Thus, not just semantics. Another recurring theme in the SOS’ responses to government, is the call for the DOC to grant access to the research they claimed to have conducted with regard to the Bill – in fact, this theme is also present in tweets about the Bill during the Parliamentary hearings, as will be seen in the next section.
The negotiation process is not always clear and linear, but can also be messy and fraught with tension - not only between the group and government, but also between group members themselves - as people do not always agree on one course of action. So for example SOS group member Mashilo Boloka (at the time of writing this letter, the head of policy in the DOC) threatens to unsubscribe from the group because he interpreted their publication and discussion of Anton Harber's comments on the Bill's treatment of community media offensive, writing in this respect that,

I do not think we should undermine the intelligence of everyone by acting on the comments from Anton Harber, unless the agenda of this forum is set elsewhere. Personally, I have a fundamental problems with Anton Harber’s comments because not only are they misinterpreting the provisions of the Bill in respect of community broadcasting services, they are oblivious to the challenges faced by the sector particularly sustainability (Boloka, 2009, November 11, 09:21am http://bit.ly/olsrfu).

He outlines why his argument holds strong over Harber’s comments and later that day, another member (Mark), responds, imploring Dr Boloko not to unsubscribe, noting that

As the head of policy in the Department of Communications, it would be great if you could at least be informed of different perspectives - even better if you are willing to engage in the debate. That would be an indication that the DoC is embracing the participatory democracy (community ownership and control) that the community media sector is founded on…I don't know how Anton 'sets his agenda' but the agenda of this group is set by all who participate in setting it… (mark@wisenet.co.za, 2009, November 11, 11:14am, http://bit.ly/nqk5ny)

A similar situation arises about the Bill’s provision for funding through a levy on income tax. Later on 11 November 2010, Group member Jane Duncan writes in this regard that

I really think that SoS needs to seek a meeting with Treasury to signal its support for the income tax proposal. This should be done parallel to the meeting being sought with the Minister of Communications. Then SoS needs to consider a widespread public campaign in support of this proposal, as well as in support of the SABC’s independence. Listening to some of the public sentiment on this proposal, it is clear that much more needs to be done to win the argument in the public space for an income tax-based form of public funding. Many are expressing concern about their tax money being used to fund a propaganda machine, and that issue needs to be addressed by getting the public behind
this proposal, as well as proposals to enhance the independence of the SABC. Predictably, it seems to be middle class audiences that are complaining the most. We need to make the argument that public broadcasting is a merit good that the more monied in our society should contribute to, whether they use the service or not. Many middle class people do not use public transport or public hospitals, but we expect them to contribute to the upkeep of these public services because they are a public good, and we strive towards a society that is redistributive in nature. So the argument being made by DSTV subscribers that they will not pay because they have contracted themselves out of the free to air terrestrial space, is not an argument that can be allowed to win the day. The danger we face is that Treasury may refuse to concede the income tax proposal, leading to us having the worst of both worlds: a more tightly controlled broadcaster by the state, but one that is forced to become even more commercialised as adspend fragments in the multichannel environment (Duncan, 2009, [http://bit.ly/nqk5ny](http://bit.ly/nqk5ny)).

Duncan’s letter suggests that there is consensus within the group to accept the income tax levy provision in the Bill as necessary for a free and independent broadcaster, but, as is clear from the next letter, her sentiment not only irked the “middle class audiences” she refers to in her letter, but also drew the ire of BEMAWU (the Broadcasting and Electronic Media Allied Workers Union), who writes on 12 November 2010 that

> [t]he income tax proposal can never work. Every other minister will do the same if it is allowed to happen. What will be next? A percentage income tax to build new roads, another percentage to build houses, another percentage to build schools, another percentage to do away with motor vehicle licenses and so it will continue. We are talking about 1500 jobs on the line if the income tax proposal will be accepted. There is also a real danger that people who are unhappy with the content they get on air will try to not pay tax now, instead of a tv license which will have a a severe effect on the country. If 4 million Zulus for example decide to not pay any tax because they don’t agree with what’s been broadcasted or they feel they don’t get a fair share of language and culture on the airways, what then? There is already a public outcry and we have read some comments of people saying they will not pay more tax for the SABC fat cats to squander their tax money…Would it not be a simpler solution to raise the Government subsidy by 5% to provide more funding to the SABC and link the SABC with E-Natis where you will not be able to renew your vehicle license or get any income tax returns if your tv license has not been renewed? We are living in a computer age and anything is possible…(BEMAWU, 2009, [http://bit.ly/nqk5ny](http://bit.ly/nqk5ny)).

While Duncan’s response to the Bill slights middle-class audiences’ complaints about the radical change in funding for the broadcaster, BEMAWU’s concern is for the impact proposed change would have on the job market – a situation that feeds in to the divide between those with money and those without. Duncan’s decontextualised assertion that it is primarily middle-class audiences that are responding negatively to the Bill, does not necessarily take into account who may have had access to the discussions about the Bill at this stage in the negotiation process. BEMAWU’s response on the other hand speaks from the point of view of a union who looks after the best interest of its constituents – i.e. the workers who may be left jobless if the Bill is enacted. What is interesting about BEMAWU’s response is that it disregards 1990s policy decisions (as well as Duncan’s clear comment in relation to this) that government funding might make the broadcaster more
susceptible to government interference. In the light of other provisions in the Bill that are already granting the DOC more input into the governance of the public broadcaster, it is small wonder that the final presentations on the Bill all responded to its unconstitutionality (i.e. the tax provisions make it a “money bill”) and its threat to media freedom and independence.

Given the “messiness” of getting public and civil society approval for the Bill in its original form, a running thread in the Coalition’s advocacy was to pressurize government to extend the deadline for public submissions on the Bill beyond December. They eventually succeeded in this respect when on 3 December 2009, government announced that the date for submissions has been extended to 15 January 2010. While the SOS and its partners was hoping to push for a March 2010 date, they were none-the-less gracious in accepting government’s heed to their call for an extension, noting in a press statement that,

The “Save our SABC” Campaign representing a number of trade unions including COSATU, COSATU affiliates CWU and CWUSA, FEDUSA and BEMAWU; independent producer organisations including the South African Screen Federation (SASFED); and a host of NGOs and CBOs including the Freedom of Expression Institute, Media Monitoring Africa, the Media Institute of Southern Africa and the National Community Radio Forum; as well as a number of academic and independent experts welcome the fact that the Department of Communications has shifted the deadlines for comment on the Bill from 7 December 2009 to 15 January 2010. However, we do note that this extension is over the Christmas period and this certainly significantly hampers our ability to research, debate and consult on the issues raised by the Bill. We had originally asked for an extension until the end of March 2010.

Their statement concludes with another reiteration of the problems they have with the Bill, while stressing again the need for

a proper policy review process including a review of the Broadcasting White Paper, 1998. In line with sound law making practices we believe that the policy review process should proceed the drafting of new legislation. The Coalition will certainly respond to the new deadline of the 15th of January but one of the key foci of our submission will be addressing the need for a proper policy review process. We also again call on the Department to release the research it has done that proceeded and informed the Bill’s proposals.

The year 2010 however introduced fresh challenges for the SABC which makes the problems highlighted by the SOS in their January 2010 submission on the bill all the more pertinent. To note, their primary concerns about the proposed Bill, centered on issues such as (Skinner as quoted by Da Silva, 2010):

• Lack of proper public consultation and a comprehensive policy overview
• Endangerment of the job sector (BEMAWU for example argued that between 1200 and 1500 employees will lose their jobs if the Bill is signed into law)
• Lack of clarity regarding the Bill’s preamble that “South Africa is a developmental state” and that the broadcasting system must therefore be aligned to the development goals of the country
• The Bill’s focus on an appropriation of money through taxes, means that it is in deed a “money bill” and thus the Department of Communications has no constitutional power to introduce the bill as a
money bill may only be introduced by the Minister of Finance (who in 2009 rejected the idea of a dedicated tax for public broadcasting).

- The increasing power of control over Broadcasting afforded to the Minister of Communications, including:
  - the proposed provision that the appointment process for the chief officers (Group Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer), be contingent upon approval by the Minister of Communications, thus opening the door for ministerial interference in the SABC’s decision-making processes and that
  - the Bill’s position regarding the separation between public service broadcasting and commercial broadcasting within the SABC and the Minister’s role in overseeing the process of cross-subsidisation need further review as it violates the independence of the SABC board
  - Lack of consistency and contradictory views resultant of the Bill’s inclusion of two Charters – an SABC Charter and a Community Media Charter – which often contradict each other and in some cases also contradict the main Bill.

True to their December 2009 promise, their submission contextualises their call for a comprehensive policy review process, noting in their press release about their submission that,

We argue that it remains a puzzle to the Coalition that the Department appears to be missing the opportunity with a new ANC leadership, a new Parliament, a new Portfolio Committee, A new Minister and a new Director General to make new, fresh, bold policy initiatives. We argue that significant debate needs to be held as regards a host of topics including the Bill’s linking of broadcasting to the “developmental state” and its total reconceptualisation of the role of community media. Further we discuss, in some detail, the issue of funding. For instance we note the Bill presents only one funding option the dedicated broadcasting tax which has now been rejected by National Treasury...

We argue that a policy review process would allow for a number of governance and funding options to be researched, debated and discussed which would certainly be to the long term benefit of public broadcasting.

The period following the January 2010 submission process was met with relative silence by government, who took their time looking over the various submissions they received. Looking at the SOS-Coalition’s Google groups pages and their twitter-activity (via @SOS_ZA), a clear picture now emerges about the SABC’s situation following the enactment of the Broadcasting Amendment Bill of 2009 and the October 2009 introduction of the draft Public Service Broadcasting Bill that contributed to government’s 2010 decision to allow oral presentations on the Bill as well as the eventual withdrawal of the Bill in November 2010.

Through a further examination of @SOS_ZA’s microblogging on Twitter in relation to their Google groups pages, the issues that informs broadcasting policy debates, the areas of disagreement and the progress toward consensus can now be traced.

@SOS_ZA: Saving the SABC in 140 characters or less...
Earlier in this paper I argued that President Jacob Zuma’s appointment of a new SABC Board at the end of 2009 was met with relative optimism as it departed from the highly controversial Board selection processes of his predecessor. In this case, the SOS coalition and others played an important role in putting forward nominations; resulting in an unprecedented 200 nominations (Louw & Milton, in publication). In December 2009, the president announced the new board with the former minister of arts and culture, Dr Ben Ngubane, as chair. Given the general representativeness of the board, commentators were hopeful that Zuma’s ascendancy to the proverbial throne, signalled a new era not only for the country as a whole, but also for the Communication’s sector in particular. However, as can be gleaned from what follows, this optimism was short-lived.

There are a total of 182 tweets using #sabc as directed marker on @SOS_ZA, generated between 23 August 2010 and 11 July 2011. The first appearance of #sabc on @SOS_ZA was a linked tweet, leading to an article about dissent at the SABC resulting from the broadcaster’s governance and financial problems:


While the linked article in the above tweet certainly contextualises the growing woes of the public broadcaster, a number of tweets following this one (but sans the #sabc) visually documents the downward spiraling relations between members of the SABCs governing body as well as the much publicised financial woes of the post-Polokwane SABC on @SOS_ZA. :

SOS_ZA What do people think of Ben Ngubane’s support for the CEO around bonuses? 5:19 PM Aug 3rd, 2010 from web

SOS_ZA Cosatu’s positions on secrecy bill, media tribunal and Sabc - excellent. Broadly supports Sabc Board. Ben and Solly the problem. Agreed! 8:15 PM Aug 26th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA SABC CEO Solly Mokoetle has just been suspended. 4:14 PM Aug 27th, 2010 from web

mailandguardian http://u.mg.co.za/avFnb 9:00 AM Aug 29th, 2010 from API retweeted by SOS_ZA

SOS_ZA Hope SABC Board followed labour law to the letter. Solly contesting suspension. Cant afford a protracted labour law battle! Aaarrrrgh! 7:15 PM Aug 29th, 2010 from web
The above tweets provide a digital time-line that dates back to May 2010, but it is one that makes sense only if one is fully informed about the SABC’s precarious condition back then. In May, 2010, a number of non-executive SABC Board members pointed to serious misconduct with regard to corporate governance at the broadcaster. At issue was the unilateral appointment of Phil Molefe as the head of news, by Dr Ben Ngubane, the then Chair of the SABC Board as well as financial misconduct by Ngubane and group CEO, Solly Mokoetle. The article to which the first hastagged tweet links even suggested that President Jacob Zuma is siding with the out of favor duo by mentioning in its opening paragraph that both enjoy support from the president. Indicative of the growing dissatisfaction with the state of affairs at the SABC, this series of @SOS_ZA tweets between 3 August 2010 and 19 October 2010, documents the growing discontent of people in the industry and civil society in general:

In light of this situation and to help sort out the mess, it was resolved that the Portfolio Committee on Communications will conduct a special Parliamentary hearing to discuss issues of governance at the SABC. Originally, the discussions were scheduled to take place behind closed doors in August 2010, and it did indeed get underway, as illustrated by this tweet:

However, the South African National Editor’s Forum (SANEF) along with the SOS and others urged Parliament to rethink that strategy, claiming that public interest and balanced reporting are at stake. In fact, SANEF eventually forced Parliament to reconsider by serving them with a court interdict,
Sanef has got an interdict to force parly to hold an open session on the Sabc.

Everything on hold. Now discussing Postbank Bill. Sigh! 1:30 PM Aug 24th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

resulting in a date-change that meant that only Ben Ngubane spoke in the closed session. The new date was announced via @SOS_ZA on 17 October,

Sabc reporting to Parly Wed. Minister says they will be presenting united front. Why Board not telling us?#zamediafreedom 9:32 PM Oct 17th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

and this announcement was followed two days later by the second hashtagged SABC announcement on 19 October 2010:

@SOS_ZA Kate Skinner

Follow live coverage of Parly hearing on Sabc tom from 930am til late. Dstv408. #Sabc

19 Oct via Twitter for BlackBerry®

On 20 October 2010, it became clear that any optimism about the new SABC board appointed by President Jacob Zuma was premature and misplaced:

SOS_ZA Just heard that #Sabc Board resignations been accepted with immediate effect. Ex Board members can't speak. Big prob. 9:50 AM Oct 20th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA #Sabc union Bemawu calling for Chair to resign due to dismal Parly performance. Also hasn't signed Ceo contract! 8:34 AM Oct 22nd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA #Sabc Chair saying the appointment of acting Ceo is illegal. He wants to bring back Solly! Did anyone hear this on the news? 9:46 AM Oct 22nd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA @MediaMattersZA #Sabc Confirmed Chair has unilaterally declared acting Ceo illegal, will appoint new acting Ceo, or bring back Solly 10:38 AM Oct 22nd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA Robin Nicholson's appointment as acting CEO confirmed. Relief! But wish Ngubane had not created the confusion. #Sabc 2:05 PM Oct 25th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®
Clearly, the controversies surrounding the appointment of new SABC Boards continue and in fact, the preferred method of protest, failing a commitment by those in power to act, is still resignation or forced removal of Board members. In particular, the appointment of a new SABC board in 2010/2011 was derailed by the unilateral appointment of Phil Molefe as Head of News:

Gina reporting on the appointment of SABC Head of News. There were problems but that is all behind us. 8:35 AM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

#Sabc Board member Peter Harris argues that Phil Molefe's appointment was not ratified. New decision was taken. Decision now legal 11:23 AM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

Gina: gives a detailed explanation of what happened re appointment Head of News. #Sabc 2:05 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

Gina: Molefe has now been appointed. This was 6 sept. #Sabc 2:10 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

Pippa Green: appointment process painful but we are moving on. Key issue is to turnaround news. We are putting clear KPIs in place. #Sabc 2:14 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

Gina: nobody had personal issues with Phil. The probs we had were with process. #Sabc 2:16 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

Clare O'Neil: we couldn't allow the appointment to paralyse us endlessly. We needed to move on. #Sabc 2:18 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®
With questions being asked about political pressure,

SOS_ZA Gina: I had no political pressure put on me re the appointment of the Head of News. #Sabc
2:27 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

and calls from MP’s for a further investigation into the matter of the appointment,

SOS_ZA Vos: as parly u can call for an investigation into the matter of the appointment. It was a huge problem. #Sabc
2:29 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA Killian: I personally asked the Public Protector to investigate the appoint of the Head of News. #Sabc
2:35 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA Parly chair: Good that there is unity in the Board but this must be built on good corp governance.#Sabc
2:42 PM Nov 23rd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

Nonetheless, the appointment process for a new SABC Board forged ahead and Parliament declared that they should have a new board in place by February 2011. @SOS_ZA ended the tweets on a hopeful note, pointing out that Parliamentary hearings did result in a commitment to good governance:

SOS_ZA #Sabc union Bemawu calling for Chair to resign due to dismal Parly performance. Also hasn't signed Ceo contract! 8:34 AM Oct 22nd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA #Sabc Chair saying the appointment of acting Ceo is illegal. He wants to bring back Solly! Did anyone hear this on the news? 9:46 AM Oct 22nd, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®
One outcome of the sorry state of affairs at the SABC, together with increased pressure from civil society organisations such as SOS, was that government was forced to rethink its strategy regarding the PSB Bill. Government responded to calls for a review of the Bill, thereby opening the floor for oral negotiations in November 2010 through a parliamentary hearing process that allowed the public and members of civil society to respond to the bill in person:
SOS_ZA Guy Berger: keep the #sabc license fee. No to a broadcasting tax! Need a policy review to debate funding. #MediaMattersZA 7:55 AM Nov 15th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA Guy Berger: another funding option for the #sabc a levy on electricity bills. #MediaMattersZA 8:03 AM Nov 15th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA Multichoice: Public Service Broadcasting Bill should be an #Sabc Bill not deal with comm media etc.#MediaMattersZA 8:09 AM Nov 15th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA Multichoice: we need a flat rate public broadcasting levy to fund the#Sabc. It should be managed by SARS.#MediaMattersZA 8:24 AM Nov 15th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA At public service broadcasting bill oral hearings. National Association of broadcasters: the Bill should only look at the #Sabc 9:37 AM Nov 16th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA NAB: Dept of Comms needs to do more research on funding options for the #Sabc. It is DOC's role! #MediaMattersZA 9:43 AM Nov 16th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA The Dept of Comms says they have done lots of broadcasting research. The public must keep asking for it. #Sabc 10:02 AM Nov 16th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA NAB: the #Sabc’s oversight structures must play their roles. At some point Parly and the DOC accepted a deficit budget. Not acceptable! 10:07 AM Nov 16th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA NAB: we need a clear policy review, a road map for broadcasting for the next 20 years. Dept of Comms must lead the way. #Sabc 10:16 AM Nov 16th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®

SOS_ZA Cape TV: public broadcasting should be aligned to the goals of the Constitution, not just the developmental goals of the state. #Sabc 10:55 AM Nov 16th, 2010 from Twitter for BlackBerry®
As evident from the above tweets, presentations on the proposed Bill was made by various members of civil society, ranging from academics (such as University of Rhodes professor, Guy Berger), media organizations (such as M-Net and Multichoice and the National Association of Broadcasters) and (not evident from the tweets, but accessible on the SOS’ Google groups pages), civil society organizations such as the SOS and Media Monitoring Africa. These presentations as reflected through @SOS_ZA’s microblogging above, upholds the concerns about the proposed new Bill outlined on p.28 of this paper. Clearly, what these tweets illustrate is that while there is consensus that broadcasting policy in South Africa needs a thorough overhaul, a more rigorous period of reviewed is needed to unpack just how such an overhaul should take place and what exactly it should entail. Reiterating arguments in written submissions filed in January 2010, presenters above disagreed with the funding-focus of the PSB Bill, the executive decision-making powers afforded to government in terms of thereof, and in some cases even disagreed with each other in terms of how these issues should be revised. One issue that all the role-players seemed to agree with, was that a thorough review of the policy landscape is needed before any proposed changes to the law is signed into effect and that government must be pressured to show the research they claim to have conducted.

For the SOS Coalition, as evident from their discussion documents and press releases, the bill’s heads-on tackling of the escalating crisis at the SABC was laudable, but they lamented the fact that the bill sought to resolve the crisis by increasing direct government interference (when it is clear from the foregoing discussions that it is precisely government interference that played a major role in the SABC’s crisis of governance and funding). The SOS coalition therefore lobbied with other organisations, media bodies and opposition political parties for restraint regarding the implementation of the proposed bill, asking that the issue be tabled, pending a thorough review of the South African Broadcasting policy landscape. Through engaging in a series of discourses and public action that involved press releases, public debates as well as social media networking and discussions with similar minded groups and organizations, government was forced to negotiate more inclusively with civil society in developing and implementing a revised Public Service Broadcasting. On 22 November 2010, the newly minted Minister of Communications, Roy Padayachee who took over from Siphiwe Nyanda earlier that month announced that the controversial PSB Bill has been withdrawn:

Kate Skinner Minister of Comms has withdrawn Public Service Broadcasting Bill! Yes to that! Policy review needed #Sabc #MediaMattersZA
Dear All

This is wonderful news - see below! One of the major aims of our campaign has been to fight for a proper policy review process. We argued that the PSB Bill was premature. The Minister has now decided to withdraw the Bill to allow the Dept to consider new models for funding the SABC and community media. He will be looking at the costs of digital migration. He will also be ensuring that there is consistency in the legislative and regulatory environment. Excellent!

Warm regards Kate

Kate Skinner  Campaign Coordinator - SOS:Support Public Broadcasting

He cited, as reasons for this decision, that government wanted South Africa’s broadcasting policy to be at the cutting edge of the digital age, emphasising that this requires a committed effort from the state, industry and key role-players in society (Sabinetlaw, 2010). In what can be considered a victory for civil society activism, Minister Padayachee further noted that processes will now be put into place to

- review the 1998 white paper on broadcasting, including a scan of the broadcasting legislation and regulations currently in place to ensure policy and legislative alignment;
- review completed research on funding options for the SABC and community media; and
- institute and economic modelling exercise to look at the costs for the SABC and community media as well the projected costs of digital migration.

Media scholars, civil society and industry are currently eagerly awaiting the kick-off of this process, but it can be agreed that in this case, civil society and civic discourse succeeded in turning a highly contentious issue, leaving the door open for more active participation of all stakeholders in future policy decisions and negotiations. Here, it is worthwhile to note the role of social media in supporting media policy advocacy.

While advocacy scholars concur that social media can play a significant role in bringing about social change, they nonetheless stress that “…change is…brought about by getting one’s hands dirty, by inserting oneself into the material conditions and realities of the historical present” (Giardina & Denzin, 2011, p. 2). In accepting this argument, it is meaningful to acknowledge that while social media alone will not bring changes; it does expose issues and links organizers. Through the SOS-Coalition, a platform was created which provided opportunities for academics, media professionals and representatives from a host of civil society organizations, to express their visions for a new broadcasting era in South Africa, as well as to discuss legal, technical and financial matters as it pertains to public (service) broadcasting in that country. Through their
social networking efforts, they ensured wider publication (and perhaps eventual participation) in what they are doing, providing at once a platform for a public not necessarily interested in joining the coalition, but nonetheless concerned about broadcasting issues, as well as streamlining in-group communication between coalition-members in seeking concensus on how they wish to position themselves in terms of ongoing discourses and issues.

What we have learned through following @SOS_ZA is that they are indeed lobbying for a public broadcaster that would be more accountable to the public it professes to serve. Their efforts include informing ordinary citizens about broadcasting policy, problems in the governance of the SABC and issues pertaining to Parliament’s responsibility towards the SABC and the South African public. Their efforts extend beyond mere informational tweets (although these form the bases of this paper’s focus), to include organised dissent (like marches to Parliament or SABC headquarters), lobbying with Parliament on behalf of the SABC viewing public and forming a pressure group with partners such as SANEF to force politicians, lawmakers and policy makers to listen. In this respect and in relation to the 2010 Parliamentary hearings into the SABC, they were therefore successful in forcing Parliament to reschedule the hearings and to open it for the public. This also opened the door for them to partake in the Parliamentary hearings through attendance and spreading the word on what was transpiring during the course of the hearings. As a direct result of their lobbying and their engagement with other civil society organizations, trade unions and the general public, the SOS are implicated in two important victories that may very well shape the future of participatory broadcasting policy reform in South Africa – the first was the SOS-Coalition and SANEF’s efforts to ensure that the Parliamentary hearings into the SABCs trials and tribulations would be accessible to the South African public and civil society and the second was succeeding in forcing government to retract a controversial bill and start the process from scratch.
References


Title of paper: Toward a measurement tool for the monitoring of media diversity and pluralism in South Africa and other developing countries

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ABSTRACT

In September 2011 the parliamentary portfolio committee on communications held the first of a series of indabas on diversity and transformation within the print media sector of South Africa. The second such indaba was hosted in March 2012. Discussions focussed on a perceived lack of plurality of ownership of the South African print media sector, and a resultant lack of diversity of content. In 2012 the portfolio committee began to voice commitment to the notion of the development of a print media charter in order to assist in the facilitation of the transformation of the print sector and to encourage a more pluralistic and diverse print media within the country.

In response to these debates, the Media Policy and Democracy Project (MPDP), a collaborative research initiative between the Department of Communication Science at UNISA and the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, conducted an analysis of media diversity measurement tools and metrics developed in foreign countries, with a view to developing a tool which would be appropriate for the South African media environment. Before media policies, regulations or a charter on print media diversity can be drafted for South Africa, it is important to reliably and accurately assess the actual levels of print media plurality of ownership and diversity of content, if the interventionist measures of a charter or new regulation are to be of significant effect, of benefit to media users and best serve the public interest. Resultantly, a media diversity and plurality measurement tool must necessarily be developed which would determine and reflect the level of plurality and diversity within the South African print sector, and one which is sensitive to the contextual nuances of the South African media landscape and particular media audience socio-economic conditions.

A number of foreign research initiatives have already developed detailed and rigorous media diversity and pluralism measurement monitors, and the MPDP endeavoured to glean from such research activities strategies which could be put to potential use in the analysis of the South African media sector. All of the foreign media diversity measurement tools and metrics which were investigated as part of this project, operated according to the normative understanding that a diversity of content in the media is important to society and to democracy, and should reflect the widest range of cultural and political ideas possible, because the media is integral to the individual’s formulation of ideas and opinions. The competing of divergent information, opinions and ideas within the media landscape are widely considered a valued method for the promotion and preservation of a healthy democratic socio-political space within society. Additionally, the media, and the news media genre in particular, are understood to be at the nucleus of society(ies) because of how they disseminate information to mass audiences, thus informing and enabling the citizenry with the information
that it needs to actively participate in political or civic action. Such normative understandings of the importance of media diversity and/or pluralism within a democracy highlight the media policy maker’s concern with the monitoring of media diversity.

However, if we are to operate from this theoretical starting point, then a markedly different approach to the measuring of media diversity may be required in developing countries such as South Africa. All of the media diversity measurement tools and metrics assessed for this study originated in developed (mostly European) countries, where audience barriers to mass media access are far lower than in developing countries, and were constructed for use in mature democracies. While many aspects and tactics for the monitoring of media diversity can be appropriated from foreign media diversity measurement tools, there are also many local complexities which such foreign-developed tools do not address. The MPDP’s ongoing study therefore aims to develop a media diversity measurement tool which addresses aspects which may not be necessary to consider in developed countries, but which are imperative within the context of developing countries, particularly from the position of the citizen’s ability/inability to engage with the media.

Crucial to such concerns is an inversion of the view from which to assess media diversity. While the foreign models assessed for this study, without exception, begin with an appraisal of media ownership and market share, in developing countries it may be more appropriate to begin at the opposite end of the media value chain by considering audience access to media, and media availability. It is one matter to measure the diversity of content within a particular print media publication, but the importance of that analysis must be jointly determined by the accessibility (in addition to the availability) of the publication to which/what audience. Furthermore, the accessibility of print media publications is traditionally low in developing countries amongst large sections of the citizenry, who rather depend on the free-to-air broadcast media for most of their information needs.

Therefore, it may be nonsensical in developing countries to measure the plurality and diversity of the print media sector in isolation of the rest of the media landscape, as many foreign measurement metrics have done, and which the parliamentary portfolio committee of communications in South Africa has suggested. Increasing the diversity and plurality of the print sector only, will potentially have limited benefits with regard to the normative ideals of increasing the citizen’s access to a divergent collection of competing ideas/opinions, if the widest portion of the citizenry does not have access to much of the print media. A holistic view which involves an assessment of all available media, and each media platform’s availability and accessibility (and to which audiences), is necessary to address concerns over the extent to which the citizenry is enabled to receive a diverse range of opinions and ideas via media platforms.
Introduction

In September 2011 the South African Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications held the first of a series of indabas on diversity and transformation within the print media sector of South Africa. The second such indaba was hosted in November 2011, and the third in March 2012. These parliamentary discussions sparked debates within the country, which considered the concentrated nature of the print sector and raised concerns about whether this concentration resulted in a lack of diversity of content within the print media as well as a lack of racial and gender transformation in the sector. In 2012 the ANC component of the Portfolio Committee began to voice commitment to the notion of the development of a print media charter in order to assist in the facilitation of the transformation of the print sector and to encourage a more pluralistic and diverse print media within the country.

In response to the portfolio committee’s concerns, Print and Digital Media South Africa or PDMSA (formerly known as Print Media South Africa or PMSA) established a task team, called the Print and Digital Media Transformation Task Team (PDMTTT) in September 2012. The PDMTTT is currently conducting a series of public hearings to gather input for its researched report of recommendations on areas of transformation, the implementation of such transformation, targets (benchmarks) for transformation, instruments to measure transformation as well as sanctions for non-compliance (Print and Digital Media Transformation Task Team: 2012).

Prior to the establishment of the PDMTTT the Media Policy and Democracy Project34 (MPDP) initiated an analysis of media diversity measurement tools and metrics developed in foreign countries, with a view to developing a tool which would be appropriate for the South African media environment. This research project began with the premise that before media policies, regulations or a charter on print media diversity can be drafted for South Africa, it is important to reliably and accurately assess the actual levels of media plurality of ownership and diversity of content, if the interventionist measures of a charter or new regulation are to be of significant effect, of benefit to media users and best serve the public interest. Resultantly, a media diversity and plurality measurement tool must necessarily be developed which would determine and reflect the level of plurality and diversity within the South African print sector, and one which is sensitive to the contextual nuances of the South African media landscape and particular media audience socio-economic conditions.

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34 The Media Policy and Democracy Project is a joint collaborative research project between the Department of Communication Science at the University of South Africa (UNISA), and the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University which was launched in 2012, and aims to promote participatory media and communications policymaking in the public interest in South Africa. The project involves three thematic areas, which include media accountability and media freedom, communications policy and the public interest and the focus area to which this research pertains, media diversity and transformation.
When initiating this project we noted that a significant amount of the debate concentrated on a lack of racial representivity at the level of ownership in the print sector. We became concerned that notions of transformation must necessarily be defined more broadly than Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) indicators only. In a country where there are 11 official languages but where most newspapers are printed in one of only two languages, the notion of transformation should also address the matter of print media content. Resultantly, the media diversity measurement tool to be developed by the MPDP will be used to assess both the level print media plurality of ownership as well as print media diversity of content within South Africa.

An additional factor which highlights the importance of such a media diversity measurement metric is the question of diversity ‘benchmarks’. Simply, before strategies for transformation can be developed, before media policies, regulations or a charter can be drafted it is important to collectively decide, through a process of parliamentary consultation and public engagement, on such diversity ‘benchmarks’. In other words, we need to decide, how much diversity is enough diversity? It is one thing to acknowledge a lack of plurality of ownership and content diversity within the print sector, but it is an entirely different matter to determine the end goal of the process of attempts to address the problem. However, without an accurate assessment of the level of content diversity which currently exists, not only will it be impossible to determine such benchmarks, but there will be no means to monitor the effectiveness of interventionist measures, enact contingency measures should they be required, nor will we have the ability to recognise improved or increased levels of media diversity as and when they happen. This again underscores the importance of developing and enacting a media diversity measurement tool within the South African context at the present time.

**The normative question: Why is media diversity important?**

There are a number of key factors which must be taken into consideration before the initiation of such a project. The first, and perhaps seemingly simple point of departure is to reassess the normative theoretical understanding of media diversity, and ask ‘why is media diversity important’? This may seem nonsensical and self-evident, but when considered within frameworks of media diversity measurement when applied to a developing country such as South Africa, and/or to emerging democracies with weak media economies relative to more mature democracies and developed countries, the normative understanding of media diversity demands a re-focus and an inversion of the point of departure in the media diversity measurement project to a more audience focussed approach. This will be explained in more detail later.

The very notion of the normative understanding of the social importance of media diversity within society is a theoretically contested idea.
“When analysing national and European policy discourses, two major normative approaches can be detected: the neo-liberal marketplace of ideas model, on the one hand, and the Habermasian public sphere approach, which contains the notion of unifying public discourse, on the other hand. Both models rely on very different rationalities when interpreting diversity and pluralism as media policy goals. While the former is based on competition and freedom of choice, the latter emphasizes a broader defence of ‘principled pluralism’; an attempt to serve the society in its entirety with various political views and cultural values. The argument over the nature and objectives of media pluralism is endemic to both points of view, which implies that the concept of media pluralism in itself is an object of political contestation, subject to continuous processes of social negotiation.

This dichotomy can also be understood in terms of regulatory approaches to media diversity: the competition or market approach, endorsing economic regulation to prevent market failure, and the interventionist or public regulation approach, involving an active media policy. The first approach equates diversity with freedom of choice and defends the viewpoint that diversity is best achieved when people can freely enter the ‘marketplace of ideas’ without any governmental constraints, a concept based upon classical economic market theory. The second approach relies on a different interpretation of diversity, highlighting the importance of various political views and cultural values, the support of which may require state intervention, but which may also be achieved through a range of complementary regulatory approaches, including co- and self-regulation” (Independent study... 2009:5-6).

Although the nature of the normative notion of media diversity is a contested one, all of the foreign developed media diversity measurement metrics adopted, without exception, adopt one basic normative premise: that the diversity of content in the media is important to society and democracy, and should reflect the widest range of cultural and political ideas possible, because the media is integral to the individual’s formulation of opinions & ideas.35

The relationship between media diversity of content and media pluralism of ownership

Faced with the importance of ensuring a high degree of media content diversity within a society, it is tempting to endeavour to address the problem first, by encouraging the fragmentation of media markets with regard to ownership and discouraging the monopolistic practices of larger media conglomerates, and second, encourage the start-up of new entrants. But, good intentions aside, this tactic may have adverse unintended effects which serve to weaken the overall media economy.

35 See for example, Ofcom (2012: 8).
Media markets tend naturally toward product differentiation (diversity of content) regardless of whether a large degree of pluralistic media ownership exists. The preferences of media audiences and users are not homogenous: different media users demand different things from the media. “Strong competition in media markets will consequently yield product content differentiation that is highly reflective of pluralism and variety in population preferences in society” (van Cuilenburg 2007:33-34).

It is important to remember that as cultural artefacts, media products have a high risk of product failure. Resultantly, larger media companies survive more easily: larger media companies can produce or acquire a number of media products, and then finance products that fail out of profits from more successful products. Simply, the larger the company, the lower the risk. Smaller media companies resultantly face a much higher degree of risk because they are less capable of financing media products that do not produce suitable profits. Resultantly, we often see media markets being dominated with regard to media ownership, by large monopolies. Therefore, over diversification of the media market could result in media companies facing high risks and potential business failure. Also, a media market with high ownership concentration does not necessarily indicate a lack of diversity of media content. For example, research from the Netherlands indicates that while the Dutch newspaper market is highly concentrated in terms of ownership, the very small number of publishers nonetheless caters for a certain level of content diversity (van Cuilenburg 2007:35). Increasing the number of media outlets for the purpose of increasing plurality of ownership and/or diversity of content can result in a downward spiral effect. Once the number of media outlets are increased, each media outlet captures a smaller section of the audience, resulting in a lower income for the media outlet, which then means that less expensive and often lower quality content is provided via the outlet, again reducing the audience size and therefore again reducing the media outlet’s income (van Cuilenburg 2007:39).

This argument may be underscored by Hotelling’s law of excessive sameness. Highly competitive markets which contain a high number of media outlets, tend to display a homogeneity of content, meaning that competing media outlets try to make their products as similar as possible. The social importance of variety is superseded by the media outlet’s concern for its own financial survival and sustainability in an environment of fierce competition. Again, such media outlets are able to take fewer risks than those in monopolistic or oligopolistic media markets, resulting in fewer innovative media products and more mainstream or popular and low cost media content. “Fierce competition enhances competition on price. Under conditions of fierce competition, media organisations can only gain reasonable profits by sharply cutting the costs of the production and distribution of their goods and services. Consequently, with fierce competition media markets tend toward reflective diversity, reflecting mainstream, middle of the road preferences and demand. Fierce competition on price in media markets goes with extensive supply of low cost media products ‘for the millions’ and/or easy to consume media entertainment” (van Cuilenburg 2007:40).
The forcible ‘breaking up’ of a monopolistic media market, or legislative restrictions on the percentage of market share allowed to one owner, may increase temporarily the level of content diversity available to audiences, but if performed irresponsibly or without due care and a detailed measurement of the capability of the media market to withstand such pressures and to become sustainable after such interventions, then the increase in diversity is unlikely to last, and it may negatively impact the overall media economy to the extent where some media outlets are not financially sustainable, resulting in a ruinous media economy. This again stresses the importance of the implementation of a media diversity measurement tool, which necessarily includes a holistic assessment of the current media economy, before interventionist measures to increase media diversity and plurality are enacted.

Assessing media diversity & pluralism measurement tools developed elsewhere: internationally developed media diversity measurement tools

A number of foreign research initiatives have already developed detailed and rigorous media diversity and pluralism measurement monitors, which have been put to use in a variety of countries for the purpose of assessing the media landscape within a particular country. The MPDP has endeavoured to glean from such research activities strategies which could be put to potential use in the analysis of the South African media sector. Since a variety of foreign developed measurement tools have already been implemented it would be tempting to simply select and apply one such tool to a South Africa media market. However, this may result in a decidedly inaccurate set of findings. It is unlikely that foreign developed media diversity measurement tools could be applied in their entirety in a developing country and give accurate results: all of the foreign developed theoretical frameworks assessed by the MPDP were developed for the assessment of media diversity within developed countries and mature democracies, and are not necessarily sensitive to the particular complexities and nuances which exist in the developing world’s media environment and emerging democracies. However, there are a number of research and data collection tactics employed by such tools, which could be of benefit to efforts to assess the media diversity of a particular media landscape within a developing country. Therefore, the foreign media diversity measurement tools are assessed primarily in terms of which aspects of each method of measurement could be put to potential appropriate use within a developing country.

Measurement tools and metrics which have been specifically developed for the measurement of media diversity and pluralism in particular, have been purposefully selected for discussion here. A number of media measurement tools exist, for the measurement of various aspects of the media landscape including measurement tools which assess the media’s contribution or negative influence on democracy, but for the purposes of this study only tools which take the measurement of diversity and pluralism in the media as their primary objective have been assessed.
Such foreign developed measurement metrics include the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) which is used by US Department of Justice to monitor mergers, and measures the competitiveness of market structures. The HHI, which is calculated by summing the squares of the market shares of owners, has a significant drawback in that it is not constructed exclusively for media markets and the thresholds set for other markets may not be appropriate for media – audiences tend to demand more diversity from the media than they do from other markets (van Cuilenburg 2007:34).

The Noam Index, developed by Prof Eli Noam, attempts to compensate for some of the disadvantages of the HHI. Noam contends that market power alone, as indicated by HHI, does not offer an accurate reflection of media diversity because the availability of alternatives, even if they are small, permits different viewpoints. Resultantly the Noam Index mathematically combines the measure of market power (HHI) and the pluralism of a market (number of voices). Noam’s ‘number of voices’ indicates the number of media outlets available to media audiences, instead of exclusively focussing on the market share of media owners (Noam 2004).

Although the Noam Index does go some way to filling in the gaps of the information not supplied by the HHI, it still cannot provide the whole picture.

Media ownership and cross ownership must also be incorporated into such measurements, because some media companies have their content distributed across media market types. For example, in South Africa SAPA or Eye Witness News content/copy will be distributed in newspapers as well as radio, thereby lowering the diversity of a particular media genre. A detailed content analysis of each media type and media channel will be required to determine the actual degree of diversity of content within the overall media genre. This highlights a potential drawback of an over-reliance on Eli Noam’s concept of the ‘number of voices’ within a media market. Although Noam’s index did attempt to compensate for some of the disadvantages of the HHI, by incorporating the number of different media outlets into the equation and counting each outlet as one ‘voice’, a content analysis cannot necessarily approach each outlet as a single and separate ‘voice’, since content is reproduced across various outlets, effectively reducing the number of ‘voices’ and diversity.

The Media Monitor Model, developed by the The Media Authority of the Netherlands, measures a number of related factors which are of interest in the South African environment (Commissariaat voor de Media: 2002). These include:

- Ownership concentration and ownership competition: the degree to which owners control media markets
- Editorial/programming concentration and editorial competition: the degree to which journalists and editors are able to make decisions independently from media ownership structures
- Diversity and choice: the quantity and variety of media content supply, and
Audience or readers preferences.

This last aspect of the Media Monitor Model is of particular interest to this study, as will be explained later.

In 2012 the UK regulator Ofcom released a report on measuring media plurality, but this report consists largely of a list of recommendations rather than the construction of a particular model. Nonetheless, some of the recommendations are also pertinent to the South African context. For example, the Ofcom report (2012) suggests the consideration of the goals of plurality, its scope and means to achieve it, which relates to the setting of diversity benchmarks mentioned earlier. It recommends an examination of the market context, involving consumer research on claimed behaviour and attitudes towards news and a description the value chain of news, the flow of funds and future dynamics (Ofcom 2012). Also recommended are an examination of international case studies to learn from their approaches to protecting plurality, a review of academic thinking and literature, and most important for this study, the issuing of an invitation to comment and collect responses from organisations/individuals (Ofcom 2012). Without stipulating a particular measurement framework, the Ofcom report (2012) acknowledges that there are three categories of measurement metrics available, which address availability, consumption and impact, and recommends that while all three should be used, but consumption metrics are the most important (reach, share and multi-sourcing).

The Independent study in indicators for media pluralism in member states – towards a risk-based approach is a report which was prepared for the European Commission by Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, headed up by Prof Peggy Valcke (Independent study on...: 2009). Indicators are divided into 3 categories:

- Measure the presence and effectiveness of policies and legal instruments that support media pluralism
- The range of media available to citizens (socio-demographic factors, end-user perspective)
- The range of diversity of media (with regard to market forces, number of companies and concentration).

This particular measurement metric is more of a diagnostic tool for assessing risks to media pluralism, but it does not prescribe policy responses. It is designed specifically for use in mature democracies and developed countries and adopts a holistic approach it measures not only ownership and concentration, but a range of other forces which may inhibit diversity.

Access & Accessibility: looking at the audience first

Returning to the normative understanding of media diversity: all of the foreign media diversity measurement tools and metrics which were investigated as part of this project, operated according to a similar normative understanding that a diversity of content in the media is important to society and to democracy, and should reflect the widest range of cultural and political ideas possible, because the media is integral to the individual’s
formulation of ideas and opinions. As previously mentioned, the competing of divergent information, opinions and ideas within the media landscape are widely considered a valued method for the promotion and preservation of a healthy democratic socio-political space within society. Additionally, the media, and the news media genre in particular, are understood to be at the nucleus of society(ies) because of how they disseminate information to mass audiences, thus informing and enabling the citizenry with the information that it needs to actively participate in political or civic action. Such normative understandings of the importance of media diversity and/or pluralism within a democracy highlight the media policy maker’s concern with the monitoring of media diversity.

However, if we are to operate from this normative starting point, then a markedly different approach to the measuring of media diversity may be required in developing countries such as South Africa. All of the media pluralism/diversity measurement tools and metrics assessed for this study originated in developed (mostly European) countries, where audience barriers to mass media access are far lower than in developing countries, and were constructed for use in mature democracies. While many aspects and tactics for the monitoring of media diversity can be appropriated from foreign media diversity measurement tools, there are also many local complexities which such foreign-developed tools do not address. In particular, questions surrounding the audience’s access to media, and the accessibility of media, may not be necessary to consider in developed countries, but are imperative concerns within the context of developing countries, particularly from the position of the citizen’s ability/inability to engage with the media.

We know of course, that in many developing countries large sections of the media audience may experience very limited access to some, if not all, media platforms. Significantly then an inversion of the view from which to assess media diversity is required in developing countries. While the foreign models assessed for this study, without exception, begin with an appraisal of media ownership and market share, in developing countries it may be more appropriate to begin at the opposite end of the media value chain by considering audience access to media, and media availability. It is one matter to measure the diversity of content within a particular print media publication, but the importance of that analysis must be jointly determined by the accessibility (in addition to the availability) of the publication to which/what audience.

By necessity then, the measurement of the diversity of the media landscape becomes a more complicated project within developing countries than developed ones. Such a measurement performed within a developing country must include all of the factors implemented within a developed country, but that is not all. It must also measure the various levels of access and accessibility to the media within different segments of the audience, and what is more, could potentially be best implemented if this audience assessment were the starting point of the study.
How to measure access & accessibility?

This tactic for the measurement of media diversity within the media landscape of developing countries then becomes a far more audience centred approach than those adopted by many of the foreign developed media diversity measurement metrics assessed for this study. Such an approach necessarily includes an extensive audience study which is something that is entirely uncommon in foreign developed tools. More detail is provided on this later.

Because different sections of the audience within developing countries have such large variances in their access and accessibility to different media platforms, it is necessary to segment the audience according to their levels of access and accessibility. The first element here is to recognise the difference between the notions of access and accessibility. Difficulties with access usually relate to whether a media platform's distribution reaches certain media users, while in many developing countries many media outlets distribute their products in urban areas only, leaving rural citizens without access to such products. Accessibility relates to questions of, for example, language and cost: although an individual may have access to a particular media platform, this media may be in a language which he/she does not understand, or the cost of the media product may make it unaffordable to many.

Audiences can potentially be segmented according to what we have called ‘media bundles’. Audience members on the upper levels of the Living Standards Measures (LSM) spectrum naturally tend toward large media bundles: these audience members have access to a variety of different media types, including subscription broadcasting, internet access, and a large variety of mainstream print media publications. Inversely, audience members on the lower LSM levels may have access to a far more limited number of media types, including perhaps one or two local community radio stations and newspapers, free-to-air television but not subscription television and perhaps one or two SABC radio stations. All of this indicates a far smaller media bundle.

Therefore, on assessing media diversity of content within developing countries, the audience must necessarily first be segmented into the varying media bundle categories (once these have been identified), and a media type should preferably be included within an audience segment’s media bundle only if its access and accessibility is rated highly for that particular audience segment. Only then can a content analysis of the level of diversity within the media be initiated, but a separate content analysis should be made of each media bundle category.
Such a content analysis is likely to reveal a high level of diversity within the media bundles of audience members who rate highly according to the Living Standards Measure: these individuals have access to many media types, thus increasing the level of diversity within the spectrum of media that they have access to. But the greatest concern must lie with the media bundles of audience members who have limited access to varying media types, and who also form the largest number of media users. On a content analysis, such media bundles are more likely to reveal far lower levels of media diversity, since the number of media platforms which are open with regard to access and accessibility within such bundles is sometimes remarkably low.

But, if we are to continue with our normative idea of the importance of media diversity, this becomes a major cause for concern. Where we understand diversity of opinions and ideas within the media to be crucial to the health of a democratic society because of its enabling the citizen’s formulation of their own world-view, we are faced with a situation in developing countries where the largest portion of the media using audience have significantly small media bundles and thus potentially inhibited access to a diversity of views via the media. Therefore, our normative understanding of the importance of media diversity forces us to adopt the audience centred approach when assessing media diversity within the context of a developing country.

The generic classification of the media when assessing diversity

Once the media bundles of different segments of the audience have been identified, the media types appearing in each bundle become the next unit of analysis. It is necessary to identify the separate media types within the media bundles, for example, free-to-air television, newspapers, radio etc, and perform a content analysis thereof in order to determine the level of diversity of content within each bundle. However, this necessitates the analysis of different media types or platforms as distinct from one another.

Van Cuilenburg (2007:38-39) makes a case for assessing the diversity of a media market in its entirety as opposed to analysing the diversity of separate media markets in isolation from one another. When analysing media diversity, media markets are usually considered separately: the television market, the radio market, the newspaper and publishing market and so on. But in a digital age, and with regard to ever increasing convergence it may not be possible for much longer to consider these markets as wholly distinct from one another.

One may need to consider whether the diversity of ideas (content) within a democracy can/should be confined in analysis to the content which audiences receive from one market type, for example, newspapers only. “Media diversity is promoted by media policy because of its democratic value. Competition of divergent information, news and opinions on the free marketplace of ideas is considered to be the most valuable method to serve political truth and democracy... For democracy, does it matter how people gather information and from
which media they form their opinions? Maybe for audiences, from the perspective of opinion formation, media
countent services and products are getting more and more substitutable” (Van Cuilenburg 2007:38-39).
Increasingly media markets are becoming more and more multi-media markets, meaning that the range of
ideas and content available to audiences are represented across a variety of platforms. Therefore, if the
primary motivator for measuring media diversity is a concern for the diversity of content and available ideas
according to which audiences form their opinions, it may be better to view the media as a whole, instead of
separate parts. Then, instead of identifying media classifications for markets such as press, television, and
radio, the diversity of the media landscape would be considered according to media genres: diversity of the
news media, the entertainment media, the financial news, the sports media and so on (Van Cuilenburg

Assessing media diversity according to genres: will it work for developing countries?
In light of considerations for access and accessibility, the generic classification of the media while measuring
the diversity of content with a view to how audiences form opinion, will not yield accurate results in a country
such as South Africa if not striated according to the varying degree to which different segments of the
audience have access to different types of media. For this reason it is not possible to wholly do away with
more traditional classifications which see us analysing diversity of content according to medium (television,
radio, newspaper and internet) because few people in South Africa, or other developing countries, have
access to all media market types. For example, if we analyse the genre of political news media in an attempt
to ascertain the diversity of opinion/views/voices provided to audiences within this genre, we must bear in mind
that political news is available to audiences across all media types, but large numbers of people will only have
access to one or two media types, and many cases, only radio broadcasting. In this case it becomes important
to perform a content analysis of the political news reporting within the relevant radio station if we want to
accurately understand the level of diversity of political news reporting to which segments of the audience are
exposed, instead of performing a content analysis of the entire political news media landscape within a
country, much of which may be inaccessible to many media users.

When viewing the media as a whole instead of analysing media types separately, there is the view that the
internet and satellite television adequately fill the void for diversity lost due to media production concentration.
But, in developing countries many citizens do not have affordable and reliable access to the internet, nor can
they afford pay-satellite television. For example, if we consider the African continent: Africa still has the lowest
Internet penetration rate relative to the percentage of populations than any other continent (Internet World
States 2012a). While the world average Internet penetration rate stands at 34.3% the African rate is 15.6%
(Internet World States 2012b).
In developing countries, the percentage of the population which has access to newspapers, whether national publications or locally produced newspapers, also tends to be low. Many citizens do not have access to free-to-air broadcasting, whether radio or television, as the reach of state-owned or public service broadcasters (particularly in Africa), is not adequate for the entire country. However, because of the low cost of access of free-to-air broadcasting, particularly radio, this media platform may be the one which most often appears in the media bundles of lower LSM audience segments. Therefore, the level of the diversity of content available on television and broadcasting, while it captures a larger audience than any other news media, is arguably the most important.

We should bear in mind that even while analysing media diversity of content according to genre’s alone may be possible sometime in the future, that future is still far off for South Africa and other developing countries. An integrated model could be developed for the present moment, one which takes both media market types and media genres into account with regard to determining the overall diversity of content available to audiences. However, such a model would need to be audience focussed, and produce results which stipulate the media diversity of content available to different segments of society, as these will differ. This model then needs to incorporate and develop a number of categories including 1) media genres (news, entertainment, sport etc), 2) media market types (television, radio, newspapers etc), 3) media audience groups (those will full access to all media, those with limited access, those with very low access to only one or two media types) and 4) then measure the level of diversity of content across these different categories via a content analysis.

The importance of a high level of diversity of content in a media type such as radio depends on the size of the audience of a particular media type. So, we may find a wide range of content diversity in the print media within the genre of political news, but the print media have a relatively small audience when compared to radio. If we measure the diversity of content within the political news genre as broadcast on radio, and we find a low level of diversity that is a concern because of the size of the audience.

**Taking a more holistic view of the media landscape with regard to content diversity**

All of the above indicates that it is necessary to adopt a holistic view of the media landscape with regard to concerns for the availability of diverse content, and to not focus singularly on one media type as the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications in South Africa have done. Simply, in the interest of ensuring that the largest segments of the news media audience have access to a diversity of opinion and ideas, implementing measures to increase the level of content diversity within the print sector may have limited social benefit, when the largest segments of the media audience have access to broadcast news only. In such an environment interventionist measures must be four-pronged. First, scrutiny must be applied to the news media type(s) to which most audience members do have access, free-to-air broadcasting, and urgency should
be applied to that media in order to increase levels of content diversity. Second, the access and accessibility of media types which do not appear in the media bundles of lower LSM groups should be addressed. Third, an audience study must be performed before regulatory benchmarks can be set which determine the desired levels of media content diversity. Fourth, a feasibility study must be conducted, one which could measure the strength of the economy of the local media market to determine whether it is strong enough to withstand the inevitable pressures which will accompany interventionist measures (such as regulatory charters) so as to not drive the market toward the status of a ruinous economy.

Returning momentarily to the print media sector in South Africa, since concerns for a perceived lack of pluralism of ownership and diversity\(^\text{37}\) of content therein have been the catalyst for debate within the country on media diversity: some valuable insights which could contribute to the debate have been offered by the recently conducted The International Media Concentration Project, administered by the Columbia Institute for Tele-Information. The study was performed in 30 different countries, including South Africa, and it combines the HHI, the Noam Index and importantly an additional measure called the C4 ratio. The study then measures, 1) the degree to which 4 largest companies within the media market exercise control of the market, 2) the degree of competition within a market and 3) the number of voices available (content). In South Africa, the study was conducted by Prof George Angelopulo & Prof Petrus Potgieter (UNISA) the publication of their findings is forthcoming.

Importantly, and in light of what is discussed above, the International Media Concentration Project not only takes a holistic view of the media landscape within a particular country, but also measures media types as distinct from one another. In South Africa, this project assessed newspapers, magazines, analogue TV broadcasting, satellite TV, radio, film distribution & production, telecommunications distribution media, wireline, wireless and online media. The research found that the overall media landscape in SA offers a high degree of diversity of content. However, when media types are considered in isolation, markets are often dominated by one or two owners and concentration is high. Perhaps most significant to current debates in South Africa, according to this study, the print sector is the least concentrated with regard to ownership, and offers the highest level of diversity of content (Angelopulo and Potgieter, 2011, p. 44)\(^\text{38}\). With regard to free-to-air...

\(^{37}\) In our investigation of foreign developed media diversity measurement metrics and tools we have found that the terms ‘pluralism’ and ‘diversity’ are often used interchangeably and inconsistently. For the purposes of this study we understand pluralism and diversity as follows: the former refers to the number of media outlets within a particular media environment, whereas the latter refers to the diversity of voices offered by those media outlets, in terms of ‘race’, gender, age, language, geographic location and other significant factors that differentiate various segments of the population.

\(^{38}\) The four most dominant print media companies market share in 2011 was registered as follows: Media 24 – 35.0%, Independent News and Media – 26.5%, Avusa – 17.7%, and Caxton – 14.3% (Angelopulo and Potgieter, 2011, p. 9).
broadcasting (television and radio) the SABC dominates, and in 2011 captured 67.58% of television and 31.6% of market share (Angelopulo and Potgieter, 2011, p. 16,24).

**A renewed impetus for media diversity of content: but what does the audience want?**

To measure the levels of ownership concentration and content diversity in the media sector, with the purpose of establishing diversity ‘benchmarks’, and thereafter instituting regulatory measures to encourage the sector to reach such benchmarks is one matter. But all such endeavours may be misguided if not informed by a substantial audience study. Indeed, the ideals for media diversity held by policy makers may not necessarily reflect a symmetry with the preferences of the audience(s). Therefore, as part of the project for the establishing a media diversity measurement tool, or monitoring metric, and in-keeping with the audience focussed approach adopted by this study as detailed above, the MPDP aims to conduct such an audience study.

Research questions here will include not only how diverse the audience feels the media to be, but whether they are satisfied with its content, and which media platforms and types present challenges of access and accessibility. Among such questions, we hope to ask, “What would YOU like to see in the media?” and “Do you feel that the news media tells YOUR stories and reflects your struggles”. Importantly, South Africa journalism has been recently accused of ignoring grassroots communities & focussing instead on elites (government, business etc)\(^39\): an audience study and content analysis will, amongst other factors, measure the validity of this accusation.

Also important to an audience study would be to establish an accurate picture of the nature of barriers to access and accessibility of certain (if not most) media platforms and types, whether these are related to geographical distribution, cost, language or other factors. The purpose of this exercise lies in that the interventionist measures of media policy makers should appropriately attempt to address and rectify such barriers, especially within the context of developing countries where such barriers tend to be high.

**Conclusion**

As this paper has discussed, it may be nonsensical in developing countries to measure the plurality and diversity of the print media sector in isolation of the rest of the media landscape, as many foreign measurement metrics have done, and which the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications in South Africa has suggested. Increasing the diversity and plurality of the print sector only, will potentially have limited benefits with regard to the normative ideals of increasing the citizen’s access to a divergent collection

\(^{39}\) See for example, Reid (2012) and Nevill (2013).
of competing ideas/opinions, if the widest portion of the citizenry does not have access to much of the print media. A holistic view which involves an assessment of all available media, and each media platform’s availability and accessibility (and to which audiences), is necessary to address concerns over the extent to which the citizenry is enabled to receive a diverse range of opinions and ideas via media platforms.

But such a focus should not exempt the print media, or any other media type, from scrutiny in this debate. Questions of why so few have access to the media types (including print and online media) which offer the highest levels of content diversity must be asked. An audience perspective, informed by an audience study, is necessary if any interventionist measures and media diversity benchmarks are to be established in an informed manner. And the likelihood of the economic sustainability of such measures should also be tested before regulatory instruments for the encouragement of media diversity are enacted.

In sum, and in light of recent debates with regard to the diversity of the South African print sector, we propose that such debates be re-aligned to include the following key aspects:

• A holistic view of the media landscape, instead of focussing on only one media type
• Investigating ways in which to lower barriers to access and accessibility of certain media types, thus expanding the media bundles of larger audience segments
• A more audience focussed approach, which includes a process of meaningful public engagement and a substantial audience study
• A feasibility study of the local media sector to establish whether the media economy is capable of withstanding the pressures of interventionist measures to ensure the establishment of both a diverse and sustainable media market.
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