New Media Development in Africa

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Abstract

In this paper we give an exploratory overview of how the new media has developed in Africa and the role that new media technologies might play in facilitating the development of media in African countries.

Introduction

Mass media in Africa have undergone tremendous changes in the last decade. Over the past 15 to 20 years, there has been notable progress and a significant shift towards democratization and media diversity in Africa. A UN report (2006:3) states that mainstream, alternative and new forms of media, such as community and privately owned commercial media have steadily emerged and grown in numbers and diversity of opinion. The report suggests that the growth is in large part due to the space created by the shift from dictorial regimes to multiparty democracies and elections as well as the end of the cold war and internal calls for democratic reforms. In many African countries, as the new media entities have emerged, state-owned media, equally important for the public interest, has stagnated in the face of competition and diversity.

The growth of independent and pluralistic media in the 1990s was characterized by an urgent need to move from top-down, state-driven propaganda to message-driven and participatory forms of dialogue and expression. Organic community media networks and associations across Africa emerged to give voice to marginalized and isolated communities in the wave of the democratic reform that was sweeping the continent. The 1990s also witnessed a surge in the take-up of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa. While mainstream mass media outlets harnessed ICTs to achieve significant efficiencies and economies of scale, the period saw the emergence of pioneering grassroots media initiatives leveraging ICTs. Integrating ICTs in traditional media offered a diversified media and medium.

For a close to a decade, the Highway Africa initiative, an annual collaboration between Rhodes University in South Africa, the private sector and development partners to showcase and promote new media, has helped engender a new breed of networked, multimedia-savvy African journalists. In recent years the digital era, and with it the convergence of new

technologies with traditional/conventional media have raised critical policy questions on conventional regulatory telecommunications frameworks that lag behind new and emerging technologies. With access to new technologies and with improved bandwidth and internet infrastructure, ordinary citizens can bypass the hurdles of access to frequencies and licenses by appropriating digital or video cameras and audio players to publish, podcast, vodcast or stream stories on independent internet blogs. The digital age and the rapid development of the Internet have also challenged the traditional definition of journalism, forcing the mainstream or mass media to adapt or face extinction. Citizen journalism, including the generation of news content and analysis by individuals and independent groups of citizens worldwide, is an important dimension of this emerging phenomenon. With more Africans able to access other forms of communications, such as mobile telephony, the emphasis rightly remains on converging these newer technologies with radio, which has the widest reach and is most accessible to marginalized communities. Although the last decade and half in African history has witnessed dramatic changes in the media terrain on the continent, African media has been for long been in chains and under the control of the Africa leaders and their collaborators, multinationals corporations. Despite the growth, the African mass media system faces age-old problems stemming from poor ownership structure, a weak financial base, low quality staff (particularly journalists), lack of access to information, and conflict with authorities. Of all the media, newspapers remain the most combative and aggressive in their efforts to develop editorial independence, open up the society, and make themselves relevant.

A number of challenges stand in the way of a strong media sector in Africa. Sustainability emerges as an overarching concern common to all media actors, irrespective of type. Of particular concern is financial sustainability. In many African countries the market for commercial media products is thin, manifested by a weak subscription and advertiser base. Where such markets do exist, the concentration is overwhelmingly urban and to a lesser extent peri-urban. Rural dwellers must rely largely on alternative and community-focused media, where they exist. There is an overall deficit of investment. Media owners and entrepreneurs have little or no dedicated means of support, as a result of which media is unevenly developed, within and across countries. In the short term, consistent and coherent financing is required to address this concern. A longer-term challenge is how to graduate from reliance on donor funding, to full sustainability. Press freedom remains a significant challenge. The collapse of the state monopoly on media in the 1990s notwithstanding, the growth of independent media has been circumscribed by state efforts to claw back power. In many countries, journalists and communicators are not allowed to operate freely, and

intimidation and censorship remain the order of the day. The spectre of journalists threatened, jailed and even killed in the course of doing their jobs remains too common a scenario. Often, economic imperatives and political alignments make nonsense of the media's role as a guardian of the public sphere. Some state-controlled media continue to serve as propagandists, ensuring that only prescribed messages are released. The same phenomenon of crowding out space applies to the private media, with concentration of media ownership threatening pluralism. Moreover, the dearth of public media in Africa raises concern that serving the public interest rests solely on the shoulders of state and private media, both of which have overriding concerns – such as serving ruling elites and ensuring financial sustainability.

Capacity and standards are also identified as a major concern. In recent decades, donors have supported media training aimed at individuals and, to a lesser extent, organizations. However, the conventional wisdom is that such training has been piecemeal, small-scale and inimical to institution-building of the kind that is needed to sustain media as a sector. Producing content of a consistently high quality that is accurate and reliable requires a stronger configuration of training providers and a clear vision as to how to develop media capacity in different countries and subregions, all with their own specific characteristics and realities. Media management and entrepreneurial skills, as well as skills to strengthen media representation, also need to be developed with the same holistic approach in mind.

In this paper we will conduct a literature review focusing on five major themes namely (i) a brief history of the Africa press (ii) colonial and nationalist press, (iii) control of broadcast media in Africa, (iv) the media and state in Africa and finally this paper will focus on (v) public sphere and whether the concept exists in Africa.

A brief history of the African press

Faringer (1991:2) argues that the colonial powers strongly influenced the development of journalism on the African continent, by introducing a rather authoritarian press concept and restricting the growth of an indigenous press. This situation, Wilcox (1975:342) suggests, contributed to the vigorous nationalistic polemics that were the other major influence in shaping the emergent African press. Many scholars have argued that the first African journalism first emerged in West Africa (see for example Barton, 1979; Faringer, 1991; Wilcox, 1975). Nyamnjoh (2005:40) argues that the first newspaper in Africa dates back to 1797 in Egypt, 1800 in South Africa, 1801 in Sierra Leone, and 1826 in Liberia – where returning slaves from the Americas set up the *Liberia Herald* to celebrate the brilliance freedom. In February1801 the first known newspaper in Black Africa (East and West Africa)

was printed. Sierra Leone started Africa's first newspaper, *The Royal Gazette* and *Sierra Leone Advertiser,* and it was published for about a year. In 1822, 21 years after the first newspaper was published in Sierra Leone, the semiofficial, handwritten *Royal Gold Coast Gazette* was founded in Accra, capital of what was then the Gold cost (now Ghana). In addition to these early government owned publications, a few newspapers were operated by Europeans independently of the authorities.

Nigeria's first ever newspaper, the weekly *Iwe Ihorin,* was founded by Reverend Henry Townsend in 1859 and printed by missionaries. Faringer (1991:2) argues that the missionaries in West Africa contributed to the concept of an independent African press, as it produced the first publication specifically aimed at an African audience. Nyamnjoh concurs, arguing:

> Missionaries were also at the forefront of the first newspapers, which were often published either in the colonial language or indigenous languages and a major dimension of which was news and information of a religious an evangelical nature (Nyamnjoh, 2005:40).

Iwe Ihorin began as a paper in vernacular Yoruba. Later an English edition was added, and this created what was believed to have been West Africa's first bilingual newspaper (see Faringer, 1991). This paper was primarily a bulletin meant for Christian missionary society. In 1857, about thirty years after the *Royal Gold Coast Gazette* had folded , the *Accra Herald* was the first privately owned newspaper in the Gold Coast. The *Accra Herald* was also transcribed by hand. The idea of newspaper, Faringer (1991:5) suggests, began to spread, at first slowly but eventually almost like a bush fire out of control over the West African coast. In the Gold Coast, Faringer argues,the press was particularly strong, and for many years was exclusively African owned and operated. She concludes that a part from official publications and a few missionary newspapers, the press in West Africa was, from the beginning, already in African hands to a large extent. The motivation for this publication was mainly political, in that the printed material served as a tool for political development and political influence. This, Faringer (1991:5) argues, had a direct effect on the development of the West African press. Another situation that influenced the emergence of an early press in West Africa was the return of freed slaves from the United States and the West Indies to Liberia and Sierra Leone who came with printing press and started a couple of newspapers (Faringer, 1991).

Faringer (1991:9) asserts that the East African press was very different from that in West Africa. She argues that although there were newspapers started by Africans, they never were of the same caliber as those produced by the nationalists on the west coast. Burton (1979:350) concurs, asserting that it is probably true to say that one of the principle reasons Britain's major West African colonies achieved independence before their East African and Central African counterparts, laid in the lack of a virile nationalists African press. Faringer (1991:9) argues that newspapers in East African mainly grew from news organizations formerly dominated by European interests, into what Faringer calls "Africanized" news media controlled by the indigenous governments.

The development of media in West Africa has been accredited to its extensive contact with European for centuries, while the British East and Central Africa have less than a hundred years of contact with the Europeans. Faringer argues that unlike in West Africa, the British in East Africa arrived in large numbers and settled, and a "settler" press which carried news from Britain appeared. The East Indians, who had been imported by colonizers as cheap labor to build railroads, eventually dominated commercial life in east Africa and they too launched their own newspaper. Faringer (1991:10) posits that Kenya was a three-tier society with the Europeans at the top of the political pyramid, followed by the Indians, and then the Africans. They all started their own newspapers. Faringer (1991:10) argues that the African press on the lowest tier was in a particular vulnerable situation. She accentuates that the African press in East Africa was staffed by politicians with no training in journalism, it was dependent on Asias who owned the printing presses and on the Europeans who supplied advertising revenue. All the African and Asian newspapers from those early days are defunct today. It was the European press that survived independence, although its editorial policies have changed significantly since then.

The most important of Great Britain's East Africa's colonies was Kenya, in which more than 400 newspapers have been registered since the beginning of the century. Most of them were small ephemeral sheets, often in vernacular languages. The first newspaper in East Africa, the *East Africa and Ugandan mail,* was established in Mombasa on the Kenyan coast in 1899 and lasted only a few years. The *African Standard*, later renamed the *East African Standard* (today simply called the *Standard*), was started in Mombasa in 1902 by A.M. Jeevanjee, an Indian. The newspaper was later sold to a partnership of two Englishmen, who turned the paper into a daily and moved it to Nairobi. The East African Standard was the largest press corporation in East Africa for many years. Nation Media Group – which owns the Nation

newspaper, Nation Television, Nation FM (Kenya) The Citizen newspaper (Tanzania) Nation Television, The Monitor (Uganda) and The East African circulated in the three east Africa countries is the biggest media house in the region today. Faringer (1991:11) argues that the colonial authorities and the missions in East Africa published a few newspapers for the African readership, but the first indigenously owned paper was the *Mwigwithania*, launched by the Kikuyu Central Association in 1928 to support its nationalist demands.

The history of newspapers in Southern Africa dates back to 1800, when the Governor of the Cape Colony initiated the publishing of the government-controlled *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*. The first privately-owned newspaper, the *SA Commercial Advertiser,* was published in 1824, with Thomas Pringle and John Fairbairn as editors. The first Dutch language newspaper, *De Zuid Afrikaan,* was published in 1830, the first African language newspaper, *Umshumayeli Wendaba,* in 1837 and the first Afrikaans language newspaper, *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*, in 1876. Nyamnjoh (2005:40) concludes that in Southern, Central and Eastern Africa, the press was largely a European creation to serve the information, education and entertainment needs of the large settler communities, leaving the black reaadership at the mercy of an irrelevant content and/or in search of alternative channels of communication. But in francophone colonies, much was done actively to discourage the development of ctical local press, and the few local papers that managed to be established, served mainly the white settler population. This Nyammjoh (2005:40) suggests was the case in Tunisia, where a larg French settler population and government support favoured the French-language press over its Arabic counterpart between 188? and independence in 1956.

Colonial and nationalist press in Africa

Colonial press

Faringer (1999:2) argues that the African press emerged under colonialism, and during the following two centuries, its development closely followed that of the press in Europe and North America. The colonial power, she asserts, strongly influenced the development of journalism on the African continent, by introducing a rather authoritarian press concept and restricting the growth of an indigenous press. Wilcox (1975:342) concurs, arguing that this situation contributed to the vigorous nationalistic polemics that were the other major influence in shaping the emergent African press.

Africa's journalism first emerged in West Africa. In the former British colonies of West Africa the press dates back more than 175 years, while in the former French colonies and in East Africa it is less than a century old. Faringer (1991:2) argues that the British were regarded as having pursued rather libertarian ideas about the press. The rule of the French, on the other hand, was more closely related to their domestic organizational traditions. Little enterprise was shown in developing an African press in the French territories. The philosophy there was to promote the growth of a French-speaking native elite, receptive to French culture. Both the newspaper audience and the journalists were to be found within this group, and the European press in French Africa contributed to the assimilation process. Faringer (1991:3) argues that Ghana, Nigeria, and in particular, Kenya – all three former British colonies – have among the best developed press systems on the African continent, based on long traditions.

Wilcox (1975:342) asserts that today's press in English-speaking Black Africa appears to have its roots in four different kinds of early newspapers: (1) the official government gazettes; (2) the missionary press; (3) privately owned newspapers; and (4) the underground political, anticolonial news sheets. Wilcox argues that the official publications were among the first to appear. He opines that the genesis of African journalism lay in dry, official publications of colonial governments. Faringer (1991:3) asserts that journalism in Africa thus began with newspapers owned/or operated by officials of the British colonial government, with the goal of promoting mass literacy, encouraging rural development, and – not least – countering nationalist aspirations. The main purpose, however, was to provide news and information to European business persons and civil servants in Africa, and therefore the press was ethnocentric in concept and content. The situation, Wilcox (1975:344) asserts, was only natural in view of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the literate population was European. Africans, he argues, were not directly targeted as an audience; but where they were concerned, the press was to foster loyalty and conformity with the colonial system.

Barton (1979:16) asserts that apart from setting up official gazettes, the British were much too concerned with the sheer business of surviving in the face of numerous tropical diseases and the treacherous climate to worry about setting up something as precarious as a newspaper industry in a territory with a minute number of literates. Barton (1979:16) argues that the British had come to raise the flag and hopefully make some money, never to settle and make a home. Barton (1979:16) contends that two white owned newspapers were started in the West Coast after independence and one of these was owned by a man called W.C. Bilblett, who

between March and August 1985 produced a few spasmodic issues of the *Gold Coast News* at the Cape Coast before giving up the venture. A year later, Leslie Mayne brought out the first issue of the *Gold Coast Herald*. It was supposed to be a fortnightly publication, but it only came out once. Faringer (1991:4) asserts that the first known newspaper in Black Africa was the *Royal Gazette* and *Sierra Leone Advertiser,* which started in February 1801 and was published for about a year. In 1822 the semiofficial, handwritten *Royal Gold Coast Gazette* was founded in Accra, capital of what was then the Gold Coast (now Ghana). Most early official colonial newspapers lasted for only a few years.

From the beginning, the East African press was very different from that of the West Africa. Faringer (1991:9) argues that newspapers in East Africa mainly grew from news organizations formerly dominated by European interests, into "Africanized" news media controlled by the indigenous governments. While West Africa has had extensive contact with Europeans for centuries, British East and Central Africa could look back at less than a hundred years. It was not until the last century that Europeans – mostly Britons – came inland, mainly to Kenya. Unlike in West Africa, Wilcox (1975:345) argues, the British in East Africa arrived in large numbers and settled, and a "settler" press appeared. Wilcox (1975:346) asserts that the settler carried news from Great Britain, and some of the journalists were even members of the British press. The settler press in East and Central Africa expressed the interest of Europeans in Africa in the same way as the French colonial press did. Barton (1979:72) argues that the beginning of what was to become for along time the most powerful in East Africa was the founding of the weekly *African Standard* in Mombasa in 1902. Although it had been started by an Asian, A.M. Jeevanjee, who had made a fortune supplying the builders of the railway from the coast inland, he soon sold out to two Englishmen. Barton (1979:72) states that in 1910 the renamed *East African Standard* moved three hundred miles up country to Nairobi. It became a daily in 1910 and its only competition, the weekly *Leader of British East African*, which had been founded two years earlier, limped on until 1923 before ceasing publication. Barton (1979:73) writes that in 1930 the colonial government in Tanganyika invited the Standard to set up a newspaper in Dar-es-Salaam, and thus the *Tanganyika Standard* was born. He reports that Uganda was to wait until 1953 before the same group established the daily *Uganda Argus*.

Nationalist press

Nyamnjoh (2005:41) argues that literacy and the press are important for modernization. He suggests that this did not include allowing the colonized to determine the content of what to

read or be informed about, especially as content of the early newspapers soon became dominated by political protest against colonial officials. Hence, Nyamnjoh (2005:41) argues, almost all territories instituted strict laws regulating the right of Africans to setup and operate newspapers, and aimed at stifling the spread of 'subversive' ideas. Economic measures were also imposed to make it difficult for African newspapers proprietors to import newsprint and other technical facilities. This rigid control of the press, Nyamnjoh (2005:41) suggests, made it particularly difficult for African elites to articulate their anti-colonial struggles via the mass media, especially as broadcasting was invariably under much tighter control by colonialists.

Africa's primary political and social concern has been political independence and consolidation of national economic and political structures, which has resulted into the underdevelopment of the media. Faringer (1991: ix) states that during colonialism, most of the existing press consisted either European-owned city newspapers or rural papers run by ministries, often in vernacular languages. She suggests that during the movement for independence and nationalism, the press played and important role in ideological mobilization and advocating national unity and development. Many leaders of the African independence movement were originally journalists, and envisioned the mass media as important agents for political change and national growth. Among their objectives was the creation of a press that would define its own role and conditions. Faringer (1991:x) indicates that African leaders strove to replace European political structures and ideologies as well as the western image of African society with indigenous institutions, including an African press. The hope for a national press, she argues, was that it would promote national integration, development, and ideological mobilization and contribute to education regarding basic economic needs – a press for Africa's unique objectives. But Hyden and Okigbo (2003:32) argue that with vibrant associations, both in urban and rural settings, the media were easily perceived as being of secondary important. First of all, they were few newspapers, and read only by a relatively small segment of the population. Hyden and Okigbo (2003:32) assert that because the nationalist leaders wanted to create mass movements, they understandably were inclined to rely more on direct communication with the people through political rallies. Secondly, because of the considerable strength of civil society among Africans at that time, the media, notably the newspapers, were at best seen as emissaries of the nationalist cause. They were not treated as having a role of their own.

Many African nationalist leaders, including Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, articulated the goals of this African-development journalism. These leaders

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attached great importance to the mass media as revolutionary tools in the African liberation struggle. Faringer (1991:xi) asserts that the media were assumed to function as extensions of governments and their objectives of social, economic, and cultural development. The creation of national media systems was expected to reconcile a new national identity with new economic structures, new loyalties, and new self-identities. Faringer (1991:xi) asserts that most Africa governments intended to use the media as direct means to promote national development and integration, foster political stability, and educate – in general to act as one of the mobilizing agents in underdeveloped areas.

Barton (1979:74) argues that the mushrooming of the African press was an important factor in fostering political action in the urban centres of Kenya after the Second World War. Publications, he argues, appeared in several of the tribal languages and also in English. All the publications were nationalist and highly militant, expressing bitterness at colonial discrimination and the poverty and insecurity of the African tribes against the affluence of the settlers. Faringer (1991:11) reports that the first indigenous owned paper was the *Mwigwithania* ("The Reconciler"), launched by the Kikuyu Central Association in 1928 to support its nationalist demands. Its editor was Johnstone Kamau, who was later to be known as Jomo Kenyatta. Hyden and Okigbo (2003:32) states that although the publication appeared only monthly, it was influential in forming nationalist opinion. Eventually it brought people together in a common front against colonialism. Faringer (1991:11) writes that the paper was discontinued in 1934 when Kenyatta returned to England. Hyden and Okigbo (2003:32) tell that Kenyatta's fellow nationalist, Achieng Aneko, served as one of the first editors of *Ramogi*, a Luo language crusader for the nationalist cause. In Uganda, they argue, a vibrant press had emerged in Luganda, the closest Uganda has to an indigenous *lingua franca*. Achieng (1992:158) writes that newspapers like *Munno, Taifa Empya*, and *Kizito* had a circulation of around 10,000 copies as Uganda approached independence in 1962. Hyden and Okigbo (2003:34) concur, arguing that several nationalist politicians among the Gande ethnic group had close connections to these publications. In Tanzania, where Swahili was established as a lingua franca, *Mfanyakazi* ("The Worker") became the mouthpiece of the politically powerful trade union movement. As such, it played its role in helping to shape the nationalist agenda.

Hyden and Okigbo (2003:34) argue that the colonial presence in the later part of the continent was less direct because of the virtual absence of European settlers[1]. This meant that Africans were more effectively socialized into using the metropolitan language. In the case of the French colonies, Hyden and Okigbo (2003:34) argue that it was a deliberate policy of assimilation that facilitated this process. In the case of the British colonies, there was no similar policy, but whether in Ghana, Nigeria, or Sierra Leon, the English language established itself as the natural mode of communication. Hyden and Okigbo (2003:34) contend that English-speaking media, therefore, were established in these countries and although their editorial agenda differed, a number of them were sympathetic to the nationalist cause. Faringer (1991:5) reports that the first newspaper published for and by Africans, then, emerged in the British West African colonies of Sierra Leon, the Gold Coast, and later Nigeria. The motivation for the publication, she argues, was mainly political, in that the printed material served as a tool for political development and political influence. This, Faringer (1991:5) asserts, had a direct effect on the development of the West African press. She writes that the first successful West African daily was the *Lagos Daily News*, founded in 1925 by Herbert Macaulay. The paper, Faringer (1991:7) reports, was the first to be affiliated with a political party – Macaulay's National Democratic Party. As a daily newspaper owned by a prominent politician, it had a major influence on the development of the Nigerian nationalist movement. Barton (1979:24) states that Kwame Nkrumah founded his *Evening News* in Accra in 1948 and that it was a mouthpiece around which the Convention Peoples' Party was built. All CPP members were expected to read it.

A major landmark in the development of the press of Africa was the appearance on the morning of 22 November 1937 of the *West Africa Pilot*, a new daily launched in Lagos by NnamdiAzikwe. Azikwe, Barton (1979:25) argues, was to become not only the Continent's greatest newspaperman, but also one of its most dynamic nationalists. Barton (1979:27) writes that Azikwe created the first newspaper chain in West Africa. This was the Associated Newspaper of Nigeria, known as the Zik Group. *The Pilot* was number one in the group, but was followed by the *Eastern Nigerian Guardian* at Port Harcourt, Eastern Nigeria's first daily, founded in 1940, the *Nigerian Spokesman* at Onitsha in 1943, and the *Southern Nigerian Defender* at Warri the same year. Zik bought out a successful Lagos weekly, called *The Comet* , in 1945 and turned it into a daily. Four years later *The Comet* was transferred to Kano, giving Nigeria's northernmost center on the edge of the Sahara its first daily. Zik had

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[1] In the later part of the continent here means African regions that were not invaded by European settlers except southern Africa, east Africa and West Africa.

papers all over Africa's most important country??, and each one of them was ramming home the message that the day of the White man was coming to an end. Nyamnjoh (2005:40) argues that the colonial administrative control, censorship and other restrictions severely hampered the birth and growth of a vibrant press of the type remarkable in anglophone Africa. Broadcasting too, when introduced in Africa, was heavily under the colonial control and ever since it has always been chiefly state-controlled.

Control of broadcast media in Africa

There are two major forms of electronic journalism, radio and television. Both forms of broadcasting exist in Africa in varying degrees of development. Ziegler and Asante (1992:55) states that radio is the most widely used form of communication on the continent. Broadcasting has for a long time been important to African audiences. The majority of Africans get their information, education and entertainment from primarily radio, and then television. Nyamnjoh (2005:41) suggests that the introduction and development of broadcasting in Africa have been highly influenced by Wetern societies and models. Nyamnjoh (2005:4) argues that in their capacity as colonial and/or economic powers, Britain, France and the USA, for example, have been instrumental as standard-setters for the rest of the word, Africa included. By so doing, they have not only made broadcasting an Africa reality, but have equally universalised the values, attitudes and practices identifiable with radio and television in the West.

Nyamnjoh (2005:41) asserts that the overruling factor in the introduction of broadcasting in Africa was the interest of Western powers. He argues that in almost every case, not only were the indigenous people denied the right to choose the type of broadcast system to be introduced, they were equally denied access and /or the right to determin content and use. Nyamnjoh (2005:44) asserts that France and Britain set up radio stations to provide their citizens with information from home, to disseminate their cultures an values among the "natives", or for propaganda purposes against the Nazis. Nyamnjoh (2005:44) suggests that the aim for countries such as Britain and France setting up radio stations in Africa was to consolidate their positions in the colonies by promoting the use of their languages and selling their cultures to the "natives", as a foil to the forces of dissidence. Literature on broadcasting in Africa reveals that everything the colonies did in the domain of radio and television was for their exclusive interests. Golding and Elliot (1979:42) argue that the French and the British tended to introduce new radio stations during World War II. But a less centrally controlled broadcasting system, coupled with a free flow of infomation, was introduced only when the

pressures for independence could no longer be resisted. Nyamnjo (2005:46) suggests that the failure to harness brodcasting in the colonies, and later the former colonies of Africa, has instituted a characteristic universal to broaddcasting, wich should normally not be the case.

Van der Veur (2002:82) argues that regional broadcasting systems in Africa grew out of the desire to maintain the established order of the colonialists, to enhance global prestige, and to influence international development. Van der Veur (2002:82) asserts that local governors invariably based decisions regarding broadcasting on perceived administrative benefits, and on the wishes of the settler communities, rather than in response to needs of the indigenous population. This pattern was especially evident in countries with relatively large, stable populations of European settlers. Thus, Hailey (1957:245) contends, private ventures in the Union of South Africa led to the development of the first broadcasting facility on the African continent in Johannesburg in 1920. Wilkinson (1972:172) indicates that in 1928, Kenya became the first of the British colonial territories to begin regular broadcasts. Van der Veur (2002:83) asserts that in other African colonies the development of broadcasting was seen as an instrument of advanced administration, an instrument, not only and perhaps not even primarily for the entertainment but rather for the enlightenment and education of the more backward sections of the population. Nyamnjo (2005:38) argues that in opting for state ownership and control, post-colonial governments were just as eager as their colonial predecesors to justify why broadcasting needed to be so tightly controlled.

Kupe (2003:1) argues that in the overwhelming majority of African countries, broadcasting has been the most controlled medium for both technical and political reasons. The technological limits to the frequency spectrum and its allocation at both the international and national level have meant that unlike using the press, not just anyone can broadcast. Broadcasting's ability to reach the majority of citizens in a country has obvious political implications. Kupe (2003:1) suggests that colonial administrations, which introduced broadcasting to Africa, controlled it and used it for largely political propaganda purposes. Post colonial African goverments also followed a policy of control of broadcastiong mainly for political reasons. Broadcasting stations were often the first institutions to be taken over by coup plotters between 1960s and 1980s, when coups were West and Central Africa's most favoured mode change of government.

In most, if not all countries in Africa, broadcasting has since independence been a monopoly of the state justified on the grounds that it was a public service critical to development, the fostering of unity and the promotion of national culture and identity. Van der Veur (2002:89)

opines that in the post-colonial era, media's ability to support or topple empires created a situation in which broadcasting facilities became strategic points of control for emergent states. He argues that even seemingly stable governments such as that in Botswana and Kenya continue to turn to the military to protect the radio and television stations. Van der Veur asserted:

> As governments seek to inform and educate their population, to fight off external attacks on sovereignty, and to protect their domestic power base, control over broadcasting is invariably extended into areas of program content (Van der Veur, 2002:89).

Van der Veur (2002:89) contend that de facto state monopolies of broadcasting facilities continue in Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mauritius, Rwanda, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. Nyamnjo (2005:38) argues that though power was a common appetiser for both pre- and pots-colonial states, the post-colonial leaders marshalled additional rhetoric to justify rigid control of braodcasting. From the early days of independence until recently, it was common for states to claim centralism was necessarily the best way of attending to nation-building and development. Nyamnjo (2005:38) argues that central control was justified as less wasteful of limited resources, and as guaranteeing the political stability badly needed for rapid development and for catching up. The governments generally claimed that once their states had become more mature and stable, they would lossen their grip over broadcasting and become more tolerant of pluralism and diversity in the media.

This position Nyamnjo (2005:38) argues, was similar to that of the colonial states, which recognised the importance of free and private initiative in broadcasting only towards or at the end of their colonial stay. Again, just as the colonial state was most rigid about broadcasting and relatively more tolerant of the print media, so too have been the governments of post-colonial Africa. Broadcasting was singled out as needing to be carefully monitored.

Tudesq (1983:34) argues that early broadcasting in the Anglophone countries begun a path towards decentralization. In this way, Tudesq (1983:34) argues, British broadcasting policy mirrored educational policy and the policy of indirect rule. In Anglophone West Africa, efforts to indigenize broadcasting proceeded very rapidly during the 1950s. Tudesq (1983:23) asserts that the BBC began training African broadcasters at the BBC staff training department in 1951. By 1956, there were 163 African managers of Ghana radio, and 445 technicians.

These figures had increased from the 1949 figure of 13 indigenous managers and 46 local technicians.[2]

Tudesq (1983:29) argues that in most of their colonies, the British eventually established, before independence, broadcasting services designed along the Public Corporation model of the BBC. Some of the early broadcasters were among those who clamored for independence. This was true in Sudan, in Kenya, and in Nigeria. Perhaps it was inevitable that such services would eventually be dismantled as semiautonomous bodies and absorbed into the more controlling government structures which would emerge after independence. Martin (1991:183) states that today there are seven countries with a so-called public corporation status. These include Ghana, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. But as Mytton (1983:78) reminds us, having this nominal status guarantees little in the way of autonomy.

Tudesq (1983:15) asserts that the French colonial policy of direct rule was mirrored in broadcasting. Thus, radio was viewed in the French colonies as a useful and inexpensive means of countering the discussions of educated Africans turning rapidly to subversive and anti-governmental ideas. Bourgault (1995:72) argues that at independence the vast majority of anglophone countries had broadcasting systems based upon the BBC's model of public corporations and public service broadcasting. Most of the French colonies had radio services heavily influenced in style and substance and in political tenor by the French model. Tudesq (1983:35) asserts that the Belgians had a mixed system which included the participation of the government of the Belgian Congo, the Catholic Church, and private industry. The government service, begun in 1940, included locally trained indigenous broadcasters, who produced a variety of indigenous language programs destined for rural audiences.

Kolade (1974:87) reports that by 1949 broadcasting in Nigeria was flourishing and was inaugurated into that government under the Nigeria Broadcasting System. Nigerian broadcasting offered stations at Lagos, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, Port-Harcourt, Enugu, Kano, and Zaria. The Nigerian Broadcasting System also had rediffusion stations at Calabar, Kaduna, Jos, Warri, Katsina, Sokoto, Onitsha, Maiduguri, and Ilorin. Local language

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[2] See Van der Veur (2002:84) who argues that the end of the war and a renewed interest in developing radio services for Africa, led the British government to provide grants for the development of broadcasting facilities. These grants brought with them a flood of engineers and technicians who surveyed the potential for broadcasting across the continent. Briggs (1979:470) asserts that between the inception of the program in 1948 and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953, more than forty broadcast systems were started in twenty-seven colonial territories.

broadcasts began that year. In the late 1940s the British helped establish a Central African broadcasting station in Lusaka, Zambia as a complement to the service for expatriates in Zimbabwe. Fraenkel (1959:17) described it as the first "fully fledged station broadcasting exclusively to Africans." This service broadcast in six different languages.

Radio

Bourgault (1995:69) writes that radio was introduced to Africa during the colonial period and served initially to provide links from expatriates to the metropoles. Van der Veur (2002:88) concurs, arguing that radio has continued to grow in political significance as a prime medium for defending and promoting a wide range of politically motivated projects or programs.In 1927, the British East Africa Company began a BBC relay service for settlers, broadcasting from Nairobi, Kenya. This, Bourgault (1995:69) indicates, was, in fact, the second radio service on the African continent, for independent radio broadcasting had already begun in 1920 in South Africa. In 1932, the British established the Empire Service, designed to serve their colonies and dominions in Canada, Australia, India and Anglophone Africa. Bourgault (1995:69) argues that this service relayed the BBC from Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), in Southern Africa and from Lagos, Nigeria, in West Africa.

French efforts in broadcasting began with a small scale effort in Madagascar in 1931. The station broadcast 13 hours of music and information per week in French and Malagasy. Bourgault (1995:69) argues that besides serving resident French citizens, this service also hoped to underscore the value of colonial rule among Malagasy elites. But French broadcast, Bourgault (1995:69) suggests, seems to have begun in earnest in Senegal with the establishment of Radio Dakar in 1939. Gibbons (1974:113) asserts that its mission was to promote coverage for the francophone countries in the region.

In both the French and the British colonies, radio was seen as an arm of colonial policies. But as colonial policies differed, so did radio output. Bourgault (1995:69) suggests that interested in building an African audience, the British promoted the use of African vernaculars very early in the process. Bourgault (1995:69) asserts that the Nairobi service broadcast in the Kikamba and Kikiyu languages. By the mid-1930s, a radio service was begun in Accra, Gold Coast (now Ghana), and relays were soon added in the colony to Sekondi, Kumasi, and Korofidua. African personnel were introduced to the service in 1936-37. Indigenous languages were added in 1939 with broadcasts in Eve, Twi, and Hausa; two additional languages were added during the 1940s (see Bourgault 1995). Tudesq (1983:19) argues that

radio Anglophone Africa was designed to provide a public service to its native peoples, even though this was resisted by settler population in East and Southern Africa.

The Development of Radio in Africa

During the 1960s, the genesis of certain patterns of broadcasting emerged in Black Africa. First and foremost, Bourgault (1995:72) argues, the first generation of anglophone politicians of the independence period recognized the power of radio. Many already had training or practical experience as journalists. These include Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Kwame N'krumah of Ghana, Nmamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Hastings Banda of Malawi. These politicians were cognizant of radio's value as a tool in consolidating the nation. Tudesq (1983:36) reports that N'krumah dismantled the regional station at Kumasi, and Nigeria eliminated the public corporation status of the NBC in 1961, a status it later recreated in the 1970s. Tanzania put its semiautonomous radio under the ministry of Information and Tourism in 1965. Bourgault (1995:72) asserts that other anglophone countries retained the official designation of broadcasting as a public corporation, but tightened the reigns of control nonetheless. By the 1970s, most of the anglophone countries had placed their radio broadcasting systems firmly in control of their governments.

Bourgault (1995:72) argues that from the early days of independence, leaders in the francophone countries were well aware of the power of radio as a political instrument. They had witnessed its use during the war when Radio Brazzaville had served as a propaganda instrument for the voice of Free France. Tudesq (1983:36) concurs, arguing that President Fulbert Youlou used radio to quell demonstrations against his regime in the Congo in 1960. Maurice Yameogo of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) used it in 1959 to attempt to unite his people against divisive elements coming through the airwaves of Radio Mali and Radio Sudan.

Tudesq (1983:39-40) asserts that cognizant of the important role of radio in consolidating the new nations, a number of countries launched ambitious plans during the post independence period to distribute cheap radio sets, while other countries established radio clubs. Both efforts, Tudesq (1983:40) argues, were designed to bring about awareness among rural peasants of their new governments. Early five and ten year development plans from the 1960s show a marked and near universal intention to expand broadcasting, at least radio, to rural areas. In this regard, Bourgault (1995:73) argues, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was instrumental. Inspired by technocrats charmed

with the model of the nation-state, UNESCO promoted the expansion of broadcasting services in Africa. Bourgault (1995:73) argues that UESCO used the logic of modernization as a basis for promoting acceptable baseline levels of media penetration. It advocated following minimum target saturation standards: for every 100 persons in the population, there should be ten daily newspapers, five radio receivers, two cinema seats, and two television receivers (UNESCO 1961). Tudesq (1983:69) asserts that the use of mass media for development was a highly salable idea, one which appealed to the new elites in the recently independent states. Radio permitted elites and governments to talk directly to villagers, thereby reorienting existing (precolonial) village hierarchies toward the central government.

Tunstall (1977:213) indicates that despite competition from TV, radio coverage did expand considerably in the 1960s, though ambitious plans for rural services with considerable rural autonomy tended to be abandoned. Boafo (1991:105) asserts that by the late 1960s, political pressures had mounted as regimes began to note the disappointment of their populations with the unfulfilled promises of the precolonial era. Regimes thus began to find various means to curb media access. And preference was given to telecommunication investment designed to consolidate central power, i.e., repeater stations disseminating messages from the capital cities where broadcasting could be more carefully monitored and controlled by insecure national governments. This pattern, Bourgault (1995:75) suggests has continued into the 1990s. Bourgault (1995:75) argues that until this decade, the vast majority of countries have maintained an average of one to four national services, usually beaming from the capital, often using repeater stations to extend the signals to rural areas.

In the 1990s, African radio was caught up in the wider political changes sweeping across the continent. Bourgault (1995:99) argues that political developments since the collapse of the Soviet Union have led many governments to allow (or fail to prohibit) the establishment of private radio stations. Related to this trend, Bourgault (1995:99) suggests, is a parallel move to consider decentralization of national radios. In most countries, decentralization is still in the stage of contemplation, part of a larger debate on political pluralism and public access to the means of communication. Bourgault (1995:99) indicates that much of the impetus for restructuring broadcasting has come out of national conferences held in the early 1990s, where the hue and cry for private access to the airwaves rose into a wholesale public insurgency against existing governments together with their apparatus of controlled media. The economic impetus for private broadcasting has come from the general liberalization of

African economies, most of which are the result of structural adjustment programs initiated in the 1980s.

Bourgault (1995:99) argues that a variety of trends are affecting the radio scene in Africa. In some cases, he argues, "pluralism" has meant more access by foreign owners to African audiences. In Benin in 1991, FM 90 went on air in Cotonou. This commercial station is a joint partnership between radio France Internationale and the *Office de Rediffusion et de Television du Benin* (OTB) (United States Information Agency 1992:1). As of 1991, Senegal was allowing Radio France Internationale to broadcast 18 hours a day on Dakar FM. In other countries, Bourgault (1995:100) writes, foreign license applicants compete with locals for frequencies. Lake (1993:4) asserts that in 1992 the government of Cote d'Ivoire allowed 17 contestants to compete for private FM broadcasting licenses in the country. Of these, only five were accepted. Davies (1994:679-80) reports that in April 1994, the BBC launched BBC Afrique on 94.3 FM in Abidjan. Wunsch, Bratton, and Kareithi (1992:26) indicate that in 1992, a Zambian government privatization subcommittee was considering new laws for the governing of anticipated private radio media. The government, Wunsch, Bratton, and Kareithi (1992:26) states, had received inquiries from potential investors, the majority of them foreign, interested in operating urban-based FM services.

Uganda had plans in 1994 to launch its first private radio station, Radio Kampala. It was to be owned by two foreign nationals and a group of Ugandans. It planned to broadcast light music, entertainment, educational programs, and news bulletins (*Africa Communications*, May-June 1993:8). In 1995, Uganda had approved the licensing of seven private FM radio stations and two private television stations (Onyango-Obbo 1996). Some of the private-enterprise stations were already broadcasting by the end of 1995. By 1997 there were three commercial radio stations in the city, Kampala (van der Akker 1996).

Lake (1993:6) asserts that Mali and Burkina Faso present somewhat more diverse pictures of potential broadcast pluralism. As of mid-1993, there were 12 private radio stations operating in Mali. Bourgault (1995:101) asserts that as of 1994, many governments in Africa allowed tentative liberalization of the airwaves as they studied the situation??. Many were working on regulatory mechanisms which would govern new private broadcasting services. They were considering ways to decentralize existing government services. Bejot (1993:91) argues that Burkina Faso, for example, intended to establish a superior council for communication, which would govern the new private media. The Burkinabe government reaffirmed its intention to protect journalistic freedoms and to end the monopoly of the state in broadcasting. Since the

1990s when there were calls for African governments to liberalize their airwaves, many countries have privatized their respective telecommunication sectors and various FM stations have been licensed and established. What does seem guaranteed, is that powerful international broadcasting entities will make inroads into the domestic African media scene. Bourgault (1995:102) suggests that their presence could help to safeguard freedom of expression about domestic issues. But ominously, international radio stations could serve only "crowd out" domestic political views by offering their own slick programming or by creating a near monopoly over the available airwaves. Van der veur (2003:94) states that despite promises to privatize the airwaves, countries like Zimbabwe have yet to make a definitive move in that direction. Others, like Benin, were slow to act on promises of reform. It was 1997 before private radio stations began broadcasting in the country. However, these new stations are now allowed to operate without government interference despite sometimes critical commentary (U.S. Department of State 1999). Takirambudde (1995:37) writes that in Ghana, the ruling party reversed its restrictive licensing laws in 1991. The 1993 constitution also promises the 'freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media'. Despite the government's early closure of Radio Eye for operating without a license, more than thirty-six companies were granted radio and television licenses in 1995 (International Press Institute 1995). Accra currently boosts seven private FM radio stations and two private TV stations.

Mali has also seen a dramatic shift in ownership patterns. UNESCO reported in 1995 that there were fifteen private radio stations operating in the country (UNESCO 1996). By 1997, the number of private stations had grown to thirty (Coles 1998). Today, the country has fifteen private radio stations in Bamako and an additional forty independent broadcasting facilities in operation throughout the country. Van der veur (2003:94) states that while the governments of Mozambique and Tanzania have chosen to maintain control of state broadcasting facilities, both have seen a surge in the number of private broadcasters. In Tanzania, state broadcasting competes with private FM radio and television stations. Passage of the 1993 Broadcasting Act resulted in an explosion in the number of television stations in the capital of Dar es Salaam. Since the act was passed, licenses have been granted to eight private television stations and eleven private radio stations, with five private television stations currently operating in the capital city. In Burkina Faso, the government has also allowed for the development of twenty-one independent radio stations and provided grants to even the most critical of these media outlets. Togo was slower to respond to calls of privatization of broadcasting and did not permit any private radio broadcasts until the

adoption of a new Press Code. Since then, eleven private radio stations have begun to compete with the two government owned stations. In addition to the state-run Liberian Broadcasting Corporation, there are six private radio stations that have emerged in the capital of Monrovia since the end of the civil war.

Fatoyinbo (2000:2) argues that radio is undoubtedly the most powerful instrument for nation-building in Africa. Given its oral tradition, it is a medium through which all Africans can be reached easily. In fact, radio has picked up as traditional media systems are being discarded. But, as is often the case in Africa, dualism also subsists in the media -the old coexisting with the modern. Fatoyinbo (2000:2) suggests that there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of radio in Africa. New technology is making equipment lighter, smaller and less expensive. Direct access to information on the Internet will probably prompt officials to loosen their grip. And there is likely to be a change of mentality with the slow but steady influx of foreign radio networks such as RFI, the BBC and Voice of America, which may end up softening political rigidity.

Fatoyinbo (2000:3) asserts that the expansion of radio, particularly rural and community radio, is reducing the impact of these traditional systems. Unfortunately, radio broadcasting in Africa has many structural weaknesses. Fatoyinbo (2000:3) argues that the establishment of private radio stations has expanded the coverage and the plurality of information access to many segments of the population, particularly the urban and peri-urban poor. The negative effects have been the extreme focus of the private radio stations on commercialism and the external cultural domination conveyed through their music. Bourgault (1995:102) indicates that the current spate of enthusiasm over newly burgeoning radio services in Africa seems preoccupied with urban entertainment services and middle-class political concerns over media access. Meanwhile would-be private media owners are concerned very much with potential profits. Unfortunately, little attention or energy has yet been devoted to providing genuinely rural-based broadcasting services to the media-starved regions of the hinterlands.

Development of Africa's media

The last decade and half in African history has witnessed dramatic changes in the media terrain on the continent, with most of the new developments occurring alongside or even signaling the opening up of political space in different countries as single party and military rule went into decline and multi-party systems were introduced. Fatoyinbo (2000:6) indicates that the African media has been for long been in chains and under the control of the Africa leaders and their collaborators, multinationals corporations. At different times they have

served as an instrument readily available to influence decisions and pass false information to civil society, though they have also been useful in the enthronement of democracy in Africa. The media in Africa, Fatoyinbo (2000:6) argues, could be said to have been retarding the pace of African development, since they have always put profit, greed and self-enrichment before the mandate and trust they owe to the masses.

Fatoyinbo (2000:6) asserts that except in those countries undergoing serious social and political crises (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville, Somalia) the mass media in Africa have undergone tremendous, and generally positive, changes in the last decade. As a result of the democracy movement of the early 1990s, the monopoly of media by government has been broken. In virtually every African country, private newspapers are flourishing. But equally important is the fact that the world-wide revolution in information and communications technologies (ICTs) was refracted into Africa in ways which has had a transformatory effect on the media terrain on the continent. Fatoyinbo (2000:1) argues that ten years ago, in most French-speaking countries in West Africa, there was usually just one national daily newspaper; invariably it was government-owned, with a few privately-sponsored newspapers struggling to survive as weeklies, biweeklies and monthlies.

The changes which have occurred are visible enough even to the most casual of observers: the collapse of the monopoly of the state on the print and electronic media, with the emergence, indeed proliferation of privately-owned and managed radio and television stations, as well as newspapers; the growth and spread of the use of mobile telephone technology to deliver and receive news; the deployment of dedicated satellite spaces for enhancing territorial coverage and transmission quality; the adoption of new electronic printing technologies that facilitate the simultaneous production and distribution of newspapers from multiple sites; and the rapid spread of access to and use of the internet as a medium for accessing news and for disseminating information.[3] These developments have not only re-shaped the ways in which news is produced and distributed but also the mode of consumption of information, the publics that consume news, and the type of news that is sought after.

The face of broadcasting in Africa has changed almost beyond recognition over the past decade. The winds of change in the 1990s heralded the end of many government-controlled media monopolies, with radio and television seeing particularly remarkable levels of change. Where radio stations were once the exclusive preserve of dictorial governments, they are now

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[3] The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) (2005:1).

flourishing in almost every African country. Television has undergone a similar, but less dramatic change with the appearance of private television stations, particularly via the medium of satellite. The broadcasting industry today is dynamic and diverse, hosting a growing number of private operators in a young and exuberant market.[4] Fatoyinbo (2000:1) argues that the strongest government media monopoly broken in the last decade is that of the radio. He asserts that government authorities have always considered radio and television broadcasting as their own cherished territory, not to be penetrated by private operators. He posits:

> Now, in almost every country in Africa, private radio stations proliferate, most of them broadcasting on frequency modulation (FM) Channels, with relatively low output and coverage area. Similar developments, though not so pronounced, have taken place in television, with the privatization of ownership and the proliferation of cable and satellite broadcasting or relay stations (Fatoyinbo, 2000:1)[5]

Fatoyinbo (2000:2) argues that despite its growth, the African mass media system faces age-old problems stemming from poor ownership structure, a weak financial base, low quality staff (particularly journalists), lack of access to information, and conflict with authorities. Of all the media, newspapers remain the most combative and aggressive in their efforts to develop editorial independence, open up the society, and make themselves relevant. Fatoyinbo (2000:2) asserts that in Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda and Cameroon, not to mention Nigeria under the late General Abacha, newspapers have been confronting the authorities in their efforts to broaden the debate on national issues. Unfortunately however, the focus of many of the newspapers is still overwhelmingly political and personality-oriented, and less on issues of development. The screaming headlines on the front pages highlight corruption, political in-fighting, scandals, or the family crises of personalities. There is much superficial treatment of news and information. Kupe (2003:2) concurs, identifying several problems the media in Africa still faces. First, he argues that the African media systems are very small urban phenomena. A majority of the population in African countries

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[4] The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) (2005:1).

[5] See Ogbondah (2002:55-80) who has written extensively on media laws in political transition in Africa. Ogbondah (2002:55-56) argues that the nature of autocratic rule that preceded the present regime transition was such that it left little or no room for the media to express independent views. Those in power constantly threatened their freedom. On media ownership, Ogbondah (2002:60) contend that the enactment of constitutional provisions that facilitates the development of privately owned media in African countries was an important development in the 1990s. The result of this privatization of ownership of the media is a rapid growth in newspapers and radio stations. Ogbondah (2002:60) asserts that African governments have also permitted privately owned radio stations to be established, although they have been slower in giving up the monopoly in this field.

lives in the rural areas. Even in the urban areas the penetration and availability of the media is not uniform. Circulation of, for example, daily newspapers are very small. Most countries have one major national daily whose widest circulation is in the capital city. Second, when it comes to the print media it is only those who can read and write and have the purchasing power who have access to the limited titles available. Levels of literacy vary from country to country but it is an accurate statement to say that levels of illiteracy are high.

Third, he asserts that the African media systems are so undercapitalized that existence is precarious and the mortality of newspapers and magazines is very high. This is compounded by poor management and poor distribution systems. Kupe (2003:2) argues that the transport networks are so underdeveloped that daily newspapers reach parts of the country days after publication. Radio, which is the nearest to being a mass medium in Africa, suffers the same handicaps: transmission equipment that does not cover the national territory, weak signals, radio sets that are too expensive to a large section of the population, batteries which are both expensive and in some countries difficult to find. Kupe (2003:3) suggests that television does not even exist in some countries; where it does the cost of sets is prohibitive and it is only available where there is electricity, which is normally the urban centers. Kupe (2003:3) asserts that in terms of content, most programming is cheap and old programmes from Europe, North America and Australia. Fourth, contrary to the desires of the media and development advocates, perhaps the media in Africa is used more for its entertainment value than its ability to inform or teach people how to improve their living standards. Kupe (2003:4) accentuates that certainly most mainstream media which is dominant in Africa hardly contain the so-called development programmes; rather, they carry promises of development by politicians and threats against "elements bent on destabilising the nation." The material that is "free" from the shallow promises and dire threats is entertainment.

Television in Africa

Bourgault (1995:104) posit that the television age began in Africa with the inauguration of WNTV in Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1959. A second station soon followed at Enugu, Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria had two television stations before independence from Great Britain in October 1960. Bourgault (1995:104) contend that television was also introduced before independence in Kenya, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where it served mainly the expatriate community. In most of other countries, TV was established just after independence in the early to mid-1960s. In some countries financial constraints or political consideration delayed the inauguration of TV broadcasting services until the 1970s.

Bourgault (1995:104) asserts that a few countries resisted TV for a long time. Namibia obtained a television service in 1983. Burundi and Mauritania did not have TV until 1984. Cameroon delayed television service until 1986. Chad waited until 1987; Lesotho until 1988; and Botswana until 1989. Taylor (1992:4) argues that geographical TV coverage on the continent ranges from 1 percent to 90 percent with a median coverage of 30 percent. And population coverage varies from 10 to 100 percent with 40 percent being the median value. Bourgault (1995:105) argues that the big rush to television came for most countries just after independence. Television, like a national carrier, he argues, was seen as a symbol of national status. Bourgault (1995:105) indicate that though more attention has been paid to television hardware than software, the television signals is most countries have never gotten very far beyond the capital city.

The 1990s witnessed the beginning of changes in broadcasting in Africa that have been described as "liberalization of the airwaves".[6] Kupe (2003:2) argues that liberalization of the airwaves is a reference to a process that has led to the emergence of private broadcasters and to a much lesser extent and in a very few countries, "community" broadcasters. This has also included the emergence and growth of satellite and subscription or pay service. By 2002, direct to home satellite TV had reached 41 countries in Africa. Television in Africa is improving and is gradually becoming a powerful instrument for public education, entertainment and information.

Snyman and Bristowe (2001:1) argue that the launch of the PAS4 commercial satellite in 1995 marked the beginning of a new era of opportunities and challenges for Africa's broadcasting industry. The commercial satellite wrestled control of programming distribution and reception away from governments. Snyman and Bristowe (2001:1) assert that the most influential and successful player commanding Africa's broadcast industry from the sky is undoubtedly the South African-based Multi-Choice Africa (MCA). Its satellite service bouquet, DStv, launched in 1995, was not only a pioneer in television on this continent, but was one of the first in the world to offer digital satellite television viewing. Snyman and Bristowe (2001:1) indicate that today DStv boasts 400 000 subscribers, averaging a remarkable 30 percent growth per year. Snyman and Bristowe (2001:2) states that through its

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[6] See Van der Veur (2002:93) who argues that in the mid 1980s there were virtually no non-governmental radio stations in Africa south of the Sahara, by 1995 there were at least 137 broadcasters in twenty-seven countries. Van der Veur (2002:93) asserts that to compete in the post-Cold war era, countries are also finding they must have state-of-the-art communications systems. Making the decline of short wave broadcasting, Van der Veur (2002:94) argues, the trend among international radio broadcasters is to take advantage of privatization to develop a network of affiliated FM stations across the continent.

holding company, MIHH, MultiChoice not only provides digital satellite transmission, but analogue and other pay-television platform services to a total of 1,9 million house-holds in more than 40 countries. Its sister company, Electronic Media Network Limited (M-Net), was granted the first pay-television license on the continent. It became South Africa's first analogue (terrestrial) pay-TV service in 1986 and is recognised today as Africa's most popular "movie channel" with more than 1,2 million subscribers.[7] Snyman and Bristowe (2001:2) reports that MultiChoice broadcasts DStv on its C-band and Ku-band direct-to-home (DTH) satellite bouquets, covering sub-Saharan and Southern Africa respectively. The Ku-band bouquet comprises close to 50 live channels on an available capacity of seven satellite transponders. Some 40 channels are beamed into Africa via C-band on four transponders.

Snyman and Bristowe (2001:2) writes that Canal+ Horizon/Le Sat grouping, subsidiary of the French pay-TV operator Canal plus, is another influential player in the market. Le Sat (Satellite Africa Television) is currently available to subscribers either via Direct-to-Home (DTH) or terrestrial (MMDS -Multichannel Multipoint Distribution System) re-broadcast, using both France Telecom's uplink facilities and part of its transponder quota on INTEL-SAT 803. Snyman and Bristowe (2001:3) opine that both MultiChoice and the Canal+ Horizon/Le Sat combination offer multi-channel programming to various markets, especially targeting middle class Africa through re-broadcast partnerships across the continent. MultiChoice serves the English speaking countries in Africa, whilst Canal+ Horizon targets the French. Snyman and Bristowe (2001:3) argue that the two coexist quite comfortably, carrying each other's programming after agreeing in 1997 not to infringe on the other's territories.

As the private TV stations are being established, they are forcing the government-owned stations to liven up. Fatoyinbo (2000:3) opines that official television stations are under pressure to move their focus away from reporting the activities and official communiqués of the president and government ministers. One such example is South Africa's government owned SABC. Snyman and Bristowe (2001:4) assert that the SABC provides news and editorials for 18 radio stations and four television channels. It also supplies content for an international radio station, Channel Africa, and an African-wide satellite television news service, SABC Africa, with coverage levered off the MultiChoice DStv bouquet. Snyman and Bristowe (2001:4) suggest that there is a growing awareness and acceptance of this service in Africa, with some national broadcasters entering into negotiations with the SABC for local re-

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[7] Van der Veur (2002:97) asserts that M-Net and its Multi-Channel Africa is making significant inroads, not only into quarters traditionally served by the SABC, but also markets across the continent.

broadcast rights. Snyman and Bristowe (2001:5) contend that the SABC has positioned this news service to be the news service of Africa. In the same way that CNN and the BBC are perceived as being the major providers of news in the western world, the SABC Africa channels have the potential to be the provider of choice for in-depth coverage of Africa - and from an African viewpoint.

However, Fatoyinbo (2000:2) argues, many of the new private stations face major problems. Most of them are underfunded, overly commercialized, and have become re-transmitters of programs by powerful, Western TV stations. This invasion of African TV by external programs is mainly due to the weak financial base of the stations and the lack of local production capacities. Fatoyinbo (2000:2) asserts that stations cannot produce because they do not have the equipment. Very often, there are no cameras to go on a city reportage, not to speak of organizing the coverage of events in rural areas- unless, of course, the minister is visiting.

Internet and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Internet's threat to news agencies comes mainly from two factors: its multimedia capacity; and its democratization of information production, access and distribution.[8] Fatoyinbo (2000:4) asserts that the monopoly enjoyed by news agencies in the collection, processing and distribution of news no longer exists. Fatoyinbo (2000:4) argues that it is now easy for individuals or organizations to get their information disseminated throughout the world via the information highway. News and information can now be packed not only in words, but also in sound, pictures and moving images. This, he suggests, is a far cry from the one-dimensional process of information flow in news agencies and its single medium mode of distribution. Africa has the world's lowest use of Internet and information technology.[9] Yet,

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[8] See Leslie (2002:107) on Internet and Africa.
[9] See Jensen (2003) on ICT in Africa: A Status Report. This is his latest ICT status report for Africa.
Jansen (2003:86) asserts that the environment for networked readiness has improved relatively rapidly in most urban areas in Africa. Five years ago, only a handful of countries had local Internet access or mobile telephones; now, devices and access are available in virtually every major city. Hundreds of new radio stations and newspapers have been licensed over the last few years and digital satellite television has also become widely available. The "digital divide" however, is still at its most extreme in Africa. In absolute terms, networked readiness is still at a very early stage of development compared to other regions of the world. Jansen (2003:86) argues that overall, a substantial increase in the rate of expansion and modernization of fixed networks is currently taking place, along with an explosion of mobile networks. The number of main lines in Africa grew about 9 percent per year between 1995 and 2001 although the overall fixed line teledensity as of 2001 is still only about one in 40 inhabitants, and one in 130 in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa). Jansen (2003:86) asserts that overall, the number of fixed lines increased from 12.5 million to 21 million across Africa between 1995 and 2001, a teledensity growth rate of 6.7 percent (i.e., taking into account population growth). North Africa had 11.4 million of these fixed lines and South Africa, 5 million lines; this means there were only 4.6 million lines in the rest of the continent.

these offer the greatest hope for the future. The primary commodity of the 21st Century will be information; information translated into knowledge, education and savoir-faire (see Jensen 2003).[10]

Wasserman (2003:2) argues that the emergence and development of Information and Communication technologies and especially the Internet has brought in its wake hope of increased exchanges between people geographically separated, dreams of economic prosperity, a new sense of interconnectedness and the optimistic belief in development and change even in the lives of Africans. While the marketing hype around the so-called "new media" has often been inspired by to neo-liberal ideologies (Lister et al., 2003:11), enthusiasm for its potential in a range of other areas like governance, education and economic development has also been pervasive. Baber (2002: 287) asserts that although much of the optimism has been tempered by more realistic expectations of what these new technologies can achieve, their usage in democratic processes seems to be increasing. Not only do these

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Jansen (2003:87) contend that the situation is not quite as bad as it would appear, however, because of the penetration of mobile networks, where subscribers (now numbering 23.5 million) have surpassed fixed line users in most countries; this demonstrates that there is pent-up demand for basic voice services. Jansen (2003:87) indicates that most of the subscribers use prepaid accounts, and because of the low cost and long range of the cellular base stations, many rural areas have also been covered. But the high cost of mobile usage (US$0.25 to US$0.50/minute) makes it too expensive for regular local calls or Internet access. A common response to this is the use of text messaging; in some countries, for example, Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa, text messaging now includes delivery of information services such as news, weather, and market prices.

Jansen (2003:89) indicates that the use of the Internet is a good indicator of the use of information and communication technologies, as such use requires the integration of many of individual components—electricity, telecommunications infrastructure, computers, and the skills to use them. Jansen (2003:89) asserts that both the number of Internet users and the amount of international bandwidth is still growing strongly across the continent. In Africa, Jansen (2003:89) argues, the pattern of Internet diffusion has been similar to that of the mobile telephone networks. Although the Internet is not quite as widespread, it preceded the mobile telephone explosion; its greatest impact is at the top end of business and in wealthy families, primarily in major urban areas. Jansen (2003:89) contend that the rates of growth seen in the 1990s have slowed in most countries, because most users who can afford a computer and telephone have already obtained connections. However, although the total number of dial-up subscriber accounts is readily available, the large number of shared dial-up accounts, along with the relatively high use of public access services such as telecenters, and cybercafés, make it difficult to measure the total number of Internet users.

[10] The NEPAD Council ICT Departments (2007) says that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are shrinking the world, making it possible for people from one part of the world to work for companies in other parts of the world without leaving their own countries. Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) is significantly reducing the cost of voice communications for businesses and residences all over the world. Professional and academic courses can now be offered through electronic enabled distance learning and web casts. Educational institutions separated by thousands of kilometers can now share resources and offer common courses through video conferencing and e-lab programs. As an example, Massachusetts Institute of Technology has developed an e-Labs program where Institutions from anywhere in the world may join the program and run laboratory sessions remotely. In many parts of the world, the cost and quality of research has been lowered through the use of the Internet as a research tool and the use of less expensive and easily accessible electronic journals. Unfortunately, NEPAD states, these fast paced developments require high speed or broadband Internet access which is still out of reach of most Africans. Internet penetration, including traditional dial-up access, is only about 2% in Africa – the lowest in the world. There are only about 10 Internet exchange points which are isolated from one another. Only a handful of African countries have been able to deploy broadband access networks, which include mostly digital subscriber lines (DSL) and wireless broadband.

new media technologies facilitate formal political participation (so-called "e-governance"), but they also provide the means for social movements, activist groupings or minority groups to engage with these processes on a global level (see Agre, 2002; Arnold & Plymire, 2000; Lax, 2000; Mason, 2001:96; Struwig & Conradie, 2003). As Rheingold (2003) points out, new media technologies bring about interactive, "many-to-many" communication that have provided opportunities (and problems) for activists in three key areas: dissemination of alternative news; creating virtual public spheres; and organizing collective political action.[11] Wasserman (2003:3) argues that for a variety of reasons, including its potential to shift power balances between states and citizens; to enable countries to "leapfrog" stages of infrastructural development; and the democratic participation that might be stimulated by its interactivity, new media technologies are often seen as a development tool for African countries (see also Mutume, 2003; Lister et al., 2003:173; Okoth, 2003).

The development of ICTs on the continent has formed an important part of the planning of the African Union and Nepad.[12] Wasserman (2003:3) asserts that the African Union (AU) in 2003 passed a resolution noting the importance of the information society for economic, socio-political and cultural development of African countries and an e-Africa Commission was set up. This statement had been preceded by other resolutions like the Africa Information Society Initiative launched by the Organisation for African Unity in 1996 and a declaration in Bamako, Mali, in 2002 urging African countries to remove duties on ICT hardware and software (see Mutume, 2003). In the 2003 review of the implementation of Nepad's Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan (STAP), mention is made of progress regarding the harmonisation of telecommunications and specifically ICT policy and regulatory frameworks in the region. This process is also listed as one of the twenty top priority STAP projects and as a Nepad flagship project (Nepad, 2003).

Wasserman (2003:3) argues that despite this focus contained in AU and Nepad policy documents, African civil society has also already engaged with ICT policies on a continental level. Wasserman (2003:3) states that the African Civil Society Caucus, a group of NGO's

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[11] Burnett & Marshall (2003:47) outline the different aspects of internet communication as one-to-many (similar to traditional media), many-to-one (enabling random selection by individual users) and many-to-many (enabling users to also produce information) communication. Appropriation of new media in African contexts might necessitate modifications to this model.

[12] The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a vision and strategic framework for Africa's renewal. NEPAD is designed to address the current challenges facing the African continent. Issues such as the escalating poverty levels, underdevelopment and the continued marginalisation of Africa needed a new radical intervention, spearheaded by African leaders, to develop a new Vision that would guarantee Africa's Renewal.

participating in the World Summit on the Information Society, have called on governments to balance commercialisation of the ICT sector with the development of public communication facilities (see Mutume, 2003). A group of African Civil Society Organisations (ACSO) has called on the African Union to also involve civil society in its processes, and has undertaken to "continue to engage with Nepad" (ACSO, 2003). Bond (2002:54-55) indicates that this plea by CSOs for involvement in policymaking can be seen against the background of criticism leveled against Nepad for favouring endorsements from global elites at the expense of alliances with social, labour and environmental movements. Strategies have been devised aiming at the participation of African civil society in the institutions of the newly established African Union (Pambazuka News, 2003).

Gurak & Logie (2003:25) argue that new media like the Internet can assist in network formation, makes sense when bearing in mind that the Internet has been "about networking" from its inception: "not just networks of wires and hubs but networks of people." Gurak & Logie (2003:43-44) assert that the Internet's capability of linking people and forming issue-centered communities can be seen in numerous petitions being circulated and protest networks being formed. One example of such an international protest network, Kidd (2003:54) indicates, is the Independent Media Center (IMC) with its site at www.indymedia.org. The IMC network, Kidd (2003:62) argues, is an illustration of the potential the Internet has to serve as a new media "commons" where community movements, activists, and social interest groups may share information more freely and with less of the space limitations and distribution problems than is the case in traditional media. The Internet, however, in some ways excludes, due to its commercialisation, inequality of access and subjection to surveillance by authorities. Kidd (2003:58) argues that through over-arching networks such as the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), a network linking other NGO networks, local struggles are, at relative low cost and with high speed, amplified across a global support system. Cultural minorities have also successfully appropriated the Internet for empowerment. Many examples exist, ranging from Hawaiians (see Wood, 1997); Indian diaspora in the USA (see Mallapragada, 2000) and the Cherokee Indians (see Arnold & Plymire, 2000). The formation of virtual communities in cyberspace makes it possible for groupings such as these to gain social power and consolidate their cultural identities in spite of societal constraints or geographical borders by producing and circulating their own knowledge (Arnold & Plymire, 2000:188).

From these and other examples it is clear that ICTs, especially the Internet and email, can broaden the scope and reach of local struggles, disembed them from their localities and re-embed them in the global arena (see Giddens, quoted in Negus & Román-Velázquez 2000:332). Wasserman (2003:6) asserts that some of the advantages that the Internet holds for grassroots networks are that the medium is suited towards a non-hierarchical structure and that it reduces the need for centralized communication. As a means of communication, the Internet can assist activists to mobilize participation by augmenting existing communication methods and overcoming their limitations. The notion that the Internet signifies a radical break with the old ways in which society will be ordered, has however been amended by those proposing the theory of "amplification" (see Agre, 2002; Brants, 2002), contending that the Internet will serve to enlarge and accelerate processes already in place in societies and organisations, rather than creating entirely new forces. Agre (2002:315-316) asserts that rather than a revolutionising force, the Internet is embedded in larger networks of societal processes and amplifies existing social forces when appropriated for use by participants in the communication process. The existence of the Internet - and especially the increased availability of inexpensive server links and affordable personal computers - has enabled a dramatic proliferation of completely new ways of communicating, networking, forming community, and maintaining diasporic identities (see Jones 1995, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996, and Turkle 1995). Spitulnik (2002:185) argues that gathering places for posting messages and having discussions about Africa have proliferated dramatically over the last few years, and take many different electronic forms such as email listservs (Ugandanet@bible.acu.edu; Kenya-net@AfricaOnline.com), Usenet groups (soc.culture.african; soc.culture.nigeria) and Web page guest books and chat/discussion forums. The development of media in Africa has been heralded as a step to greater democratic participation and?as? democracy involves a separation of powers and popular participation in governmental affairs.

During the era of the Enlightenment and 18th century democratic revolutions in Europe, so-called public spheres emerged where individuals could discuss and debate issues of common concern (see Habermas 1989). The public sphere was also a site where criticism of the state and existing society could circulate. Kellner (1997:1) argues that the institutions and spaces of the18th century democratic public sphere included newspapers, journals, and a press independent from state ownership and control, coffee houses where individuals read newspapers and engaged in political discussion, literary salons where ideas and criticism were produced, and public assemblies which were the sites of public oratory and debate. Mak'Ochieng (1994:1) concurs, suggesting that the African and Kenyan media are political

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public sphere(s). But with the major criticism[13] of the notion of a public sphere, especially of its bourgeois nature based on the exclusions of women, the poor, the uneducated and the ethnic minorities, is the concept of public sphere useful and applicable to Africa?

Public sphere in Africa

There is considerable literature on the media and democracy in Africa, especially after the so-called second liberation or revolution that is believed to have come in the wake of the winds of change that started in the former Soviet Bloc and spilt over into Africa. (Ansah 1988, 1992; Boafo 1992; Rønning 1993; Ziegler & Asante 1992; Heyden, et.al 2002). In the first three or so decades after independence most African governments embraced a developmental philosophy in their approach to political and economic issues (see for example Faringer 1991, Eribo and Jong-Ebot1997). Free at last from the yoke of colonialism, they then had good and legitimate reasons to make efforts to formulate and put into effect the best possible institutional structures and systems in politics, economics and social arrangements to address the people's educational, social and material needs. (see Ansah 1988, 1992; Mak'Ochieng 1993; Ziegler & Asante 1992). But there was another important aspect to the struggle for independence: the obvious and taken-for-granted promise of greater human freedom and respect for human rights that had been so grossly violated under colonialism. Mak'Ochieng (1994:5), however, asserts that with time, most African rulers cultivated politics of suppression and intolerance as their economies also failed to register meaningful improvement. The peoples of Africa have seen a tendency toward the creation of monolithic political institutions in most of their countries. This development can partly be attributed to the propensity by their rulers to deprive their subjects of the right to contribute to discussions about their well-being and, more important, to question how their governments went about achieving its well-being.

As has been differently put by various writers in African countries, the press was expected to forego - by being open to restrictions - some of its freedoms in order to serve the society's collective interests (Ansah 1988; 1992; Boyd-Barrett 1982; Golding 1977; Mak'Ochieng 1993; McQuail 1987; 1994; Mytton 1983; Omwanda 1991; Ziegler & Asante 1992). This is the point made by McQuail (1987:121) when he refers to the argument that, "in the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict, media operations, and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified".. These arguments and their

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[13] See Calhoun 1992; Scudson 1992; Fraser 1987; Young 1987; Thompson 1993,1995; Eley 1992; Kellner 1999 who have criticised Habermas theory of public sphere.

normative implications have been used to justify the adoption of an authoritarian system of political governance, and the concomitant abuse of various human rights and freedoms in general and the freedom of expression in particular. As Ansah (1988:9) puts it, "the virtual monopolization of the mass media has been explained in terms of the need to ensure that people are not distracted by `false propaganda', and that all media resources will be harnessed and directed towards national development".

Faringer (1991) suggests that the developing countries have not experienced mass media development in the context of booming economic growth or the rise of a powerful new class. Faringer (1991: xi) argues that African countries never have experienced real press freedom, neither during nor after colonialism. Faringer (1991:x) argues that the press remains an urban phenomenon, produced by an urban elite for the urban elite that is largely as ignorant about the rural population and their problems as the peasants are isolated from the urban life. Ogbondah (2002:55) concurs, arguing that the nature of autocratic rule that preceded the present transition was such that it left little or no room for the media to express independent views. Those in power constantly threatened their freedom. It made little difference if the ruling clique was civilian or military. The media were used to propagate the views of the ruling establishment or keep quiet.

With all the problems affecting media in Africa, do the media still have prospects to create/ be part of a public sphere? Several studies have perceived African media as a public sphere (see Moyo 1993; Ronning 1995; 1997; Mak'Ochieng 1994; Mansson 1999). Mak'Ochieng (1994:20) asserts that African media itself is a public sphere. He argues that in Kenya the government used Voice of Kenya (VOK) for the purpose of building, strengthening, consolidating the new nation and educating its citizens to understand their duties, their responsibilities, their privileges, their opportunities and the role they can play in making the nation what they want it to be. Faringer (1991) concurs, arguing that during the movement for independence and nationalism in Africa, the press, led by national-minded intellectuals, played an important role in ideological mobilization and advocating national unity and development. Faringer (1991: X) states that many leaders of the African independence movement were originally journalists, and envisioned the mass media as important agents for political change and national growth. The hope for a national press was that it would promote national integration, development, and ideological mobilization and contribute to education regarding basic economic needs. Hyden and Leslie (2002:11) concur, arguing that media independent of government have emerged in virtually every sub-Saharan African country.

What was once a media desert has become a landscape flourishing with newspapers, radio and television stations, many of which have a very distinct perception of their own role in the process of creating and sustaining an element of political pluralism.

Hyden and Leslie (2002:12) suggest that the privately owned newspapers that have emerged in recent years play a primarily role in the process of democratization, first, as a means of probing government policies and behavior and second to help foster a discursive public realm, in which issues of national or local concern are ventilated in an open and free fashion. They argue that what the media is doing today is to contribute to the institutionalization of a communicative space which enables actors to state their real concerns about issues at hand in the expectation they will be taken seriously, if not to be shared. Hyden and Leslie (2002:16) argue that the trend of reliance on radio in Africa is likely to continue in the foreseeable future. Especially interesting in the past few years has been the rapid expansion of privately owned FM stations catering for urban audiences. Most of these stations stay away from political involvement, but by using call-in opportunities for listeners, radio is becoming more participatory and interactive.

Mak'Ochieng (1994:17), however, argues that for the African media to fully become part of a public sphere, they should be free, to a substantial degree, from political and economic constraints and pressures from the state and from organized and vested economic and other interests. Some of the above pressures can easily be affected when the media are owned by the state, political party or by private capital. Mak'Ochieng (1994:18) asserts that in the case of public ownership by the state, the media should be organized and run in a way that greatly minimizes political interference. In the case of other modes of ownership, the media system should be organized so that most interested parties have access to at least some medium of public communication, and particularly in the publicly recognized main medium.

The notion of a public sphere is relevant to Africa based on the idea of a positive, universalist view of the desirability of the public sphere as part of the political project of building and strengthening democracy around the world. The notion of a public sphere is also relevant to Africa because it shapes our thoughts, either through television, radio, print or the Internet. Dahlgren (1991:9) argues that under the periods of liberal and advanced capitalism when? where? there have existed other fora which have shaped people's political consciousness, served as networks for exchange of information, rumour and gossip, and provided setting for cultural expression and this is what the media as a public sphere is doing in Africa. The

category concept of the public sphere can help to order these media patterns (alternative, establishment, public, private etc) in terms of the normative notions of citizen access and participation in the political process. It also provides a focused political vision. The notion of a public sphere is relevant to Africa, because through the public sphere there is information which is a common asset that is essential to advancing teaching, learning, and civic participation, and also encourages the development of civic society. It is also relevant because since Africa is a developing continent, both democratically and economically, citizens need a commons where they speak freely, discern different perspectives, and share similar interests and concerns. Public spheres in Africa will develop an alternative to the process of commodification and market driven mechanism.

I argue that the concept of the public sphere is relevant to Africa because the media in Africa have been able to distribute information necessary for citizens to make an informed choice in historical events such as elections; they facilitate the formation of public opinion by providing an independent forum for debate, and they enable the people to shape the conduct of government by articulating their views. As Dahlgren and Parks (1991:30) argue, the media are thus the principle institutions of the public sphere. There are many organizations and activists that explicitly embrace this view. For example, the global civil society network CIVICUS aims to help advance regional, national and international initiatives to strengthen the capacity of civil society.[14]

Gillwald (1993:5) argues that the media in all its forms provides an obvious conduit for democratic participation and education. The media, he asserts, have already gone some way to revealing the hidden issues of a private sphere specifically for women, through popular magazines and programmes. On a more educative and participatory level, Gillwald (1993:6) argues, television and radio listener clubs of women in Zimbabwe have helped counter the isolation of domesticity and sometimes consciously prepared women for participation in industry. The media, by providing public spheres of political participation, could then play a crucial role in forming a collective identity.

Conclusion

Good governance is universally acknowledged as a crucial precursor for development in Africa. Free and effective media play a vital role in improving that governance. African countries need effective media because they cannot otherwise hope to democratise, prosper,

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[14] See CIVICUS website: www.civicus.org.

or engage with the rest of the world as equals. Africa will continue to need an effective pluralist media embodying a wide variety of forms, content, and funding models, and operating at local, national and regional levels. This paper has looked at the development of mass media in Africa and the enormous link that exists between the African media systems and their colonies. The study found that mass media in Africa have undergone tremendous changes in the last decade. Fatoyinbo (2000:1) argues that the monopoly by government has been broken. Radio and television are improving and are gradually becoming powerful instruments for public information and education. However, despite progress made, mass media in Africa remains constrained by acute problems including a lack of financial, human and material resources. These constraints could have a profound impact on the possibility of the African media to create public spheres for democratic participation.

The right to receive and impart information is, of course, guaranteed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the mass media are key actors in preserving that right. But the media, in all oral, print, broadcast and electronic forms, are also a key factor in political, economic and social development. Indeed the development and management of effective independent media has historically been a key factor in the success of modern nation-states. In the case of nascent democratic states like many of those in Africa, Fiske de Gouveia (2005:2) suggests, the media's role can be said to be fourfold. *Firstly*, the media plays an important role in the day-to-day conduct of representative democracy, acting as the so-called "fourth estate", informing citizens of government activity, facilitating the electoral process, and challenging bad governance. *Secondly*, an effective media system is a requirement for any country seeking to achieve advanced economic development, stimulating enterprise through advertising and the exchange of knowledge. *Thirdly*, the media is an important tool in the shaping of a sense of national identity, *Fourthly*, the behaviour of the media can have significant security implications, with the capacity to inflame hatred, passion and aggression, such as the media's role in inciting violence in Rwanda; or ease the security situation, for example, by acting as a safety valve for political discontent.

The aim of this paper is not, however, to revisit well-worn arguments about the relationship between media and democratisation, or media and development. Nor has it been conceived as a detailed manifesto for donor action. These can only follow with more comprehensive research. It is intended instead to look at the state of the media in Africa and how the media has developed. From the view that for Africa to thrive the media landscape must change the study established some positive findings. The study found that the mass media in Africa have

undergone tremendous, and generally positive, changes in the last decade. The study found that as a result of the democracy movement of the early 1990s, the monopoly of media by government had been broken. Fatoyinbo (2000:2) asserts that in virtually every African country, private newspapers are flourishing. Ten years ago, he argues, in most French-speaking countries in West Africa, there was usually just one national daily newspaper; invariably it was government-owned, with a few privately-sponsored newspapers struggling to survive as weeklies, biweeklies and monthlies. Today, in a city like Cotonou, Benin, he states, there are over eight daily newspapers-all but one are privately-owned-and almost every year, a new title appears on the street. The situation is similar in virtually every African country.

Historically, the media have played a complex political, economic and social role in Africa. The activities of the so-called "guerrilla typewriters" in the 1960s, for example, were a notable catalyst for change during the struggles for independence. Unfortunately the tradition of free, adversarial media pioneered by the "guerrilla typewriters" did not persist in the post-colonial era. Fiske de Gouveia (2005:4) contend that, in many cases, in the aftermath of independence, governments who had come to power in the name of democracy abandoned the principles of free media which they had themselves advocated. Indigenous African media output since the 1960s has too often resembled so-called "protocol news", typically working to national government priorities rather than the adversarial approach required in nascent democracies. Fiske de Gouveia (2005:5) argues that during the 1980s, UNESCO recommended that newspaper circulation should achieve a minimum of 100 copies per 1000 people. In Africa, newspaper circulation averaged 10 copies per 1000 people.

Although actual performance has been weak, aspirational statements of intent regarding the media have continued. The 1991 UNESCO Windhoek declaration, for example, promoted the need for an "independent and pluralistic media" across Africa noting that "the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development".[15] At another gathering ten years later, appropriately named 'Windhoek +10', participants addressed the need for "independence and pluralism in radio and television broadcasting", asserting that "all state and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, that are accountable to all strata of the people as represented by

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[15] UNESCO 'Declaration on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Media'. Windhoek 3/5/91

an independent board, and that serve the overall public interest, avoiding one-sided reporting and programming in regard to religion, political belief, culture, race and gender".[16] Despite such declarations, the development of a genuinely pluralistic print and broadcast media in Africa has been fitful. The prevalence of state-controlled broadcast media and financially vulnerable print media has been a common national model. As a consequence the African media has failed to meet the political, economic and social needs of the continent.

Today's Africa's media picture is mixed. On one hand there is the example of South Africa whose largely professional media is of a high standard. On the other hand countries like Zimbabwe, Equatorial Guinea and Eritrea have taken deliberate steps to limit all media scrutiny, reportedly "expelling foreign journalists, banning international human rights groups, and trying to control Internet access".[17] Rwanda, Gabon and Ethiopia have demonstrated similar tendencies. At the same time, security remains a major issue for journalists working in countries like Somalia, the Central African Republic (CAR), Nigeria, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), although statistically journalists in Africa are less at risk than those working in the Middle East and Latin America. Fiske de Gouveia (2005:7) asserts that where governments choose not to employ heavy-handedness in their management of journalists and editors, they have often become skilled in applying more subtle pressure, for example, through pressure on advertisers and funders, or deliberate non-cooperation with local political journalists.

The fact is that the dream of a robust, independent, indigenous continent-wide African mass media is still far from becoming reality. There have been signs of improvement, and some commentators have perceived real and lasting change, suggesting, for example, that "what was once a media desert has become a landscape flourishing with newspapers, radio and TV stations".[18] This is not a vision, however, shared with confidence. Too many issues are unresolved. Many national governments have demonstrated reluctance to allow the development of an effective "fourth estate". Other concerns persist. For example, even where African television stations are relatively free of political interference, they typically use very little local material; other than clumsily-produced news and some entertainment programming, conspicuous dependence on Western programming is common. Funding also

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[16] UNESCO 'African Charter on Broadcasting', Windhoek 3/5/01

[17] Committee to Protect Journalists 'Attacks on the Press 2004' available at
www.cpj.org/attacks04/africa04/africa.html

[18] Hyden and Leslie (2002:11)

remains a key issue for many media outlets in Africa; failure rates for financial reasons are high. In the realm of indigenous Pan-African media, pickings are slim.

Internet access and use in Africa is simply too limited. At the same time, transnational satellite television stations like CNN and BBC World, although widely available, are inevitably inadequate for African audiences. Their coverage of African news and current affairs is too limited. De Gouveia (2005:7) argues that Africa cannot, and should not, rely on such sources for coverage of African issues. Similar concerns apply to radio stations like that of BBC World Service radio. Fiske de Gouveia (2005:7) asserts that although the BBC African Service, for example, has served the continent well, consistently acting as an effective, adversarial opposition, and so challenging the actions of autocratic regimes, African audiences will ultimately be better served by indigenous broadcasters.

This brief review of issues relating to the development of the media in Africa is not exhaustive or comprehensive. Nor will many of the issues raised come as surprise to media scholars. From the above discussions, I concur with Fatoyinbo (2000:1-3) when he argues that the media mass media in Africa have undergone tremendous changes in the last decade. I also agree that radio and television in Africa is improving and is gradually becoming a powerful instrument for public education, entertainment and information.

The study also looked at whether public sphere(s) existed in Africa. Several studies have perceived African media as a creator of and/or participant in public spheres. (see Moyo 1993; Ronning 1995; 1997; Mak'Ochieng 1994; Mansson 1999). Mak'Ochieng (1994:20) asserts that African media itself is a public sphere, because?. The study concurs with Mak'Ochieng (1994:16) when he argues that the media in any African country should play two significant roles in order to actively facilitate the democratic process. First, the African media should be a political sphere or public forum accessible to all contending political players, groups and interests whose objective is the deliberation of common public issues or affairs and the framing and influencing of public policy. The African media should also seek to redress the imbalance of power in society by broadening access to the public domain in these societies where elites have privileged access to it. Second, it should be an active, involved player or participant in such deliberations. This, Mak'Ochieng (1994:16) suggests, should be in the way prescribed by Curran (1991a) in the tradition of a radical democratic theory, very much akin to the Fourth Estate role. The African media should facilitate the functioning of representative organisations, but also expose their internal operations to public scrutiny and the play of

public opinion. They should therefore expose wrongdoing, correct, or help the correction of injustice, subject to critical scrutiny the exercise of power in all its manifestations.

For it to be able to fulfil these functions, Mak'Ochieng (1994:16) contend that the African media as a public sphere should be free, to a substantial degree, from political and economic constraints and pressures from the state and from organised and vested economic and other interests. Some of these pressures, Mak'Ochieng (1994:16) argues, can easily be affected when the media are owned by the state, political party or by private capital. In the case of public ownership by the state, the media should be organised and run in a way that greatly minimises political interference. In the case of other modes of ownership, the media system should be organised so that most interested parties have access to at least some medium of public communication, and particularly in the publicly recognised main medium.

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