

**TOWARDS A CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA ASSISTANCE FOR
'NEW MEDIA' DEVELOPMENT**

Thesis

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Abstract

The field of media assistance has grown ever more complex with the inclusion of ‘new media’ networks, channels, tools and practices (such as the Internet, satellite television, mobile devices, social media and citizen journalism) to the media development mix. Adding to the ferment is the increasing convergence between the formerly discrete terrains of ICT for development, media for development and (mass) media development. Much of the discussion regarding the utility and objectives of media development in general and ‘new media’ in particular has been viewed through a modernist and techno-determinist prism which offers a limited ideological view of media development and its objects and consequently, a limited set of communication approaches and strategies. This study contextualises the assumptions of media development historically and critically, with particular focus on new media’s roles and relationships with the media environment, and its objectives democratisation and development. Through the application of literature, theory and various research studies, this thesis establishes a broader view of new media’s role and diverse consequences for media development, democracy and development. The study recommends greater collaboration, contextual research and theorisation of media development and new media as part of mixed media systems and cognisant of the multi-dimensional natures of its objects of democracy and development. One implication is the need for professionalisation of the media development and media assistance sector. In relation to the influences of new media on media use and the media as an institution, it motivates the need to address digital divides and emphasise the sustainability of the practice of journalism.

Key Words:

new media, media assistance, media development, public diplomacy, foreign aid, media for development, media and democracy, political communication, technology, ICT, convergence, journalism

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the thesis, outlines its perceived value and offers an overview of the theoretical perspectives and objectives, as well as the method and forms of explication and analysis to be employed.

1.2 Research problem and background

In any nation state, media and information flows involve struggles over signification, knowledge and power (Marshall 2004). This study examines what are often termed media assistance and media development. It views them as constitutive phenomena that shape media messages, institutions, policies and mass communication mainly in developing country contexts. Media assistance, which supports the objects of ‘media development’, is founded on certain assumed positive political, social and economic effects of media, namely the fostering of democracy, freedom of expression, and social and economic development (Berger 2010a; Peters 2010). In 2008 alone, international media support mainly through bilateral assistance from countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, German, Japan and others amounted to \$430 million (Myers 2009). The goal of this study is to produce a coherent picture of media assistance as an influential and complex practice and its internal contradictions, with particular focus on new media’s roles and relationships with the media environment, democratisation and development.

This thesis contributes to a growing body of work on media assistance and media development (see Kumar 2004). It seeks to contextualise these practices historically and critically, in relation to ‘new media’ and, where possible, within a developing world and African context.

Most research into media assistance and media development emanates from studies to evaluate donor programmes and operations or those of their implementing partners (Miller 2003). Most of that research provided (and still does) a view of media development practices through what can be termed a prism of “Western liberal developmentalism” and rarely problematises the complexity of its primary objectives (Berger 2010a; LSE 2005). This study

provides a critical understanding of concepts, phenomena and processes connected to media development to help extend knowledge beyond quantitative mapping research and case-study reports. It synthesises key concepts and research to facilitate a point of departure for future study and action on related topics of new media and media development.

Over the past decade, media development and assistance advocates have recognised and expressed concern regarding the utility and influence of new media, particularly the significance of the Internet and mobile information devices on their goals (see Kalathil 2008; Puddephat 2007). Consequently, there is a growing body of literature devoted to the role and contribution of ICT and new media for fostering economic development and popular participation in political decision-making (Alzouma 2005). Media development is increasingly directed toward new media as media assistance organisations pursue projects that use the Internet or employ mobiles and networked media tools and platforms to generate, curate and share news and data in the public interest or for public benefit. Part of this study critiques claims that hold the benefits of new media and the ‘information age’ to be true axiomatically rather than needing to be substantiated through localised, informed and critical explication (see also Alzouma 2005 citing Bedi 1999:10). The rules and orders of traditional Western media development cannot be applied perfectly under regimes of communication that are being transformed by institutionalisation and domestication of new media in local contexts (Lüders 2008). At the same time, the viability of traditional business models of some Western media enterprises are failing, while the privileged position of mass media is questioned as mass media are no longer the only ones to produce messages for public dissemination. This further problematises historic assumptions about media assistance and has led to fresh criticism of Western media approaches and trajectories that have long been held out as exemplars to developing states. (Peters 2010; Lüders 2008). As will be shown, technocentrist discourse on ICTs and development is deeply rooted in philosophical and moral concepts that have shaped the relations between colonial Europe and Africa and which have had profound policy implications for international development agencies and developing countries (Alzouma 2005). The hope behind this thesis is to offer a detailed and critical theoretical foundation that may help media assistance stakeholders understand why and how best new media development might be supported within and alongside traditional media development.

1.3 Significance of the study

Little has been written on media assistance that critically analyses this phenomenon and its objects. Research by Zambian academic Francis Kasoma concluded there is a dire need for analysis of the influence of the donor community on the policy and performance of the media in Africa (1999).¹ Jo Ellen Fair and Hemant Shah called for greater policy research including institutional analysis of development agency coordination after a study of over 140 journal articles, book chapters and books relating to communication and development published between 1987 and 1996 (Servaes 2002). Since 2006, a number of initiatives, such as the Global Media Development Forum, Centre for International Media Assistance, Africa Media Development Initiative and UNESCO have produced or aggregated research focused on media development and media assistance (Banda 2006b). However, Kumar suggests that despite these recent efforts, scholarly books, articles in professional journals, and doctoral theses on the subject are almost negligible (2007). Such shortcomings have been blamed on ignorance about media assistance, and the perceived difficulty in gathering and analysing relevant information and data. The dearth of literature critical of the dominant approach, goals and institutions of media assistance has been attributed to a view that academics and freedom of expression consultants are often beneficiaries of the media development industry and may be circumspect about what they choose to write about the subject (Kumar 2007). In part, these absences and omissions have motivated this study's comprehensive literary review and critical approach to understand media development and assistance rather than undertake an evaluation of a specific media development project or donor and beneficiary relationships.

The focus on new media as a platform for media development was motivated by the need to challenge what may be designated as the dominant technocentrist positions of such authors as Toffler (1983) and Negroponte (1995). By applying the lens of cultural and media studies, this thesis shows the socially constructed nature of new media, attempts to explain how national media environments are changing, and highlights the need to reconsider long-standing paradigms and models to explain and regulate it (see also Gurevitch et al 2009). To this end, this study attempts to give media assistance professionals an understanding of the

¹ Kasoma's work suggested less a concern for media impact (i.e. impact on media) than media influence, particularly on the sovereignty and independence of local media systems. Media influence (rather than media impact) suggests that media use is one factor (though an influential one) among others that contribute to certain social, political and economic conditions or phenomena in ways that may not always be quantitatively or qualitatively assessed. Media impact suggests that effects of media are unlinear, direct and may be easily measured.

use of new media technologies and trends about which – as van der Werff argues – many have a limited understanding of their possible utility and import (2008).

1.4 Theoretical perspectives

New media² forms display hybridity based on their capacity for multiple reconfigurations, interactions and functions as networked digital data, channels and devices (Ross 2005). This is exemplified in multi-function tools like smartphones that reconfigure and combine services (for example, short message service, global positioning systems, telephony, networking) and media content (such as text, video, sound, still image) from multiple sources to engender new content and applications. Media assistance is similarly a hybrid inasmuch as it does not belong to a discrete discipline but borrows from democratic theory, public policy, law, development and cultural studies to inform its objects. Any analysis of media assistance or new media demands a critical multidisciplinary research approach. Drawing on Marxist epistemology, ‘critical’ approaches demystify how cultural forms may be used as tools for maintenance and/or contestation of power. This thesis shows moments where power is evident and identifies other points where power is hidden, and does so by undertaking a broad synthesis of literature in disciplines such as political theory, social science, communication science, computer-mediated communications and history. There is no grand theoretical framework to understand new media or media assistance, let alone their objects or interconnections. The goals and assumptions of media assistance, which are often framed in particular language of altruism, philanthropy and development, are therefore deconstructed and subjected to critical media theory to problematise the objects and practice.

Social constructivism also informs this research to the degree that this study emphasises the role of user (audience) agency both as an empowering and limiting factor in shaping the use of media for directly or indirectly contributing to the goals of local media development.

Other theoretical strands explored in this study include (but are not limited to):

- media assistance as political power (Thompson 1995; Price 2002);

² In this study, the term ‘new media’ refers to a specific concept or collective category in the singular form and as a term referring to plural forms or examples of new media. The phrase is therefore used in both ways in this study with the appropriate concord.

- normative theories of the media's role in democracy (Siebert et al 1956; McQuail 1994; Christians et al 2009);
- media and communication for development (Lerner 1958; Schramm 1964; Rogers 1962; Servaes 1991, 1995, 2002);
- the social shaping and socially shaped nature of technology (as reflected in Stöber 2004; Lister et al 2003);
- the digital divide (as reflected in Sonaike 2004; Alzouma 2005);
- Habermas's public sphere (as reflected in Bimber 1998; Poster 1995; Berger 1998 and others);
- the cultural production thesis (Marshall 2004)

This study does not develop new theory, but uses existing theories to map and understand the relationships between complex and sometimes overlapping concepts.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of eight chapters.

Chapter one introduces, motivates and delimits this study.

Chapter two provides an overview of international media assistance and media development and foreshadows discussion of new media as a channel for media development's principal objects (elaborated in Chapter six and Chapter seven). The interrelations and differences between the concepts of media assistance and media development, concepts which are sometimes conflated, are also discussed. The chapter rejects the view of benign or neutral media assistance. Western media support is shown to be mainly allied to the expansion of a particular kind of democracy and improving national productive capacity within a liberal developmental or modernisation framework. The rationale for media assistance and its record of performance is assessed historically and its significance outlined in relation to media development and its goals. While media development has historically treated democracy and development objects separately, this chapter examines the interrelations between these processes and goals.

The mediated natures of contemporary political communication are explored in Chapter three. The chapter will show democracy as a normative construct with various inflections, which make evaluating ‘democracy building’ efforts difficult when there may be variable interpretations of democracy as a goal and/or the media’s role in relation thereto. Recognition of these conceptual and actual complexities challenges some simplistic teleological assumptions that regard media development as a magic bullet for the problems of ‘democratisation’ (Berger 2000; Boutros Ghali 2002; Crick 2002; Miller 2002).

Chapter four analyses the idea and processes of development – and especially how the media relates thereto. Three development paradigms are considered. The chapter also links development in theory to media development – and consequently media assistance – in practice. For example, the modernisation school correlates economic development with media performing a watchdog or monitorial role to ensure auditing of deliverables on development projects and facilitating stakeholder accountability. The development practice of media assistance itself is critiqued as a form of cultural imperialism. In Chapter three and four, the dominant approach, ideology and policy ethos are critiqued relative to alternative theories and approaches. These ideas contextualise the possibilities and transformative influence of new media for media development’s objects which are elaborated in the chapters that follow.

In Chapter five, distinctions between mass media and new media are explored through a focus on the use of the properties of the latter, and more particularly how those features relate to often contradictory effects that may negate or undermine the original development or democratic objectives to which they were deployed. Technological teleology is critiqued with an understanding that the properties and potential of new media technology do not define pre-determined outcomes (Groshek 2009). Instead, the historically and socially constructed nature of new media and ICT use is presented to counter modernist techno-determinism and suggest greater user agency in forming new meanings from technologies. This perspective is key for new media assistance and development, as it suggests technologies must be viewed in context of the stakeholders, and the perspective can also be employed as a catalyst for new interpretations and alternative paradigms (Srinivasan 2006).

Chapter six and Chapter seven outline the interconnections between the preceding chapters by scrutinising the assumptions underpinning media assistance for new media for democracy and development. These include: the creation of an enhanced public sphere, democratic

reform, facilitating more active citizenship, and contributing to economic growth. These assumptions are reviewed with reference to the preceding theory, case studies and the overarching contextual limits of new media in the developing world. In regard to the latter, particular attention is paid to problematising the concept of digital divides – as a challenge not simply of ICT access but also as a symptom and partial cause of asymmetries in indigenous and global power relations.

Chapter eight provides the overall conclusions and recommendations of the study by attempting to synthesise lessons from the previous chapters to inform recommendations for a critical and integrated approach to media assistance and media development focused on the new media.

Overall, this thesis attempts to connect media assistance and media development, and new media and the objectives of democracy and development. Conclusions herein remain exploratory and related to an analysis of currently available evidence given that new media remain ‘objects of uncertainty’ and subject to ongoing change (Lüders 2008). These conclusions are, however, formed on the basis of the extensive literature synthesis and conceptual discussion in this study, and they flow from the outcomes of critiques in each particular section.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT OF MEDIA ASSISTANCE

2.1 Introduction

Media assistance is multi-faceted, and de facto experimental, practice which is often poorly researched and theorised (Myers 2009; Kumar 2007). This chapter will discuss the interrelationship between media assistance and media development and elaborate a brief history of media assistance with particular reference to sub-Saharan Africa.³ The relationship between new media and media assistance practice begins in section 2.2 where the interrelationships between media assistance, media development and other developmental objectives are explicated. The subsequent structure is as follows:

- Section 2.2.1 suggests that the dominant role of international media assistance is media development as a “foreign policy of media space” (Price 2002).
- Section 2.3 examines some general trends in contemporary international media assistance practice in developing states and emerging democracies.
- Section 2.4 dissects the tensions between media development as democracy or development support

2.2 Media Development

Media assistance donor and support agencies have variable understandings of the concept and practice of ‘media development’. As a concept, the meaning of media development remains slippery. Attempts at definition often neglect the complexity and struggles over variable interpretations of media development or its multiple emphases. For example, research by Myers (2009) suggested French media assistance viewed the development of media as an end in itself, while the Dutch focused on the strengthening of the media sector as a means to achieve overall development objectives for education, agriculture, healthcare, nation building, economic growth and good governance (World Bank 2002). Other attempts to conceptualise media development, such as work done for UNESCO, serve to stress particular indices of the media’s development such as access and independence that need to be achieved to ensure a broad range of objectives (Puddephat 2002).

³ General references to ‘Africa’ in this study refer mainly to sub-Saharan Africa.

The character of ‘media development’ depends on the nature, histories, political goals, assumptions and discourse of media assistance organisations themselves. The term media development is used to describe both a process (how media is developed) and an objective (development of the media) that is also often related to the attainment of broader societal goals. The principal goal of media assistance is generally (though not always) ‘media development’ through support for an environment for free, diverse, competent, independent and sustainable media, and for other factors within this environment (eg. skills, access to equipment and capital). In this, media texts are seen as critical for the dissemination of knowledges, culture and tradition in contemporary society (Miller 2003; Price 2002). Hence, media assistance seeks to develop a normative environment with practices for public communication through specific kinds of media texts and channels that are assumed to promote certain types of social behaviour and values (Miller 2003). These values have been mainly allied to varying notions of democracy and human and economic development (Miller 2002).

Media development is most often associated with interventions (deliberate steps to create media) that involve and influence journalism. This study understands journalism as the practice of gathering, organising and analysing information concerning contemporary events and issues in the public interest by independent persons or associations to represent these as “realist communication” in and through mass media (Medsger 1996; Berger 2000). Groshek (2009) prefers the term ‘mass media development’ claiming this refers more closely to the nature of the primary institutions that are the target and vehicle of media assistance as distinct from telecommunications or software companies. However, the goal of media development can be employed more widely than the scope of mass media and the practice of institutional journalism, reflecting how the term ‘media’ implies signification through any carrier of signs – from newspapers to billboards and e-mail – to “multi-point destinations” across time and space (Berger 2001:4). Media assistance also pays increasing attention to networked and personal ‘new media’ such as blogs, microblogs, mobiles and social video produced by members and organs of civil society among others (Kalathil 2008; Myers 2009).

For purposes of this study, ‘media’ will imply any channel, which is used as a carrier of ‘journalism’, though it is acknowledged that the purview of ‘media development’ can be used more broadly to include other forms of communication. For instance, media development could be seen to subsume the output of entertainment such as television programmes like Soul

City which are intended to facilitate public dialogue about lifestyle choices and health concerns (see also Curran 1991).

Media development is sometimes also used to designate conditions for participation in modern societies, and thus to the enhancement of a normative enabling environment for, and practices of, public communication to address the social, political and economic needs of social wholes that constitute the body public. The idea is that improving the media environment, as well as the access, quality and means of public communication, should facilitate democratic participation in productive growth, the use and distribution of public goods, and political decision-making (as opposed to leaving these processes to autocrats, experts or the market) (Berger 2000, 2001, 2010a).

Media assistance⁴ supports the objective of media development through activities which may take many forms some of which are aimed at strengthening media as an end in itself, some emphasising media as a means to an end, and much being a hybrid of both. Such assistance may include: journalism training; direct support to news institutions (whether by commodity, technical or financial contribution); efforts to aid media law reform and train media lawyers; support for professional journalism and broadcasting institutions; support for developing financial sustainability of media outlets; building or rebuilding infrastructure for media; initiatives designed to transcend national, religious and ethnic barriers to participation or representation in the media; and competitions and awards (Price et al 2002; Kumar 2004; Howard 2003). Such kinds of media assistance can be provided by a myriad of different kinds of organisations to help develop goals beyond media development as such, and aimed at facilitating national goals such as institutional reform, development of economic markets, expansion of public discourse on policy issues and participation of citizens in economic and political life (Price et al 2002; Howard 2003; World Bank 2002; Kumar 2004).

Media assistance can therefore be conceived as a symbolic and political instrument premised on economic influence with the goal of transforming media spaces (generally foreign) in line with donor interests. Donor support of media assistance is premised on the thinking that in modern mediated society “the type of media space ostensibly affects the larger social system and hence the ability to transform... along democratic ideals, as envisioned by the donor

⁴ In this thesis, the terms media assistance and media support will be used interchangeably.

community” (Miller 2003). In this mode, media assistance is a means to media development and the latter is often a means to objectives beyond the media itself.

Formations that provide media assistance (variably termed donors or development assistance partners) include bilateral government aid bodies or Governmental Organisations (GOs) like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); multilateral international Governmental Organisations (IGOs) established by international treaty, such as the World Bank and UNESCO; private foundations such as the Soros Open Society Institute and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; quasi-private foundations such as the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung; and intermediary organisations like universities, expert consultancies and national, regional and international non-governmental organisations like the Freedom of Expression Institute, Media Institute of Southern Africa and International Freedom of Expression Exchange. Intermediary organisations may also be contracted by any of the aforementioned three types of agencies to engage in media development (Miller 2003; Price 2002; Howard 2003). Further, international religious organisations may offer media support for evangelisation or other goals. Companies may also contribute to media development as part of corporate social responsibility programmes or to leverage publicity or influence.⁵ In some instances, national governments contribute assistance either directly or via agencies to support media development. One example is the Media Development and Diversity Agency in South Africa which is supported through a partnership between government and major local media providers.

In the last century, media development traditionally focused on one-to-many forms of mass media – newspapers, radio and television distributed using mainly analogue technologies (Price et al 2002; Miller 2002; Miller 2003; Kumar 2004). As will be elaborated in Chapter five, ‘new media’ may include one-to-one (interpersonal), one-to-many (broad- or multi-casting) and many-to-many (networked) channels distributed using information and communication technologies (ICTs). ICT is an umbrella term for tools (generally digital) for communication and the transfer, transaction and exchange of information usually (though not exclusively) through a network or networks. ICTs may include technology of the media such

⁵ Desktop study of references mapping media assistance (Hume 2004; Price 2002) indicates that the lion’s share of global media assistance is contributed by western bilateral agencies.

as radio, video, satellites and even typewriters, though are often conflated with the concept of ‘new media’ (Watson and Hill 2000). The nature of ‘new media’ remains variable and highly contested, as are its strengths and weaknesses when compared to traditional (generally analogue) print and electronic media technologies (and legacy institutions). ‘New media’ may permit interactive experiences with texts, new representational possibilities, possibilities for use and reception and (re)creation of media, identity formation, and they often blur boundaries between genres like news and entertainment (Lister et al 2002). This thesis explicates how ‘new media’ introduces ruptures and continuities within traditional media processes of production, distribution and use which challenge media support and media development assumptions and activities – particularly those related to its primary goals of development and democratic governance. As a result, media assistance paradigms and media development models will arguably have to shift as the world’s populations gain access to new technology (Kalathil 2008).

International media assistance’s emphasis on traditional news media and journalism derives from assumptions that democratic potential is embedded in the practice of Western-style journalism (Miller 2003; Kasoma 1999; Berger 2000; Howard 2003). The dominant normative practice of Western journalism including its emphasis on values of independence (keeping aloof from politics, political parties, influence of advertisers), formal codes of ethics, self regulation, factual accuracy and balance is seen to form part of an “occupational ideology of professionalism” (Miller 2003). This occupational ideology view aggregates the roles of journalism for democratisation by covering dimensions such as opening space for democratic discourses, serving as a critical voice against authoritarianism, corruption and misrule and contributing to setting the agenda for ongoing democratisation (Miller 2003). Funding for professionalisation of journalists is therefore often among the chief preferences of media assistance organisations.⁶ However, the status and occupational ideology of professional journalism has been challenged by (among others) the decentring of the privileged status of traditional media through new media practices such as crowdsourcing, peer-to-peer communication, citizen media and blogging. These and similar practices may disrupt the elite position of journalism that interposes its practitioners between source and audience, and simultaneously they may allow the audience to become more active participants in production

⁶ Howard suggests that it is ironic that among the reasons donors prefer supporting journalism professionalisation, there is the view that skills development and training are more “apolitical” than other forms of support, like reforming states’ media regulatory environments (2004:13).

of their own mediated experiences, culture and identities (Marshall and Burnett 2003). Information abundance in ICT-dense contexts may also challenge the economic viability of traditional mass media by providing a multitude of alternative news and advertising outlets. It is also not possible to predict how ordinary members of the public may use new media to aid or undermine foreign policy initiatives of advocate states or donors. For instance, the support for the Global Voices initiative largely originates from new media activists based in USA, and forms a radical complementary alternative avenue for media donor support. These and other related issues are elaborated further in Chapter five and Chapter six.

2.2.1 Foreign policy role of media assistance

The motives for development assistance flows can be broadly categorised as either humanitarian (focused on alleviating poverty or suffering in the short or long term, for example food relief following the 2010 Haiti earthquakes); capitalist (in terms of the exploitation of trade or resources); or strategic (this relates to providing assistance which helps to meet the donor's short or medium term goal, institution or national interest, for example, stabilising local democracies for regional peace and security etc). Most international media assistance belongs to the latter category. Bilateral and multilateral state-linked agencies generally use media assistance as an instrument of "public diplomacy" (otherwise known as "international diplomacy") or "foreign policy" on behalf of a government (Miller 2002). In international media assistance, the purpose of support is mainly to propagate a "public opinion environment" to encourage target countries' leaders and citizens to "make decisions supportive of the advocate country's foreign policy objectives" (McClellan 2004).

Much international media assistance (as opposed to indigenous aid such as government or local corporate support) thus involves what has been dubbed a "foreign policy of media space" – a concern to unilaterally or multilaterally shape the structure and content of media in another state for various reasons (Price 2001). Media assistance provided by private foundations may differ from the bilateral and multilateral donors inasmuch as their support is argued to form part of "more philanthropic goals" (Miller 2002).

In its role as a foreign policy instrument, media assistance goals include, but are not limited to, media development that is expected to enhance human rights or transitions to democracy; increase national and international stability; prevent genocide and conflict; provide a media environment where certain policies or ideas may be better received; and improve

infrastructure for enhanced trade (Price 2001). Several of these goals run parallel or overlap with other media assistance bodies that may engage in similar democratisation and liberal developmental activities as western bilateral and multilateral agencies (Miller 2002).

As a tool of foreign policy, “media assistance” may sound neutral but the criteria to determine where, how much and to whom assistance should flow are far from impartial in their design and administration. The level of foreign policy influence of media assistance may be influenced by relationships between donors (generally, amongst those in developed states), beneficiaries (generally, developing states) and the nature of the media assistance bodies (Berger 2010a). These relationship permutations include:

- Directly from donor to beneficiary (such as media institution, journalism school, NGO, regulatory authority)
- From donor to international media NGO to beneficiary
- From donor to international media NGO to local media NGO to beneficiary
- From donor to local media NGO to beneficiary.

Berger refines this view by suggesting that the package of media development type, desired influence on societal behaviour, and nature of the specific implementing agency are also influential factors which inform support for particular kinds of media development activities at the expense of others (2010a).

Drawing on Thompson’s theories of power⁷, one may argue that all media assistance whether linked to states or not, is inherently ‘political’ to the degree it affects the allocation, organisation and transformation of scarce resources for media development and regulates individuals’ and organisations’ patterns of interaction to meet various goals (Thompson 1995). It is in this light that the African media development scholar, Kasoma, and others are fiercely critical of the power of media assistance or “big strings” to drive the policy and

⁷ Thompson considers four types of power: economic, political, coercive and symbolic. Economic power is concerned with how humans are able to develop their own means of subsistence by extracting and changing raw materials into goods that can be consumed or exchanged on the market. Political power deals with the ability to coordinate and regulate the activity and interaction of individuals and associations. Symbolic power or cultural power stems from the ability to produce, transmit and receive meaningful symbolic forms. In modern society the media possess cultural or symbolic capital through their possession of resources, skills and knowledge for the production, transmission and reception of information and symbolic content. Coercive power involves the use or threat of force to get someone to do what they would not otherwise have done (1995).

performance of the media in a hierarchical fashion according to the concepts and interests of donors (1999:11).⁸

For example, media assistance is frequently provided to former colonies with cultural, linguistic ties to donors, or to states where conflict threatens national interest or regional stability of donor nations (Price et al 2002). Thus, in the mid-1990s, much democracy assistance was prioritised to the formerly communist Balkan states due to strategic location, proximity, historic ties and threat to the stability of the European Union. Former French speaking colonies, the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as Burundi, Madagascar, Benin, Mauritania, Guinea and the Central Africa Republic, have received most independent media aid from Francophone donor community; while Portugal's Portuguese Institute of Development Support maintains a focus on African Portuguese speaking states including Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe (Myers 2009). In addition to the Balkan example, donor aid is consistently channelled to other particular countries that are critical for ensuring regional stability, democratisation and development – these include South Africa (Southern African region); Kenya (Eastern Africa), The Ukraine (Caucasus) and Mexico (South America) (Huntington 1996).

It is important to understand media assistance therefore as being informed by dynamic criteria including: national interest; idealism; institutional; historical and environmental ties; political economy (and fluctuations in general assistance budgets); preferences of individual decision-makers; and the assistance philosophies of donor organisations (Price 2001; Price et al 2002). Aid and lending organisations vary in objectives, accountability and philosophies. It is therefore not useful to universalise any discussion of 'international assistance' (including media assistance) as representing a singular set of interests and beliefs (see CPSI 2004). Particular philosophies of assistance – including a range of political and economic assumptions regarding the role of the press, media and journalism – affect how the media development sector grows and matures (Price et al 2002). While some might consider that there is a singular or universal philosophy of media assistance, differences do exist in relation to how donors understand and apply media assistance as a result of different national

⁸ However, to imply that all media support relations are based on top-down or hierarchical power relations (see Kasoma 1999) oversimplifies the range of interactions between organisations involved in shaping programs. It is also over simplistic to construe the relationship between the mass media development and state foreign policy as interdependent and mutually exploitative (see Copson 2003) as this fails to recognise that there are asymmetries or inequalities in the relations of power between the advocacy and target states or between donor and beneficiary. In addition, the perspective fails to recognise how relations between media assistance organisations and states, intermediary organisations and implementing partners overlap in complex and shifting ways (Price 2001).

journalistic traditions, politico-economic positions and geopolitical considerations (Miller 2002). As Kasoma writes:

For example, the French would see state-ownership and control as a basic approach to the press serving a democratic political set-up. ...the British would support a privately owned press or at least one owned by a public corporation similar to the British Broadcasting Corporation. The Canadians would support a mixture of private and publicly owned press but not a government owned press, while the Americans would support only a privately owned press (1999:17).

International aid and support occurs within historic relationships of power which often adopt a particular discourse to mask the differences and inequalities between the developers and 'developees'. Goudge (2005) argues that while the discourse of assistance may use the language of "systems, partnership, planning and rationality", aid is never neutral in practice. This does not imply that the 'developees' as beneficiaries of support lack any critical agency in the development process. The success of a development project of any kind is dependent on local expression and buy-in. "...unless clients feel so involved with the innovation that they regard it as 'theirs', it will not be continued over the long term." (Rogers 2005:181 citing Rogers 2003:376). In this way, beneficiaries albeit typically being unequal participants in a donor relationship, can to varying degrees actively engage and influence media assistance policy and practice through lobbying, research, planning and adapting programmatic outcomes.

Increasingly, the disruptive nature of convergence between old and new media is also shaping media assistance and development preferences. For example, while media assistance has generally been an exogenous process of proactively developing the media often with a "North-South" (or developed-developing world character) (Berger 2010a), a crisis in traditional media sustainability exacerbated by the global recession, debt-ridden media companies and new media's disruption of traditional media consumption and advertising has seen a re-emerging paradigm of indigenous media support in the developed states.⁹ Since 2007 major metropolitan publications in the USA have been forced to close or go online.

⁹ State intervention and public funding are not anathema to Western private media. Western press, postal, telecommunications networks, cinema, broadcasting and the Internet have all been shaped through direct state involvement – from subsidies to financial grants to support competition or innovation (Christians et al 2009). For example, in the USA the early press was subsidised through cheap postal rates, anti-trust policy shaped the telegraph and wire services and federal licensing of the spectrum regulated the growth and competition in commercial broadcasting (Starr 2004).

These include the *Rocky Mountain News*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Tucson Citizen* and *The Kentucky Post*. In 2007, weekday newspaper sales in the USA reached 50,7 million copies – their lowest point since 1945 (Myers 2009). The American Society of Newspaper Editors reported that staffing in newsrooms reached a new low in 2007 when newsrooms lost 2400 journalists, marking a 4.4 percent drop from 2006 (Mosco 2009). In the USA, this crisis has led to local interventions that include the proposing of a bill calling for tax breaks for newspapers. In France, national government provides an indirect subsidy to newspapers by purchasing a subscription for French youth for one year. These transformations have prompted questions about the viability of the Western (particularly USA) media business model as a template for media development elsewhere (Nelson 2009). Some implications of this for a changing North-South media assistance paradigm are explored further in Chapter six.

2.3 Trends and issues in contemporary media assistance

Following independence, several African states emulated the model of Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah by co-opting the mass media ostensibly as an instrument of post-colonial liberation, and to promote nation building and development (Domatob and Hall 1983). However, the cost and scale of establishing mass media systems in sub-Saharan Africa tended to be prohibitive for most post-colonial African governments which often came to rely on foreign aid to meet the requirements of importing new technology, raw materials and skills (Kasoma 1999). The capacity of Africa's media continues to be limited through repression, quality and diversity of content and constraints on reach (Berger 2001) as well as low literacy levels, inaccessible rural based populations, low per capita income, hostile political culture, poor skills, inadequate infrastructure and other factors. There thus existed (and still exists) a dire need for support for the conditions and practice of a free and independent journalism whether by ordinary citizens or institutionally located 'professionals'. The Western approach to development support has often been informed by a modernisation paradigm (Wilkins and Waters 2000). The basic concept of modernisation is that communication stimulates and disseminates values and supports institutions that favour a modern political economy that rudely reflects Western development trajectories with its emphasis on individualism, a pluralistic democratic political structure and a free market economic base (Servaes 1991). The perceived connection between media development and modernisation has been influenced by

the work of Daniel Lerner in his 1958 book, *The Passing of Traditional Society* and Wilbur Schramm's 1964 title, *Mass Media and National Development*. Lerner and Schramm's theories (among others) linked urbanisation, literacy, political development and other variables of modernity to the role of the media as a "multiplier of development" (Rogers 2005: 179). These theories and their critique are discussed in Chapter four. It may suffice to acknowledge that a consequence of these assumptions about the relationship between media and development was aid flows and media assistance towards domestic media *for* development. In the '60s, this led to particular interest in the fostering of 'development journalism'. Development journalism remains a contested idea which ascribes a role to journalism to report and investigate state development programmes and activities and encourage the population to become involved in development projects (Wimmer and Wolf 2005). Berger (2010a) considers media for development as a distinct field from Communication for Development or Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D), but suffice to say that there is some overlap and conflation. Myers notes how some bilateral donors like Canada have begun to shift media development from dedicated media divisions and funding to ICT as "convergence of digital technologies increasingly blurs distinctions between traditional mass media and new ICTs (citizen journalism on the web, digital production techniques, convergence between broadcasting and mobile telephony)" (2009:19). This shift (to media development *and* ICT development) may in part reflect disillusionment about the seeming negligible developmental results of a top-down and unidirectional media role for development. While modernisation thinking failed to consistently deliver positive economic and social results, it did however, facilitate deregulation, which led to the rise of private newspapers and broadcasters, and with them, an emphasis on a directly democratic role. The democratic role, it was assumed, would – besides being an objective in its own right – help to unlock the door to an effective developmental role by the state. These ideas are elaborated upon in Chapters three and four.

Most media assistance has come from governmental agencies acting on behalf of Western states even if funds are sometimes routed through intermediary INGOs or local organisations and donors. China is also now increasingly involved in providing media assistance – though it appears to support mainly state (as opposed to public) broadcasters in developing contexts (Banda 2009). It is estimated that during the 1990s nearly \$1 billion was spent on media assistance with about \$600 million of this coming from the USA government and donors (Howard 2003; Hume 2004). In 2006, USA media assistance contributions reached \$142

million per year, with \$100 million contributed by other developed countries, International Non-Government Organisations (INGO) and private foundations (SIM 2009). To date no definitive research has mapped Africa's share of global media assistance. African studies on media assistance such as Kasoma (1999) do not adequately quantify or qualify the scope of media assistance on the continent. It is generally acknowledged, however that European organisations and the USA government have funded most media development in Africa (Hume 2004).¹⁰

Western-originating assistance has been closely aligned with democracy promotion, state building and public diplomacy since the reconstruction of Japan and Germany after World War II (Harvey 2005; Nelson 2009). McClennan (2004) tracks the current preoccupation that links media assistance to democracy-building after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. The Cold War history of international media assistance was dominated by a traditional diplomacy role inasmuch as it was used to explain and justify Soviet or Western foreign policies through propaganda and public relations (for instance via Radio Free Europe) (Berger 2010a). Encouraged by widespread belief in the persuasive influence of the mass media, the socialist regimes of the East and liberal democracies of the West channelled aid to media in the theatres of Cold War conflict. East and West contributed aid (including media assistance) to Africa as both sides struggled to get a foothold on the continent which was rich in natural resources. At the time, the political imperative of the aid from the West was to “check the spread of communism or make those countries which were on the communist path abandon (it)” (Kasoma 1999:4). Bilateral donor investment in media development became a means to encourage democracy “as a substitute to the totalitarian and socialist beliefs” that posed a threat of “democratic backsliding” in newly emerging post-conflict states (Howard 2003:8). With the dissolution of the “communist threat”, aid was used as a stick to demand that states adhere to liberal democratic tenets including multiparty government, free elections, human rights, liberalisation of the economy and a free media (Kasoma 1999:14). Kasoma writes that, previously, democratisation had never been considered a prerequisite for aid during the Cold War. In fact, authoritarian states like Afghanistan and dictators like Mobutu Seseseko of Zaire were supported and armed by the USA in its rivalry with the Soviet Union (Kasoma, 1999). The imperative for Western donor support (including media assistance) in the Third World

¹⁰ It is not within the ambit of this study to map media assistance for traditional media or new media in Africa. Instead, this research focuses on how new media changes the democracy and development goals and outcomes of media assistance.

was to encourage the modeling of political-economic systems in their own likeness, and – in the case of the USA – to open the way for transnational corporations (Servaes 2002). This philosophy is in line with modernisation theory that postulates a unilinear and evolutionary development path for underdeveloped states primarily based on quantitative benchmarks of the development trajectories of Western European and North American states (Servaes 1991; Melkote 1991).

USA aid peaked in 1985 during the height of global competition with the Soviet Union (Copson 2003). However, after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the United States and other Western countries significantly decreased resources for helping to shape global public opinion on matters significant to national security. Many of these services were curtailed and privatised (Price 2001), while the USA Congress substantially reduced aid to Africa as a result of her perceived lack of importance to US national security interests in the post-Cold War era (Copson 2003). Price et al write that some western governments regarded media assistance as less of a priority in sub-Saharan Africa, especially when “conflict, disease and poverty” were of greater concern (2002:53). Small media grants provided to African media by US embassies in the 1980s shrunk as attention in a post-Cold War globe was redirected to reconstruction and reform in former Soviet communist countries (Hume 2004; Nelson 2009).¹¹

Between 1990 and 1995, a second wave of democratisation in Africa saw 38 of 47 sub-Saharan countries hold elections that fostered regime change, political transformation and the rise of multiparty politics in some states.¹² Africa’s emerging free press was seen as trying (with varying degrees of success) to check abuse of power that could destabilise national economies, regional security and the African democratic project. New roles emerged for an independent mass media as part of this new wave of democratisation (Ronning 2001). In some parts of the continent, the limited success of multiparty politics saw free media play the role of a critical opposition – a role left moribund in states under military or one-party rule (Ronning 2001). Conversely, in other states the media – especially the state-owned media –

¹¹ The significance of foregrounding Western bilateral media support in this section is based on the scale and arguable influence of this sector on the patterns and trends in contemporary media assistance. Notwithstanding, it should be remembered that some large European independent donors and bilaterals continued to offer support for the development of independent and community media in South Africa, Zambia, Malawi and Namibia during the same period that the USA’s support was reduced or withdrawn.

¹² In 1993, only 14 multiparty elections were held in Africa (Ronning 2001).

worked against democracy by supporting political elites, violating civil rights like privacy or omitting to broadcast or publish balanced information necessary to ensure critical and informed polities (Berger 2001). A downside to democratisation for some developing and transitional states has been that bilateral donor support was lost soon after target countries became more stable and these were integrated into the new global economy. With bilateral media assistance always subject to the vagaries of international policy, Africa has been the loser as a continent whose “fragile institutions and societies still depend on outside assistance” (Price et al 2002: 56). Donors were (and continue to be) reluctant to provide media support indefinitely, even though some analysts conclude that institutional change takes at least a generation (Gaydosik 2005).

By 1998, a turn-around occurred in the form of a recovery in USA’s democracy promotion efforts (Copson 2003). With the rise of the Internet, Western powers, and more particularly the USA, started to re-emphasise the management of public opinion in an increasingly decentralised global communications environment in order to retain relevance and military and economic advantages that had been exploited since World War II (Price 2001).¹³

Foreign public opinion has become harder to influence as once jealously guarded state monopolies on information dissemination to home populations have been broken down by satellite dishes, telephones, fax and internet links in all but the most repressive countries (Price 2001 citing Metz 1999:182).

It was thought that despite limited penetration, the media (particularly the press) in Africa could affect the lives of the general population by reaching influential coalitions (elites) who could affect financial or macroeconomic policies (Islam 2002).¹⁴ Democratic transitions had improved donor access to former Third World countries (Howard 2003) while better environments for media support in developing countries enhanced potential for a western vision of media development. New technologies had improved ability to reach remote areas. Radio and television receivers had become cheaper and more available, and cheaper printing

¹³ This interest in managing international public opinion is perhaps ironic considering the liberal democratic tenet of respecting popular involvement and decision making of the local citizenry through equal participation between competing ideas.

¹⁴ This thesis accords with the ideas of elite diffusion and also in some cases with Katz and Lazarsfeld’s two-step flow theory, which is elaborated in more detail in Chapter four.

technologies and rising literacy encouraged the expansion of newspapers. Internet and e-mail facilitated media assistance by permitting electronic coordination of activities, networking of partners and promotion and distribution of information and intelligence which facilitated joint-projects or co-productions, digital publishing, archiving and sharing of research and information to avoid project duplication and waste. A media development industry began to consolidate as part of the efforts by international donors to roll out their programmes.¹⁵ The media assistance sector also began to acknowledge the media's role in conflict prevention. After the genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992) and Rwanda (1994), donors recognised that the media could be a countervailing force against (or contributing force for) the hate media employed by those who captured media for partisan ends or undermined peace efforts (Howard 2003).

However, trends in contemporary media support demonstrate how crises in Western states tend to supersede the long-term goal of supporting media reform for democratisation and economic growth in favour of more short-term goals (such as regional or economic stability) (Price et al 2002). International media assistance groups changed their media development agenda when they shifted and directed additional resources and attention from transitional settings to Arab states after September 11 2001. The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism were blamed on (among other things) anti-American sentiment fomented in Middle East media (Hume 2004). Consequently this saw the USA and United Kingdom appropriate more funds for infrastructure for international broadcasting to counter the hegemony of anti-West Arab media (Price 2001). The US Congress doubled the \$479 million budget for overseas broadcasting with a special emphasis on programming to the Arab world (La May 2003:7). The US-based International Broadcasting Board of Governors allocated \$30 million to establish a pro-West Middle East radio network called Radio Sawa (Price 2001; La May 2003). This shift is based on a thesis that "soft power" – the capacity to influence hearts and minds – is a necessary supplement to the traditional "hard power" of military force or economic sanctions (Price 2001). In theory, the economic leverage of media assistance was a source of political and symbolic power to bilateral agencies to replace or

¹⁵ Consisting of donor and implementing agencies (or partners) in target states, a global media development industry can be understood to be an international form of production or business based on the provision of services in underdeveloped target states to assist with interventions to ensure media development. Berger (1995) argues that the "development industry" more broadly "is an extremely cynical sector, with scores of agencies competing for contracts and clients, and riven with national rivalries, political interference such as patronage or pet prestige projects, momentary fashions and flavours and even academic squabbles" (1995:3).

complement coercive military power exploited during the Cold War (Thompson 1995). Price et al observed:

Up until now there has been a sharp division between public diplomacy efforts, international broadcasting and media development assistance. These boundaries may come under pressure from time to time as short-term goals (such as stability or participation in a coalition or alliance) supersede the long term goal of supporting media reform as a means to democratisation and economic growth (2002: 56).

The latest phase in media development has been marked by the emergence of a new generation of foundations grounded in the ICT sector, the rise of media support from China and international collaborative efforts to focus media development research and agendas in a more integrated way (Banda 2009; Nelson 2009; Berger 2010a).

The past five years have seen the rise of transnational institution building and research as part of a process to ensure a more coherent and inclusive set of media development interventions in Africa and the wider developing world. In 2006, the Global Forum for Media Development was formed. It networks 500 media development NGOs and bodies in 100 countries to strengthen the quality of international cooperation and planning (Berger 2010a; Global Forum for Media Development 2007). A separate initiative under the United Nation's Economic Commission for Africa saw media academics, media assistance organisations, owners and academics assess Africa's media development landscape as part of Stream (Strengthening Africa's Media) (Berger 2010a). In 2007, the African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) coordinated by the BBC World Services Trust conducted research to set up the African Media Initiative which aimed to create a development financing facility (Berger 2010a). These moves endorse the view that media assistance and media development strategies should be based on effective research, information sharing and partnerships and distributed across geographic boundaries in order to consolidate democratic gains (Price 2002:54).

During the recent period, a number of private foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Skoll Foundation, Omidyar Network, John S and James L Knight Foundation, David and Lucile Packard foundation and others began to increase their role in international media assistance particularly as a means to foster media for development (Nelson 2009). Nelson writes that these foundations are increasingly challenging old media assistance

practice with “the spirit of innovation and venture capital” along with “new thinking about goals and methods” (2009:9)¹⁶ such as participatory democracy and development.

Some donors have a strategic interest to facilitate “robust communications infrastructure that lets people talk with one another” as a way to break the power of elite autocracies and convert authoritarian governments to democracies (Adler 2007:47). However, Facebook updates, SMS, Twitter feeds and Wikileaks increasingly compete (though may also complement) public diplomacy and mass media messages. This has opened the door to more populist visions of media development in which some donors' idea of a single political universe has been challenged by the concept of a decentralised ‘multiverse’ (Adler 2007). A critical assessment of the influence of new participatory technologies democratisation is addressed in Chapter six.

Finally, the hegemony of Western media assistance has been challenged by Chinese media support (Franks and Ribet 2009). In 2008, Sino-African media development expenditure totaled \$18 million. Sino-African media assistance can be dated back to China’s engagement with African liberation radio in the ‘60s during the Cold War (Franks and Ribet 2009). Undergirded by the values of Chinese nationalism and informed by the Forum on China-Africa Action Plan, media assistance activities have taken many forms: workshops for African correspondents in China; exchange and cooperation; increased contact for mutual understanding and friendship and expanding cooperation in broadcasting. Banda categorises these activities emerging from under the rubrics of infrastructural alignment, ideological expurgation and cultural reproduction (2009). He writes China is “opposed to linking aid to the kinds of liberal-democratic values that Western nations and multilateral financial institutions insist upon: free markets, human rights, good governance, environmental protection” (Banda 2009:343). This has seen China lend assistance to regimes like Zimbabwe for provisioning of shortwave radio jamming equipment and internet filtering technologies. Beneficiaries of Chinese media assistance have also tended to be state broadcasting institutions and journalists (Banda 2009). This is in marked contrast to Western media’s support of independent commercial media, public-service media reform initiatives and community media.

¹⁶ However, since 2008 even this funding has been scaled back once again following the global financial crisis. Funding from private foundations, particularly those tied to newspaper companies have been hardest hit as a result of losses to business and also to trust funds and endowments (many between 25 to 40 percent) which supported their outreach (Nelson 2009).

2.4 Democracy/Development matrix

Since the Vienna Declaration of 1993, which spelled out the interdependence of democracy, development and human rights, the field of assistance has been in foment regarding the balkanising development and democracy assistance (Boutros Ghali 2002). Exclusive emphasis on democracy *or* developmental aid has been argued to be flawed in practice (Mair 1997). Until quite recently, conventional wisdom held that ‘liberal developmentalism’ supported democratisation and would lead to the downfall of authoritarian regimes (Berger 1999: 20). The thesis was that over time economic modernisation and changing socio-economic conditions would produce an educated and entrepreneurial middle class that, sooner or later, would demand control over its own fate (Musqueta and Downs 2006; Shubber 2003). The concept of ‘third wave’ democratisation often assumes that economic development and modernisation can alter a country’s culture and make it more supportive of democracy (Huntington 1996). This view is key to media support for enabling environments for media development in authoritarian states and transitional democracies.

Contrary to this belief, however, in some states economic development has allowed authoritarian elites to maintain power *without* granting wider political participation (Shubber 2003). Examples include Saudi Arabia, China and Russia which have enjoyed consistent levels of economic growth, but remain among the most authoritarian regimes in the world (Musqueta and Downs 2006; Boutros Ghali 2002). Przeworski et al argue that modernisation advocates were wrong to think that development under dictatorship breeds democracies (1996). In general, though, development suffers in contexts where there is arbitrary justice or the lack of rule of law as mismanagement, bribery and corruption discourage investment and economic exchange (Boutros Ghali 2002).¹⁷

In a similar vein, not all democratic countries are able to develop. India and the Philippines became nominally democratic with institutions and independent elections without direct or immediate impact of or on industrial development (Boutros Ghali 2002). At the same time, democracy without development can reduce government’s capacity to meet the economic needs of people and or to deal with the shocks such as disaster or recession. Musqueta and

¹⁷ Experiences in states such as Italy and Japan suggest a different reading of the contribution of corruption to oiling economic growth, but these have no counterparts in the African experience. Thus, the converse is also true – not all corrupt countries are able to attain growth and development.

Downs argue that, in worst cases, weak (or unequal) economic development may lead to unstable governments and backsliding democracies which return to totalitarian or socialist rule as happened in Venezuela (2006).

This does not mean that there is no relation between democracy and development – merely that the interrelationship between these is often more complex and dependent on serious consideration of local political and cultural traditions and socio-economic situations as factors in the co-development of solutions (Boutros Ghali 2002).

This point is illustrated by research conducted by Przeworski et al (1996) into the survival and death of political regimes in 135 countries since 1950. The researchers failed to find any consistent set of factors that suggested that levels of economic development could predict a *transition* from authoritarianism to democracy. However, they did find that once a state was nominally democratic, its level of economic development had a strong influence on whether that democracy would survive or backslide.¹⁸ At per capita incomes of over \$6000, democracies are more certain to survive. In addition, democracies are more likely to survive where the gap between the rich and poor is declining. Life expectancy of democracies with rising income inequality is about 22 years (Przeworski et al 1996: 43). Poor democracies, many of which are in Africa with annual per-capita incomes of less than \$1000, are extremely susceptible to shocks and backsliding (Przeworski et al 1996: 41). Like Musqueta and Downs (2006) and Shubber (2003), the authors are therefore quite critical of the modernist assumption that international development assistance to dictatorships can produce democracies (Przeworski et al 1996).¹⁹ There is sometimes a correlation between economic development and democracy, more particularly the longevity of democracies, but there is not a causal link. This suggests that in any state the nature of the democracy, and issues of development as well as distributive justice, must be taken into account for foreign support to maximise its goals.²⁰

¹⁸ Other criteria that determine how long a state would remain a democracy or backslide into authoritarian rule are: growth with moderate inflation, favorable international factors, political history and the choice of systems and institutions such as parliamentary versus presidential rule or constituency versus representative systems (Przeworski et al 1996: 48).

¹⁹ For example, the German Stiftungen had a long relationship with the kleptocrat, Mobuto Sese Seko in Zaire (presently Democratic Republic of Congo). Mair (1997) writes that this may suggest that the overarching objective of the foundations was therefore *not* democratisation “but the promotion of development and the pursuance of foreign policies representing the interests of the German political parties to which they are affiliated”.

²⁰ Lipset (1996) argues that the reason that some democracies may be more durable in developed countries may be because the intensity of distributional conflicts is lower at higher income levels (i.e. where there is a growing bourgeoisie class).

For if political democracy, in order to consolidate itself, needs to be complemented by economic and social measures that encourage development, similarly any development strategy needs to be ratified and reinforced by democratic participation in order to be implemented (Boutros Ghali 2002:13).

It can be argued that international assistance seeking to advance either developmental or democratic objectives may still have value in its own right. In other words, there may be impact in either realm as an end in itself, and not necessarily as a means towards advances in the other realm. This conception of the rationale for assistance avoids some of the complexities of linking development and democratic objectives, but it still embeds a particular assumption. This assumption is that assistance can lead to at least more narrowly conceived objectives. Some development theorists such as *Dead Aid* author, Dambisa Moyo, argue a contrary effect: that assistance absolves internal actors, and especially governments, from taking up their responsibilities – thereby perpetuating poor performance in accountable governance and economics (2009). What this seems to signal is that general judgements may be open to challenge, and that media development assistance needs to be conceptualised in specific, not generalised, terms – again requiring attention to particular contexts. It gives impetus to growing interest in the media development community about monitoring and evaluation systems (see Berger 2010a).

2.5 Conclusion:

This chapter provides an overview of the dominant functions of international media assistance to frame further discussion in subsequent chapters regarding new media, democracy and development. It describes how media assistance is diverse in its goals, design, philosophies and institutions. It is also typically not a ‘benign’ practice. In a post Cold War society, Western media support’s political role is mainly (though not exclusively) allied to expansion of liberal democratic rule under a banner of international diplomacy (Miller 2002), while its

Diamond argues that political actors in more developed countries are able to adopt, pay for and maintain a superior institutional framework after democracy is established and thereby avoid backsliding (e.g. by means of the setting up of a functional judicial system) (see Przeworski et al 1996).

economic function is chiefly to improve national productive capacity within a liberal developmental i.e. modernisation, framework.

This chapter also introduces some of the trends and issues in contemporary media assistance and outlines the evolving political and economic dimensions of media support that influences (and influence) media development in Africa, including changing views related to the primacy of development or democracy foci for international assistance. In addition, this chapter prefaces discussions of the role that new media and convergence plays in changing approaches to media assistance and media development. The entry of new media into this hotbed of assumptions and contentions adds yet another complicating variable that challenges long-standing views about the relationship between media assistance and media development, and between these and developmental and/or democratic outcomes.

The theory of media assistance's role in fostering democratisation and democratic consolidation, as well as its interrelated development agenda will be unpacked and critiqued in chapters three and four respectively.

CHAPTER 3

MEDIA ASSISTANCE AND DEMOCRACY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three and Chapter four critique the media assistance goals of democracy and development to help understand how new media's disrupts of those objectives. Chapter three critiques the media assistance object of democratisation by unpacking 'democracy' and the media-democracy relationship as sites of struggle over meaning and power. Section 3.2 suggests that media assistance should offer a nuanced and transparent conception of democracy cognisant of its historical, theoretical and ideological inflections because the meaning of 'democracy' in policy and practice is not universal or fixed. Section 3.3 problematises media assistance's generalised claims to support democratisation through media development by comparing variable normative roles described for media in democracy.

3.2 Democratic Role of Media Assistance

A claimed value of media assistance has been to encourage 'democratisation'. 'Democratisation' can be understood as a process of fostering political participation through establishing and crafting structures, systems and practices that offer citizens meaningful collective influence over public policy (Shubber 2003; Berger 2000). The term variably describes transitions from autocracy to polyarchy²¹ and consolidation of polyarchy in already democratic states. A democracy becomes consolidated when political actors, parties or organised groups consider that there is no alternative to the democratic process to gain power (O'Donnell 1996).²² Transitions to, and consolidation of, democracy depends as much on the existence of certain social, economic or cultural preconditions (although there is disagreement about what those preconditions are) as it does on the political will and skill of leaders to craft it (Huntington 1996). The consolidation of democracies remains unpredictable in transitional states, especially where conditions exist that may facilitate democratic backsliding. This volatility is used to legitimate support by international agencies

²¹ Robert Dahl's concept of 'polyarchy' elaborates seven normative tenets associable with modern democracies by comparing these with traits of *non-democratic* states. 'Polyarchy' (the etymology implies rule or domination by the many) includes competitive, free, fair and regular elections *and* a minimum set of social and political rights (O' Donnell 1996).

²² To put it simply, democracy must be seen as the "only game in town" (O' Donnell 1996: 35).

for democracy assistance efforts such as media support, more especially since an informed polity is viewed as essential to good governance (Groshek 2009). As Monroe Price writes: “Free and independent media may organically arise in a mature democracy, but artificial steps are necessary in many transition contexts” (2000:9). Media support is based on widely held notions that professional journalism opens space for public discourse, counters authoritarianism, corruption and misrule and contributes to democracy building by providing information and a sphere for communication that facilitates self-government (Miller 2003). It is widely held that to foster democratisation, the media need to have a broad reach, be independent, accountable, be able to provide relevant information and reflect diverse social views (World Bank 2002; Islam 2002). As indicated in Chapter two, a strong and free media is therefore regarded as an essential precondition and shaper of democracy (Miller 2003; Kasoma 1999; Berger 2000; Howard 2003). In fact, some believe that media development – whether focused on development of a free, plural and sustainable media itself, poverty alleviation or even women’s rights – has a natural home with programmes dealing with democracy and governance because it articulates “a discourse of rights and responsibilities” (Myers 2009:9). Research funded by the World Bank has also credited improvements in media freedom and media pluralism with supporting the goal of democracy building. The study found that high levels of perceived media independence are associated with lower levels of perceived corruption, regardless of differences in country’s income levels. The same research also found that high levels of perceived media freedom correlate with more responsive public actors probably because consumers and voters are better informed to exercise their rights and the opportunity cost of “reputational penalties” through investigations by a free media is higher (World Bank 2002:182; Islam 2002:1).

Notwithstanding this, the mere existence of a diverse and plural media is no guarantee that the media is an effective vehicle for scrutiny of state actions or democratisation (Berger 2001; Islam 2002). Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression in Southern African countries, censorship still exists in the form of blatant repression (such media licensing by the state) and subtler forms (such as banning government advertising to critical privately owned newspapers) (Monga 1997).

3.2.1 Defining democracy

For various reasons, agencies of media assistance often fail to qualify or make transparent what they mean by ‘democracy’. This oversight (whether deliberate or not) conveys a sense that there is a common or uncontested view of ‘democracy’ as a process or end among media assistance practitioners, beneficiaries and organisations. However, the nature of democracy that media assistance agencies, beneficiary states and national publics may envisage may vary. For example, in media assistance, the use of the term ‘democracy’ often obscures the dominance of liberal democracy in comparison with the other inflections or practises such as social democracy, democratic socialism or participatory democracy.²³ While a broadly Western hegemonic understanding of ‘democracy’ is used, the functional meaning of this idea is subject to challenge and cannot be determined by abstract reasoning or appealing to some higher authority (Barber 2003). There are several competing theories of democracy as a system of popular rule – from the direct democracy derived from the classical Athenian or city state model; to representative systems of parliamentary democracy; to developmental social democracies which practice interventionism to stimulate social economic growth; to liberal democracies which place greater emphasis on the sovereignty and freedom of the individual (Heywood 1997).

The etymology of ‘democracy’ derives from the Greek words, *kratos* meaning rule and *demos* meaning people. ‘Democracy’ therefore speaks to arrangements through which authority is organised through popular collective support either directly (participatory democracy) or indirectly by majority mandate (representative democracy) (Venter and Johnstone 1991; Heywood 1997; Friedrich 2006).

Representative democracy is often assumed to be synonymous with the idea of ‘democracy’ itself. In modern democracies, the act of representation is generally accomplished through competitive elections, which are at the heart of modern democracy (Przeworski et al 1996). Citizens or members of a public authorise a few specialised institutions (political parties and interest groups in modern society) to act on behalf of (or represent) the interests, values and attitudes of a large number of people, thus mediating (or disintermediating) popular involvement in policy and decision-making (Venter and Johnstone 1991). A minimalist conception of representative democracy is based on the idea of competitive elections in

²³ US political economist, Francis Fukuyama wrote that Western liberalism has become the dominant ideology of an integrated global political and economic system in the post-Cold War environment (1989).

which the people select governors from competing elites (and the opposition should have some chance of winning).²⁴ However, some critics argue that representative democracy has departed from its ideals, and instead breaks the links between representatives and the represented thus contributing to “citizen apathy, alienation and anomie” experienced in the form of low voter turnout and weak civil participation in modern democracies (Barber 2003; Gillwald 1993; Zittel 2003). As representative democracy devolves significant public powers to representatives (individuals and organisations), states which use this system are usually governed by laws (generally in the form of a constitution) that regulate and balance power to avoid oligarchies or a tyranny in the name of a majority. To counter abuse of power, key features of modern representative democracy include constitutionalism, parliamentary government, separation of powers including an independent judiciary and impartial bureaucracy, multipartism and freedom of expression which guarantees a free and independent media. A fundamental function of media that follows in representative democracies is creating an informed electorate able to choose between parties. Surveillance of institutions and individuals that are elected, mandated, delegated or otherwise represent the interest of the public and nation state is a further media function that follows from the need to check and balance political power.

Old and new media equally have mixed influence on strengthening and eroding systems of representative democracy. Examples of media assistance activities that focus on media development for representative forms of democracy may include funding investigative reporting, media law reform and legal counsel for professional journalists and support for an environment for plural and diverse commercial media as a watchdog on public representatives.

Participatory democracy offers an alternative to the shortcomings of representative democracy in modern nation states, or can be adapted as a complementary process alongside it. Participatory democracy seeks to devolve power and increase collective decision-making through mechanisms established at the appropriate levels of government (Kataboro 2004). This system of rule increases the power that civil society has to decide on policy, while politicians assume the role of policy implementation (Aragonès and Sánchez-Pagés 2004). The challenge of modern participatory democracy is to actualise systems (given the size and

²⁴ Elections however are not necessarily a sufficient condition for democracy as governments who are elected by constitutional majority may still behave undemocratically (O’ Donnell 1996; Boutros Ghali 2002; Linz and Stepan 1996).

scale of nation states) that empower citizens (who so desire) to participate directly in collective policy making (Friedrich 2006). To facilitate participative governance, many states are reforming their political institutions to facilitate ongoing civic participation in agenda-setting, deliberation, legislation and policy implementation (Barber 2003; Zittel 2003). In some countries at least, this has led to the entrenching of the practice of participatory democracy as an integral part of the democracy-mix, side by side with entrenched systems of representative governance (Friedrich 2006).²⁵ Direct or deliberative democracy arguably gives rise to a media orientation where the media plays an active social role in forming and informing involvement of civil society in political processes. The media are viewed as social actors rather than simply “observers and chroniclers” of the prevailing reality and status quo (Berger 2000: 86). Along with community radio, new media are a powerful tool for facilitating participatory democracy by enhancing horizontal communication between the citizens and vertical communication with government. Examples of media assistance activities that focus on media development for participatory democracy include projects which expand participation of citizens in public discourse on economic and political life, support for community broadcasting, development of activist social networks and supporting citizen journalism in authoritarian environments. Uprisings by the youth and the opposition in the Middle East and North Africa (2011), Iran (2009), Moldova (2008) and Myanmar (2006) were also facilitated *in part* through interactive web and mobile technologies (CIMA 2009).

Apart from representative and participatory democracy, other elaborations of democratic practice may prescribe specific principles for the exercise of power such as the primacy of various rights or the degree to which government or the public are involved in aspects of social, political and economic life (Przeworski et al 1996; Lipset 1996). Consensus on the principles of democracy, as well as the minimum conditions and structures, systems and practices upon which an ideal democracy should be based, vary along ideological lines. In a post-Cold war environment these distinctions are roughly articulated between forms of liberal and social democracy.²⁶ As argued in the previous chapter, these political-ideological

²⁵ Participatory governance has been, for example, successfully employed in development planning and budgeting in Brazilian cities such as Porto Alegre and the *Gram Sabhas* of West Bengal and Kerala, India (Fung and Wright 2001; Aragonès and Sánchez-Pagés 2004). The principle of participatory governance is also enshrined in Article 47 of the Treaty for establishing a constitution of the European Union (Friedrich 2006). A commitment to public access, involvement and participation in policymaking at the level of the National Assembly is also enshrined in section 57 and 59 of the South African constitution of 1996 (Fakir 2003).

²⁶ ‘Democratic socialism’ is also increasingly important, as states like China, Vietnam and Cuba increase their involvement on the global stage. The extent to which these states meet core criteria for democracy is open to interpretation however. Democratic socialism refers to more left-wing version of social democracy that advocates the establishment of a fully socialist system either by reforming capitalism from within or through social revolution.

lines emphasise different targets of media assistance and assumptions about media's role in democracy.

Liberal governments presiding under libertarian values aspire to political and economic freedom under a minimalist state within a free market economic system. Resolution of the tension between plural social values occurs through competition based on a system of merit using agreed-upon procedures (Kettel 2003). Liberal democracy's emphasis on freedom and individualism stands in contrast to social democracy's accent on development and communitarianism.

Social democracies (generally practiced in the form of moderate multiparty parliamentary socialism) combine socialist ideals of community, cooperation, equality and common ownership with the liberal ideas of freedom and equal opportunity and the conservative values of paternal duty and care. Social democracy is based on principles of socio-economic justice – a compromise between the need to generate economic growth and the desire to distribute wealth along moral lines rather than exclusively market principles. Social democrats emphasise welfarism, redistribution and social justice through deliberate state intervention or participation in the economy to rectify market failures and the inequalities created by capitalism. State intervention is used to provide essential public goods and services that the market cannot deliver. This is generally achieved through Keynesian economics that attempt to stabilise free market capitalism through demand management and the creation of a mixed economy. In mixed market economies, non-core assets and services may be privatised and enjoy relative freedom from government intervention, while core industries of national interest may be regulated and administered directly by the state for the public good (Giddens 1998).

In contrast, most liberal democracies have decentralised economies that drive free market capitalism and encourage private enterprise through promotion of privatisation and equal opportunity.²⁷ Liberal democracies are generally constitutional states based on formal rules that provide for internal checks and balances (like the separation of powers and independent institutions to ensure free and fair elections, private sector broadcasting, public service

²⁷ In a free market economy, there is a relatively unfettered market for goods and services free from government interference. A free market system does not necessarily imply *laissez faire* capitalism. Liberal states still exercise control over economies through competition and industry boards to ensure that certain companies do not use their size and monopolies to unfairly restrict the trade of others.

accountability etc.) on the power of the state.²⁸ Liberal democracy encourages competition between groups representing the wealth of social, political and economic groups to foster pluralism, progress and innovation. Consequently, this form of democracy highlights an independent media that plays a fourth estate or watchdog role of checking and balancing the power of the state (McQuail 1994). In theory, within a liberal framework, independent, critical media affect democratic outcomes by filtering and curating the kind of information to help voters decide who to put in charge; holding politicians accountable through the sanction of positive or negative exposure; and putting public issues on the menu (agenda-setting) that politicians have to respond to or risk losing popular support at the ballot box (Besley et al 2002:49). In contrast social democracy is underscored by a media role focused on the construction of the nation and citizenship especially through the medium of public service broadcasting and development journalism (Berger 2000). The emphasis here is less on liberal democracy's watchdog media role than a facilitative or guide orientation (Christians et al 2009; Berger 2000). Social democratic media systems focus on promoting civil society and contributing to democratic culture rather than advancing individual rights and interests (Campbell 2004; Berger 2000).

3.2.2 Democratic transformation and Southern Africa

The practice and development of democracy in nation states is nuanced and rooted in complex political, religious, social, cultural and economic systems that have emerged through particular processes over time. International assistance organs use various normative taxonomies which include indicators of democracy, good governance and economic development to classify world states for purposes of aid, trade and cooperation. These classifications variously conceive nation states on a sliding scale between autocracy and an ideal form of strong or stable democracy based on human rights. Systems of classification also take into account states' social and economic features.

For example, USAID's typology divides societies into Semi-democratic or Developing countries, War-torn countries, Closed Societies, Post-conflict countries and Transition countries (Kumar 2004). Rozumilowicz's taxonomy divides states into distinct categories for media assistance. Her system classifies nation states in five distinct categories: Pre-transition,

²⁸ However, constitutionalism and rule of law are not sufficient requirements for democracy, as these too can be ignored or perverted by elected governments.

Primary transition, Secondary stage, Late mature stage and post-conflict environments (Price 2002). Putzel and van der Zwan further sub-categorise post-conflict or post-war states into fragile states (states susceptible to crisis or internal or external shocks); crisis states (states under stress with basic institutions in danger of collapse) and failed states (states that have collapsed that can no longer perform basic services and functions or regulate its territory or people) (2005). Bilateral and multilateral organs use systems and taxonomies, as well as the weighting of several factors such as “the nature of political opening, the level of economic development of a country, the structure of existing media, volume of donors’ assistance and the strategic importance of the country” to determine the nature of media assistance (Kumar 2007:656). Allied to these democracy barometers, a host of media-democracy indices have emerged such as IREX’s Media Sustainability Index, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung sponsored African Media Barometer, Freedom House’s indices and UNESCO’s Media Development Indicators, among others (Berger 2010a).

Between 1980 and 1990 – prior to the second wave of democratisation in Africa – almost all post-colonial Southern African states had opted for one party statehood with controlled or mixed economies to address legacies of colonialism while retaining control of key institutions ostensibly for nation-building and development (Kupe 2003). Newly independent African states often exhibited strong social democratic or democratic socialist tendencies and were fiercely critical of neo-colonialism and capitalism. These orientations often contradicted the dominant Western one, while leaning towards communist ones (although authoritarian regimes were sometimes supported by Western powers over democratic ones for Cold War rationales). After the Cold War ended, the concept of ‘democracy’ became synonymous with neo-liberal politics and economics that emphasised open markets (privatisation), respect for human rights (especially property rights), individualism and limited government (Fukuyama 1989). This became a model against which African governance dispensations were judged and served as a determinant of political support and donor assistance. Several Southern African countries have since come to be transitional democracies that exhibit varying trends and tendencies (liberal, social democratic, authoritarian) within the same state which problematises the application of simplistic taxonomies (Kupe 2003).

During the same period, neo-liberalism was strongly influencing ‘media development templates’ to transform regimes to western market capitalism and democracy (Putzel and van der Zwan 2005). The importation of concepts and assumptions associated with Western driven democratisation efforts in Africa has been roundly criticised for being uncritical and

largely simplistic (Berger 2001). The criticism is that ‘Western values’ are imported by institutions such as the World Bank and applied through measures like structural adjustment and bilateral aid with little critical examination. While liberal values are not unimportant for countries in the South,²⁹ it needs to be acknowledged that the USA and European democracies emerged out of particular historic struggles. Thus, the role of the media in these countries evolved from social struggles for democracy against absolutist monarchs, the omnipotence of Leviathan states and the industrial revolution. On the other hand, the media in Southern Africa has been variously defined by liberation struggle against colonialism, apartheid, centralised control of communications and state-driven development under one-party states and struggles for competitive multiparty democracy (Kupe 2003). It is for this reason that Putzel and van der Zwan argue that donor support needs to adapt the idea of democracy to respond to specific traditions, histories and socio-economic situations of nation states (2005).

3.3 Normative Roles of Media in Democracy

Normative media theories propose assumptions (varying but sometimes similar) about the values and ‘rules of the game’ for the media within particular developmental, historic and political contexts (including various forms of democracy). All normative media theories are constructs which can be used to prescribe, analyse or describe the tasks for the media in society. Such tasks include relations with government (and other organs of power including the public, business and the media itself), the ethical roles of journalists and the general functions of the media (Christians et al 2009). There is no universal normative media theory. Instead, different normative expectations about the media’s role often differ from state to state and between different socio-cultural contexts, as ‘the media’ seldom constitute a single system with an exclusive purpose or philosophy (McQuail 1994; Christians et al 2009). One limitation of most writing on normative media theory is that it often refers to traditional news and current affairs media content but omits discussion of other parts of media systems. Yet, national media are composed of and influenced by many separate and overlapping elements. These include ownership forms, business models, international content, diverse media types and services (including cinema, music, sport, social media) and a range of technologies

²⁹ Ronning argues that despite critiques of liberal democracy all democracies should be based on *some* basic liberal tenets. These include: an ‘impersonal’ structure of public power, a constitution to help protect and safeguard rights, diverse power centres inside and outside the state and institutional forums to promote deliberation among alternative viewpoints (2001).

(McQuail 1994). Systems of rule and social arrangements condition (though do not exclusively determine) normative expectations of media roles and behaviour (Price 2000).

The most frequently referred to normative model, Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's *The Four Theories of the Press* (1956) analyses Cold War political systems to derive different roles of the media. *The Four Theories of the Press* articulates an authoritarian, a libertarian, a Soviet and a social responsibility approach as major theories of the media. Although much criticised, Siebert et al's social responsibility and libertarian theories offer useful insights into the political role of media in a democratic framework, while their Cold War authoritarian and Soviet taxonomies contribute to a critique of non-democratic elements even in normally democratic media systems.

Authoritarian media systems demand an acquiescent media which respects the authority of the state and does not interfere with national goals – whether the rule is through an oligarchy, a monarchy or 'authoritarian democracy' like Singapore or Zimbabwe since the late '90s (Christians et al 2009; Siebert et al 1963). The authoritarian media theory highlights tendencies that may emerge in media systems in the form of censorship, prior restraint such as licensing of journalists, denial of access to information and an emphasis on propaganda. Authoritarian media systems were the norm in Africa following independence from colonial powers. From the '60s, the most common forms of government were one-party states or military dictatorships which discouraged political pluralism, by among others, nationalising independent media, monopolising the broadcasting sector and sometimes allowing a nominal free press that was either heavily regulated or politically connected (Karikari 2007). African leaders questioned whether the Western concept of media freedom was a luxury that developing states could afford while attempting to reconstruct societies after years of colonial exploitation (Feustel et al 2005). They also questioned the compatibility between individualistic liberal journalistic norms and indigenous African communitarian traditions that defer to authority. Authoritarian media systems tend to have a chilling effect on reporting but may also stimulate resistance by an independent media towards the state (Arndt 2005).

Soviet theory posits the media's main roles as education, culture, information, development, socialisation and mobilisation of citizens within a Marxist-Leninist framework (McQuail 1994). Soviet theory is also critical of control of western media by capitalist economic interests that regulate the discursive frame for political debate and discussion (Arndt 2005;

McQuail 1994). The media are viewed as agencies of class control since the bourgeoisie owns them and are subject to their ideological hegemony (McQuail 1994; Curran 2000). Consequently, this perspective does not see a democratic role for media under capitalism. Though arguably outdated since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this theory finds common cause with political economy approaches, Noam Chomsky's Propaganda model and left wing critiques of the liberal pluralist media that posit that propaganda and commoditisation are permanent features of capitalist media (Jakubowicz 1999; Arndt 2005).

The frequent criticism of 'The Four Theories...' is that they are a functionalist taxonomy from a bipolar past; are based on observations that were not tested; that they underestimate the role of political economy as compared to social norms in shaping national media systems; and are blindly entrenched in the vantage point of a single theory of classical liberalism (Berger 2000).

Subsequent attempts to replace, supplement or complement the 'Four Theories...' with a typology more suited to post-Cold War politics have also been made by Nordenstreng, Nerone, McQuail, Christians and White, among others (Jakubowicz 1999). McQuail (1987) added the development model and the democratic-participant model, while Curran (1991) reconceptualised 'Four Theories...' to include a liberal, Marxist critique, communist and radical democratic approaches. Jakubowicz argues that Curran's radical democratic approach overlaps with Siebert et al.'s social responsibility model and McQuail's democratic-participant media theory (1999).³⁰

Nordenstreng et al developed a classification based on principles of media independence and autonomy. His cooperative, surveillance, critical and facilitative roles also have some overlap with 'Four Theories...' For example, media should play a 'cooperative role' when a nation state is young, insecure, at war, etc. There are clear allusions to the authoritarian model here. Similarly, their 'critical/dialectical role' calls for journalists to examine the assumptions and premises of the community in a truly radical way and to promote public debate about (not within) the prevailing political order. This can be seen to relate not only to Siebert et al's

³⁰ Berger adapted 'Four Theories...' and other normative models to derive a typology of roles for journalism in democracy. His heuristic categories (liberal, neo-liberal, radical democratic, participatory) are derived from an assessment of journalism as a dynamic practice as opposed to media as an institution (Berger 2000). Berger prefers to think of 'rough normative ideals' that provide insight into the political aspects of media systems in a democratic framework – rather than as deterministic philosophies or approaches. (2000:96).

social responsibility theory but also to Curran's radical democratic approach (Jakubowicz 1999).

Christians et al's (2009) revision of normative media theory considers the media's roles and tasks in democracy in relation to two dimensions – a vertical continuum where media may be more closely associated with people-power on one extreme or institutional power on the other; and a horizontal axis where the poles relate to media autonomy or dependency. In this analytical model, the monitorial role which involves representing reality, presenting a wide array of ideas and being objective watchdogs of the powerful, particularly the state, is closest to Siebert et al's libertarian role. Christian et al's formulation of a facilitative role bears some semblance to the social-responsibility model that envisages the media's function as improving the quality of citizens' lives, contributing to democracy and citizen participation and promoting civil society and various cultures rather than focusing on individual rights and interests. Christian et al's radical role echoes Nordenstreng's critical/dialectic role and Curran's radical democratic approach which share the goal of media's exposure of wrongdoing of representative organisations, fighting for radical change and raising popular grievances in an attempt to fight for justice or development. Finally, their collaborative role is premised on relationships where media serve powers such as the government with tasks such as development and nation building (Christians et al. 2009). In assumptions around media-democracy, the collaborative role is seldom advanced as something worthy of Western media assistance. However, collaborative media approaches have been supported through Chinese media assistance which emphasise news media's cooperation with governments "and rejects the Western media's role as watchdogs holding governments accountable" (Farah and Mosher 2010:26). This model bears some comparison to the Siebert et al's authoritarian model mentioned above.

In this study, attention will be paid to three 'theories': liberal pluralist theory, social responsibility theory, democratic-participant and their related forms. These theories have been purposively selected because of their explanatory potential within the context of this study and relations to normative media-democracy models as indicated above. Liberal pluralism tends to be the hegemonic media-democracy role in the Anglophone developed world, while the social responsibility model has often been embraced by European developing and transitional states. Democratic participant media theory facilitates an understanding of emerging forms of community, civic and citizen media development. Even

if each normative approach is rooted in particular social, political, economic and historical experiences, they have acquired the status of being influential concepts with a life of their own and with donor support in terms of their travel to other contexts.

3.3.1 Liberal Pluralist Media Theory

Libertarian philosophy about the normative role of media dates back to the utilitarian theories of the 19th century. Proponents John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham held that a free press was necessary for good governance and that it should act as a watchdog against the abuse of power (specifically by government) (Arndt 2005). In a representative democracy, a libertarian model emphasises the free flow of information without compulsory control or prior restraint within a market of ideas (apart from consumers' ability to pay for the privilege) (McQuail 1994). Access to information is also a priority based on the assumption that government openness and transparency are prerequisites for representative democracy (Berger 2000). These points relate to elections choices, but also to the media which takes on a defensive role by providing a check (on government) and thereby offering a counterweight to the abuse of political power. This so-called watchdog role is thought to override all other values. It is based on an assumption that mass media are best placed to scrutinise state power while remaining insulated and independent through statutory provisions and the protections of the market (Curran and Gurevitch 1991). Privatisation of state media and commercialism is encouraged based on the assumptions that a free market is the best protection for media independence, pluralism and diversity. Liberal pluralist role assumptions emphasise the structure and performance of a media system where there is a minimum of censorship, private-sector broadcasting, a diversity of voices and informed public debate (Price 2005). Consequently, 'liberal pluralist' media assistance would include support for media viability (management), technical and commercial support for independent mainly commercial media, regulatory reform and liberalisation of the media and ICT sector, training for election, political and economic reporting and media professionalisation in general, among others.

However, functional expectations of media performance in the liberal pluralist paradigm are not unproblematic in a broader democratic sense. Donahue et al argue that liberal pluralism does not engender watchdogs but 'guard-dogs': a media that protects the interests of the status quo instead of critically scrutinising organs of power equally (1995 cited in Berger 2000). Whereas liberal media theory protects freedom of expression and media by outlawing

compulsory state control, it fails to offer any solutions to other pressures that media and journalists are subject, especially the public, business and the media itself (McQuail 1994; Curran and Gurevitch 1991). Concentration of media ownership in the hands of giant conglomerates encourages media to endorse, often uncritically, discourse supportive of capital and it problematises criticism of shareholders or related industries (Curran and Gurevitch 1991). Commercialisation and consolidation of large media groups with interests across different platforms may compromise the media's role in providing political pluralism by homogenising content that may undermine debate and discussion in news and actuality (Kupe 2003). Commercial media should carry different balances between public information and other material such as entertainment that inform decision-making and help citizens exchange alternative points of view (Gillwald 1993; Kupe 2003). However, strategies employed by commercial media to maximise audiences tend to "simplify, personalise, dramatise and obscure" public information (Gillwald 1993). Content and communication needs of the poor and minorities who may not constitute a lucrative advertising market are frequently marginalised (Arndt 2005; Gillwald 1993 citing Curran 1991). Under a liberal pluralist model, concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few companies reduces diversity, audience choice and public control (Curran and Gurevitch 1991). In this way, prevailing market structures limit diversity and only pay lip service to *isegoria* (equality of expression).

Liberal plural media values are the product of conditions extremely different to most of those in Africa (Berger 2002). In Africa, the problems of liberal pluralism are exacerbated by public reliance on state media, repressive media regulatory frameworks, urban media bias and concentration of private media ownership in the hands of the economic and political elite. African states lack dense media environments that can reflect and reproduce plural and diverse interests, and a vibrant public sphere and independent civil society (Berger 2002). However, it is precisely the absence of all this that spurs actors towards a liberal pluralist dispensation. New media access and use may reinforce this proclivity. Accessible and less expensive personal communication technologies like mobile phones and tools are liberating institutional and human capacity for publishing and broadcasting, although digital divides remain inhibiting factors (see Chapter six).

3.3.2 Social Responsibility Media Theory

Siebert et al's 'social responsibility' media theory is rooted in socialist communitarianism rather than liberal individualism (Skjerdal 2001). The social responsibility model departs from liberal pluralism's rejection of compulsory control to argue for media accountability and professionalism through independent and self regulation. Professional standards and self-regulation are viewed as a pre-requisite to ensure that journalists provide a fair, "comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives (it) meaning"³¹ so that the public has appropriate information for decision-making (McQuail 1994). Not surprisingly, social responsibility media theory also posits a different position on government-media relations. Contrary to liberal pluralist theory, this normative model welcomes a degree of co-operation and collaboration between the state and the media, and may encourage government intervention in the public interest under certain circumstances (Arndt 2005). Though freedom of expression and media independence still remain essential to the crafting of durable democracies, social responsibility theory stresses a public media that empowers the citizenry through emphasising a 'public stewardship' or 'guide dog' role (rather than a watchdog role) (Berger 2000).

Social responsibility theory has much in common with McQuail's 'social democratic' media theory (Berger 2000). A common denominator between these two normative media theories is recognition of the deficiencies of the market to serve the multitude of publics in a complex pluralist society. This has led some authors to conclude that only a political authority has the capacity and legitimacy to define the public space for genuine pluralism (Karpinnen 2006). In social responsibility media systems, a realistic question is thus not whether there will be political interventions "but what form they should take, what values they are based on and how these decisions are arrived at" (Karpinnen 2006:16).

However, social responsibility theory remains over-optimistic about the media's capacity to be responsible and meet certain standards, and of government (and other interests') willingness not to leverage media agendas in their own interest. A social democratic conception attracts (and is susceptible to) social forces (and especially governments), especially in Third World countries where media has been corrupted as a tool of propaganda and control (Berger 2000). For example, state and party influence (as often in the Third

³¹ This is taken from frequently cited quotation of the US Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947) that established that the media needed to be socially responsible and meet certain standards if it was to be supportive of democracy.

World there is little distinction between the two) are brought to bear on broadcasters through appointments and funding, while commercial media are brought in line through selective allocation of licenses and registration of journalists and the press (Curran 2000). Concepts of ‘civil society’, ‘citizenship’ and ‘nation’ are also often narrowly constructed in the interests of a paternal state. Clearly, if national communication is under the influence of an undemocratic government, it cannot be expected to act independently as a main contributor to profound and widespread democratic transformation. Even if governments do not exercise direct control, media leaders still tend to be part of a “professional elite integrated into the hierarchy of power” (Curran 2000:148). Social responsibility’s notion of a rational consensus and the forging of national identity through the media, fails to account for a democratic paradox. How does one ensure integration (to avoid conflict and ensure political decisions can be taken) while simultaneously fostering true religious, moral, cultural, and political pluralism that characterises civil society? (Karpinnen 2006:6). Progress through social responsibility theory is therefore conditional upon the media forming alliances and being part of the broader thrust for democratisation and development with other sectors of society (Berger 2000).

Media assistance following a ‘social responsibility’ orientation would support reform of media to transform from organs either monopolised or captured by government towards becoming public service media. This perspective also supports ethical coverage and fair representation of marginalised groups and minorities in and through the media, public broadcasting, support for media self-regulation, electoral education and other forms of citizen empowerment and improving government and media relations.

3.3.3 Democratic Participant Media Theory

Social responsibility theory’s concern with building identities and citizenship is extended in McQuail’s democratic participant media theory. This normative approach deals with the media’s role in broadening citizen engagement and constructing a wide and participatory democratic community (though plural democratic *communities* would perhaps be more accurate) (Berger 2000). Opoku-Mensah and others hold that the biggest threat to democracy in Africa is a lack of citizen participation in public life (2001). The democratic participant approach conceives media audiences (the public) as active producers and shapers of a rational social consensus in and through the media – not only as media consumers (liberal

pluralism) or national citizens (social responsibility) (Berger 2000). Journalists are regarded as social actors rather than professional and ‘neutral’ observers of the status quo (Berger 2000).

Critical of commercial and state media hegemony, democratic participant theory argues for the exploitation of fringe and new media to transcend the weaknesses of plural representation and communication inherent in the other media systems. Democratic participant media theory taken together with development media theory supports the creation of local (grassroots), plural, small-scale, non-institutional media that link senders to receivers and favour horizontal patterns of interaction (Banda 2006; Berger 2000). These ideal-type characteristics are available in community media and new information and communication technologies that possess potential to challenge uniform, centralised, high cost, commercialised or state controlled media (Banda 2006; Berger 2000).

Democratic participant media theory is closely linked to deliberative and participatory governance that conceives political communication as occurring in a ‘public sphere’ between the government and the governed (Curran and Gurevitch 2000; Berger 2000)³². Jurgen Habermas is responsible for historicising the development of this ‘public sphere’. Habermas assumed that a process of rational deliberation or public reflection between free and equal citizens would help condition government policy through formal controls (elections) and informal controls (public opinion) (Curran 2000).³³ A longitudinal study of 137 countries by Weaver (1977) concluded that “growth of mass communications is important to the growth of participant forms of government and greater freedom of expression” (Groshek 2009:118). In the democratic participant model, the media are called to challenge hegemonic social values (rather than simply reflect the status quo), by improving representation and access to communication for democracy’s ‘little platoons’—civil society (such as the civics, women’s groups, environmental groups, trade unions) (Gillwald 1993 citing Curran 1991; Price 2000). A ‘public sphere’ is a common world where private individuals can debate issues of common concern in the interests of generating a consensus that is free from state and market manipulation (Gillwald 1993; Karpinnen 2006). This would facilitate a nation’s citizens in an

³² Habermas’s original public sphere reflected a narrow elitist space for democratic participation (see Berger 2001). Contemporary democratic participatory theory holds up an ideal of broad-based social participation.

³³ While public opinion as expressed through the vote ought to guide government policy in democracies, most dominant regimes in Africa do not fear the ballot box. This factor coupled with weak media and civil societies militate against democratic transformation (Berger 2001). While radio is the dominant medium of public communication in Africa that could be used to grow an active citizenry, fear of accountability may explain why some governments have been reluctant to open the airwaves (Berger 2000).

active process of self-government. The task of media policy from a democratic participant perspective would be to support civil society and enlarge opportunities of marginalised groups; and create room for critical voices outside the reach of the market and the state to increase the inclusiveness, and openness of the public sphere to various forms of contestation (Karpinnen 2006). Linz and Stepan write that a robust civil society “with the capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor government and state, can help start transitions, help resist reversals, help push transitions to their completion, and help consolidate and deepen democracy” (1996: 18). This perspective has informed a large number of media assistance interventions around Africa. Consequently, media assistance that values the democratic participant approach supports participatory modes of communication such as grassroots community media, ICTs and new interactive media, blogging and citizen and civic journalism.

However well-meaning, the assumptions on which democratic participant media are based remain subject to practical and theoretical challenge. On a functional level, while community media may offer some challenge to the hegemony of large conglomerates, they are dwarfed by economies of scale. Currently, participatory media have less broad public support and influence and may suffer from low investment and consequently poor quality than their commercial media counterparts (Curran and Gurevitch 1991). In Africa, low telephone landline penetration, costly user infrastructure, low levels of basic and ICT literacy and slow media reform weaken the creation of sustainable participatory media and journalism. This encourages a reliance on international donors and subsidy for these forms of communication.

However, new media lowers access barriers for minority voices for local and global communication (de Maggio 2001 et al 322). ICTs and new media, in particular inexpensive mobile handsets, offer new competition and opportunities for mainstream media. The International Telecommunications Union Index on ICT development estimates that Africa has had the world’s fastest mobile growth rate (32 per cent in 2006/2007) and enjoys overall mobile penetration of 28 per cent (2009). Mobiles as tools for reception offer media a new audience, while mobiles as a tool for media production promises media pluralism and diversity that may be cumulatively greater than the footprint and circulation of localised media providers. The assumptions embedded in this conclusion are assessed in greater detail in Chapter six.

The idea of conceiving the media as an objective or neutral facilitator of public debate free from state or market manipulation also remains problematic. Media cannot be objective in a strict sense. At best, ‘the media’ comprises diverse organisations and persons subject to the influence of economic and political agendas and are themselves involved in subjective agenda setting (even if that agenda is primarily to build a democratic society as much normative theory would have it).

As separate approaches, the liberal-pluralist, social responsibility and democratic-participant models point to specific applications and limitations of the media’s political role, especially in an African context. Taken together however, the strengths and weaknesses of these normative systems illustrate the importance of developing free, independent, competent ‘mixed’ media systems consisting of community, public media and commercial media – not the restricted, captured and monopolised media systems that still populate parts of Africa. Media roles played by media institutions and journalists are “typically composites of different and sometimes contradictory traditions” (Christians et al 2009:17). An understanding of normative media theory problematises the adoption of narrow ideological foci for media support. Berger argues that the role of journalism in democracy should be based on a variable and ever-shifting combination of theoretical options – notwithstanding the minor contradictions between them (2000).

In this vein, as elaborated in the recommendations in the final chapter of this thesis, donor support for mixed media systems should aim to level the playing field and widen social access to public debate by exploiting the strengths that these ideal-media types offer to democracy building and the problem of democratic pluralism, representation and participation. This requires recognition that there are different traditions of normative theory in socio-cultural contexts, just as there tend to be different traditions of democracy in different cultures (Christians et al 2009). Donor emphasis on any one of these concepts of democracy and corresponding media role in isolation of the others may lead to impoverished concept and practice of media development. For example, an exclusive liberal pluralist media system without social democracy and participatory democracy remains elitist.³⁴ However, democratic-participant and social democratic approaches miss a trick in terms of underestimating the value of media institutions that play at least some monitorial

³⁴ Christians et al hold for example that the “ideal form of public communication can only occur when there is some degree of public participation in the collective decision making of the community” (2009:17).

role to provide a check and balance on power (Christians et al 2009). Similarly, social democracy approaches on their own can result in top-down, paternalistic practice while participatory approaches cannot dispense entirely with representative democratic practice.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that democracy is a concept with various inflections and that the problems of democracy and the media's role in relation thereto are complex and nuanced. Traditions of normative media theory differ between socio-cultural contexts, just as different traditions of democracy vary between cultures (Christians et al 2009). The use of different working concepts for democracy as a goal may make it difficult to measure how specific media support interventions may contribute toward democratising societies and institutions when media assistance and stakeholder interpretations or goals vary. This means, while the democratic value of a free, independent and plural media is to support durable democracies based on the rational evaluation of political choices (and participation) in public policy making, no specific matrix of media development offers a magic bullet to the problems of 'democratisation' or democratic consolidation (Berger 2000; Boutros Ghali 2002; Crick 2002; Miller 2002). Recommendations which relate to how media assistance can practically address the questions raised by the theoretical challenges addressed in this chapter will be dealt with in Chapter eight. The next chapter will problematise the meaning of media support in relation to development, with general reference to Africa.

CHAPTER 4

MEDIA ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

Media assistance rhetoric draws not only on democracy theory, but also – and often – on development discourse and theories, as well as the practices of development communication (Abbot 2007). The goal of this chapter is to engage ‘development’ as one of the stated objects of media assistance in order to critically interrogate its relation to the phenomena and processes of ‘new media’ later in this study. Section 4.2 discusses the critical contribution of media development to the goals of development communication and therefore development in its many forms (economic, human, nation-state based). An overview of the struggle over the meaning of ‘development’ follows in section 4.3. Like other social processes, conceptualising what media support agencies or their targets understand by ‘development’ is not easy to pin down as a single meaning. What is meant by ‘development’ may be informed by a technicist, political economy, humanist or participatory democratic bias (among others), all of which can be elaborated by particular development paradigms. Some theories of development *qua* process (Lerner 1958; Katz and Lazarfeld 1955; Rogers 1962) and some criticisms of these are outlined. Section 4.3.1 problematises the dominant paradigm of liberal developmentalism or modernisation, as well as reviews its critique by the dependency paradigm (4.3.2). The dependency and underdevelopment paradigm is seen as informing the evolution of the notion of ‘development journalism’. The multiplicity paradigm (4.3.3), which argues for a participatory democratic approach to development, critiques the dependency and modernisation approaches and provides an alternative vision for local and global development. The relationship between media development on the one hand, and development on the other is unpacked in relation to each paradigm.

4.2 Development Role of Media Development

‘Development’ or the problem of ‘underdevelopment’ remains a key challenge for states in the global South where cumulative debt already in 2002 reached at \$2,4 trillion, 2,7 billion people live on less than \$2 a day (2007 data) and lower education³⁵ and life expectancy reduces human growth potential and productive capacity (Bond 2006; World Bank 2009). In Africa, 46% of the population lived on less than \$1 a day in 2003, making sub-Saharan Africa

³⁵ 18 of 25 countries with enrolment rates for primary education below 70% have been in sub-Saharan Africa (CPSI 2004).

the region with the proportion of the world's poor (CPSI 2004; Moyo 2009). Established by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 55/2, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a set of universally agreed targets and indicators to guide policy and mobilisation of resources and capacity for global development (Servaes 1991; Bond 2006). The objectives of the MDGs to be achieved by 2015 are: halving extreme poverty; enrolling all children of school age for primary education; advancing gender equality, especially by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005; reducing infant and child mortality by two thirds; providing reproductive health service for all; and implementing national strategies for sustainable development to reverse the loss of environmental resources (Bond 2006). The success of the MDGs can be suggested to depend as much on media development and communication for development interventions and processes, as it does on financial and technical aid, investment, partnerships loans, capacity building or debt relief (Locksley 2009).

Communication policy and its effects on practice are central to expanding the productive capacity of persons and groups to meet economic, social, cultural and other needs and goals (Berger 1995; Servaes 1991; Boutros-Ghali 2002). From a social engineering perspective, the appropriate instruments of mass communication must be strategically employed to address the fundamental needs of social collectives. Communication in this view is critical to, and arguably a pre-condition for, development. It facilitates the diagnosis of development problems, aids the design and implementation of selected priorities and empowers communities in the development process through participation (Boutros-Ghali 2002; Servaes 1991, 2002; Berger 1995).

The role of communication (and media) in development can be illustrated by an example from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In 2006, the Gates Foundation began rolling out a \$6 million public health programme to combat infectious diseases in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite its best efforts, the intervention's earlier attempts were resisted by locals who did not understand "the conventions and institutions of Western medicine" (Nelson 2009:15). A communication and media strategy that facilitated the Gates Foundation's 'development' object was needed. As one foundation officer aptly suggested: "We can't get the vaccination in the arm, until we get the information in the heads" (Nelson 2009:15). This example is not meant to uncritically accept the 'authority' of Western medicine but it highlights that any

change process needs to acknowledge the importance of information and communication the concerned stakeholders.

Communication for development emerged as a distinct discipline after World War II (Servaes 1991). Two paradigms emerged – one in the wake of the reconstruction efforts in the West and Japan in the ‘50s, and the other from anti-colonial struggles of groups in Latin America in the ‘70s. The first, the modernisation paradigm, postulated that development and progress would occur when the periphery (developing/underdeveloped states) learned and acquired the technologies and values of the centre (the developed states). The second, the dependency theory, explained underdevelopment in the periphery as resulting from, and being at the expense of, development at the centre (Goudge 2004). A third and more recent paradigm, the multiplicity approach or ‘another development’ has seen development as a “multi-dimensional and dialectic process” which must involve local communities, organisations and movements facilitating their own development trajectory (Servaes 1991:64, 71).

In its early phases in this overall perspective, media development was seen by the international donor community as a subset of communication for development initiatives. Communications for development sought to influence the attitudes and behaviour of individuals, while mass media were regarded as just one of the many instruments of change (for example, to deliver social marketing messages such as agricultural, education or health programmes). However, the two have increasingly come to be regarded as “different apples from the same tree” (Abbott 2007). They are both linked to similar development communication theories which look at how communications (broadly considered) address the problems of ‘development’.

In the main, media development focuses on ‘journalism’ and news media as a vehicle or carrier of messages, as opposed to communications produced by NGOs, community groups and other networks like posters, pamphlets and educational programming. Miller holds that the focus of media development on ‘journalism’ is because the practice is viewed as a “quasi-scientific, professionalised enterprise...an essential element in the rational amelioration of social ills” (2002:22). In media development, media are the object of change (for example, media law reform, support for professional journalism and broadcasting institutions, developing financial sustainability of media outlets). Media development is viewed as reforming and building the institutions, policy environment and practices of mass media which may facilitate development by engendering media that can monitor the difference

between government or agency plans and outcomes, alert publics to “abuse, inefficiencies and corruption in the development process” and make elites more responsive to basic public needs (Berger 1995:5; Servaes 2002a). In this way, as Amartya Sen has argued, a free media can draw attention to socio-economic issues that helps citizens hold public and private agents accountable for the coordination and employ of public resources for productive economic growth and human development (Stiglitz 2002; World Bank 2002).³⁶ This may be said to indirectly contribute to development by way of media, and journalism in particular, playing a role in facilitating transparent and accountable government (Locksley 2009).

Notwithstanding, most international assistance and grants to developing states were mainly constructed to contribute to political agendas and seldom focus directly for development (Moyo 2009).

Further, media can be seen to contribute to development through its own role as an economic enterprise. In addition, media may also generate cost savings through functioning as an early warning system for example against weather and ecological disaster, as well as contributing relevant information to sectors that facilitate productive growth such as public health, safety and education among others. Media development for a free, plural and sustainable media is therefore considered by some to be a non-negotiable element in fostering both content and a media ecology for, among other things, the objective of communication for development – and development more broadly defined. However, while media may be a necessary element, with its own indirect effects on development, this alone is not seen as making a direct contribution to development.

Instead, a direct, dedicated and purposeful media role in development is generally seen in terms of express coverage of developmental issues with the desired impact of enhancing development-related practices (e.g. around MDG issues like health, as well as issues like promoting agriculture and trade).

Views that regard the roles of media in human development positively are supported at least in part by some empirical research. For example, a study of policy response systems in India correlated higher newspaper circulation with increased government responsiveness to food distribution and disaster relief (World Bank 2002). Another empirical study in Botswana demonstrated how access to media influenced women’s health and fertility outcomes across

³⁶ Hence Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s famous suggestion that no substantial famine has ever occurred in any country with a relatively free press.

income and education levels (World Bank 2002). One ‘development’ contribution of media that is frequently underplayed is the expanding of a state or nation’s productive capacity by contributing to national literacy and facilitating ‘allocative efficiencies’ in the distribution of resources (Locksley 2009; Aker and Mbiti 2010). The media also facilitates economic development by providing intelligence on environments for foreign and local investment, while integrating states more closely into a global economy. Mass media therefore contributes to the efficacy of the distribution of public benefits and the expansion of national and international productive capacity (Djankov et al 2002: 142).

A further point is Thompson’s observation that media foster “a feeling of sharing a common history and a common locale, a common trajectory in time and space” which help to constitute social communities in and through the media (Thompson 1995:34). Social cohesion in turn is often seen as a precondition for social capital and social development. When the object is “national development” as nationhood, this is also influenced by, among other things, media products and mass mediated events.

4.3 Defining ‘Development’

Deriving a working definition of ‘development’ is problematic, because the study of the subject is influenced by various academic fields – from anthropology, sociology, economic and politics – each with variable accents on particular features of development. Further, there is a general emphasis of particular development paradigms (in this chapter, I discuss three, viz. modernisation and growth, dependency and underdevelopment, and ‘another development’ or multiplicity). Each of these paradigms carries particular biases (economistic, humanist, participatory democracy) and assumptions about the nature and causes of underdevelopment and its solutions. Due recognition is given that paradigms of development influence struggles over the interpretation and application of the appellation of development – what is internal to the frame and what is external to it. (Servaes 1991 citing Giddens 1976) ‘Development’ as a discursive construct consists of systems of objects, concepts and strategies which determine what can be thought and said in this field, and what parameters must be followed to transform development problems into policies or plans (Goudge 2004:157 citing Escobar 1995a:40). Development discourses reflect historic relations of power that exist between parties – in the case of media assistance, generally between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ nations, first and third world, colonial powers and the colonised (Goudge 2004).

In general, development is seen as the corollary of underdevelopment or often as an aggregated set of indices that are taken to reflect a developed outcome (Berger 1992). To provide a working definition here, while side-stepping concepts or indicators that may be ideologically or social value-centred (though I do not contend that this thesis uses a ‘neutral’ concept of development), Berger’s concept of a “process of expanding productive capacity” is employed (1992). The value of this view lies in highlighting development as a teleological process (though not an inevitable one) where increased output of existing products, enhancement of the same and production of new items (whether baked beans or knowledge) addresses issues of scarcity, wants and needs (Berger 1992). Despite criticisms of ‘economic determinism’, this economistic view of development is employed as it is viewed as a necessary (though not sufficient condition) for holistic development. For example, social development which involves the “promotion of well-being of the population” through planned change and services like health, education, welfare and the environment, among others, is considered to ultimately be dependent on economic development (as distinct from mere redistribution of resources) for its accomplishment (Midgley 1995:2; Berger 1992).³⁷ The centrality of productive growth notwithstanding, holistic development may also be contingent on the occurrence of democratic institutions and culture and social policy measures that are ideally “compatible with the objectives of economic development” (Midgley 1995:2). Therefore development will be viewed holistically as the economistic expansion of productive capacity that may serve as a function and enabler of other forms of development at its centre, underpinned by direct or indirect participation of all citizens in the process of development (Berger 1992; Midgley 1995). This view is most closely associated with ‘another development’ theory which is discussed in section 4.3.3.

4.3.1 Modernisation and Growth

Historically the modernisation and growth paradigm has dominated development discourse (Wilkins and Waters 2000:1). In the modernisation approach, ‘backward’ or traditional states, collectives or persons are exposed to modern behaviour, institutions and technology of ‘developed’ states or parties, with the idea that these will be adopted with

³⁷ This does not mean however that social development will inevitably occur as a consequence of economic development. The experiences of authoritarian political systems in terms of generating levels of development have served to undermine these assumptions. For example, the Apartheid government in South Africa managed to achieve considerable growth rates while the majority of the black population lived under conditions of poverty and exploitation.

beneficial effects.³⁸ In a beneficiary development model, a ‘developer’ stimulates and disseminates values (such as individualism) and support institutions (such as democratic political structures and a free market economy) that favour progress, mobility, innovation and consumption to a ‘developee’ in what is seen as vertical hierarchical relationship (Servaes 1991; Berger 2005). Modernists conceive development as a unilinear evolutionary process that is progressive and generally irreversible (Servaes 1995). Rostow theorised that each state had to pass through five stages of development that would facilitate transformation from a ‘traditional’ society to ‘modern’ – from agrarian to post-industrial.³⁹ Modernisation theorists believed development could be stimulated by exogenous factors and by internal measures that support modernisation (usually of Western origin) such as democratic institutions and rule of law (Servaes 1991:70). The roots of underdevelopment are explained as endogenous variables (usually portrayed as non-Western in origin) like traditionalism, superstition and authoritarianism (Servaes 1991). However, the modernist explanation of development tends to ignore implicating geopolitical history and power relations as causes of underdevelopment (Goudge 2004:158).⁴⁰

Modernisation sees technology and economic growth as two principal drivers of such development. As indicated in section 4.2, a quantitative yardstick is applied to measure desirable development in terms of economic growth and related variables, for example increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP), Net National Income (NNI), life expectancy and teledensity. Descriptions of quantitative physical or material differences between developing and developed nations increasingly carry inferences of cultural and moral superiority both between and within societies (Goudge 2004). Almost any aspect of the lives of people in the global South can be defined as lacking in progress from a Western perspective and as therefore subject to being portrayed as relatively inferior (Goudge 2004). In doing so, modernisation often valorises the role and contribution of literate, urban, high status elite populations in the process of development and consequently

³⁸ The modernisation theorists, however, seldom reflect on the detrimental effects of Western development choices such as increasing social inequality or environmental degradation.

³⁹ Rostow’s five stages of economic development were the traditional society; pre-conditions for take-off; take-off; the drive to maturity; and the age of high mass consumption.

⁴⁰ The modernisation perspective fails to take account of the global system of power relations which also influence underdevelopment. This includes foreign debt and the impact of global financial strictures on developing states (Goudge 2004).

marginalises or excludes the contribution of lower status urban and rural sectors in development. This shortcoming may create or perpetuate social cleavages or divides (White 2004). For example, Bond notes that internal development fostered by grassroots movements is frequently absent from reports on poverty or MDGs, including “popular mobilisation for AIDS treatment and health services, reconnecting water and electricity, pro-food security campaigns, municipal budget campaigns” (2006:349). While modernisation and growth theory is challenged by theorists from other academic paradigms, its assumptions (including that an internal root of underdevelopment can be addressed through foreign aid and technological assistance) have been shared by development agencies associated with the United Nations, the World Bank, transnational companies and many governments (including those in the developing world) (Servaes 1991, 1995).

In the modernisation paradigm, the media’s role is viewed as the transmission of particular kinds of values (like industrial enterprise, cleanliness, monogamy) and particular kinds of messages (health, nutrition, agriculture, education) between the developers and beneficiaries for social growth and progress. Harold Laswell, who saw communication as the vertical transmission of messages between sender and receiver, summed up this perspective as “who says, what through which channel to whom, with what effect?” (Servaes 2002a:11). The idea that the underdeveloped could be developed through the transfer (diffusion) of particular technologies, cognitions and values (all of which may apply to media and to the assumed effects of media) was advanced by Lerner in 1958 and later supported by writings of Schramm (1964) and Rogers (1962). In his book, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, Lerner attempted to correlate development (as economic expansion) with other modernisation variables such as literacy, urbanisation and media consumption and political development. Lerner’s approach closely connected to early functionalist views of communication which assumed that social behaviour could be changed through exposure to new ways and ideas through powerful mass media (Feustel et al 2005). Lerner postulated that media could be a “magic multiplier for development” by fostering vertical transmission of messages between the developers and ‘developees’ (Servaes 1991; Berger 2005). Later communications scholars introduced a limited effects view to the modernisation paradigm by arguing that media were a co-contributor to development and that their effects were likely to be indirect influence rather than producing direct and powerful impact (Rogers 2005). Subsequent modernisation theorists also placed greater stock in interpersonal communication. The ‘Two Step Flow’ of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) and multi-step ‘Diffusion of Innovations’ model of

Rogers (1962) divided populations into active and passive participants, opinion leaders and followers (Berger 2005; Servaes 1991). Two Step Flow explains development as a linear process that involves the one way flow of ideas from the mass media to elite opinion leaders who use interpersonal communication to transmit these ideas and values to opinion followers (Servaes 1986). It is immediately possible to understand that from this perspective, new media platforms increase the flow and reach of modernisation messaging. Roger's Diffusion of Innovations theory conceived a multiphase approach which held that development is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.⁴¹ While Rogers' early writings suggested a hierarchical approach to communication for development, later editions of his book *Diffusions of Innovations*, increasingly embraced bottom-up participatory planning and the role of communications. He acknowledged that "a development project's degree of sustainability is determined in large measure by the buy-in...and extent of participation" of the local stakeholders (Adams 2007: 181).

Modernisation has been criticised for its elitist vertical approaches to development communication which arguably led to the failure of many development programmes (Rogers 2007). Issue has been taken with the functionalist and circular nature of development indicators (Berger 1992), as well as paternalistic and ethnocentric approaches to modernists' views of underdevelopment and the development process (Goudge 2004). The modernisation approach is frequently criticised for its overemphasis on quantitative indicators like GDP as its principal measure of development. Critics hold that 'development' cannot be boiled down exclusively to its financial or economic dimension. Critical humanists regard indicators of economic growth as necessary but not sufficient for human development. They argue that figures like Net National Incomes, for example, do not show how income is composed, derived or who benefits. Modernisation perceives development simply as economic growth and sees this as an end in itself. It fails to see exogenous variables that may hinder expanding productive capacity or reducing levels of poverty such as colonialism or debt manipulation (Berger 1992). Notwithstanding these criticisms of an economic oriented view of development, this variable cannot be disregarded or marginalised due to its role as a function and enabler of other forms of development (political, economic, nation-state), as indicated earlier (Berger 1992; Midgley 1995). However, the notion that a single, universal and

⁴¹ Rogers divided the population by particular characteristics into five groups: innovators (the groups who were first to adopt, tended to be affluent and mobile), early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards (the last and least likely to adopt an innovation).

evolutionary path to modern development exists is also dismissed for failing to consider development as a negotiation between different approaches and trajectories to reach these ends (Servaes 1991, 1995, 2002a).

Modernist media development supports mainly free and professional commercial media as a disseminator of knowledge and as a bulwark against corruption and a facilitator of economic growth. To these ends, similarities can be seen with the liberal pluralist democratic role of the media which emphasises free flows of information within a market of ideas to foster competition, innovation etc. (McQuail 1994). Modernist media development endorses media professionalisation to encourage critical watchdog or investigative journalism and liberalisation of media markets and policy. Emphasis continues to be on “centralised, mainstream and unidirectional media” (Berger 2005:240). However, modernisation also fosters integration of citizens into local, global and national economies through support for mass media and 'high technology' like satellites and computers (Roach 1999) and increasingly mobile phones that are bearers and tools of and for Western consumer culture.

4.3.2 The Dependency Paradigm

Emerging from the revolutionary movements in Latin America during the mid-'60s, the dependency or underdevelopment paradigm critiques the shortcomings of modernisation, in particular its failure to explain how the Third World came to be “underdeveloped” (at least in the dependency theorists’ estimation) and how development could take place. The ‘father’ of dependency theory, Baran (1957) suggested development and underdevelopment were two sides of the “interrelated and continuous” problem of global capitalism (Servaes 1991:58). In short, underdevelopment in the Third World (‘developing’ states/periphery) takes place at the expense of development for the First World (‘developed’ states/centre) by engendering dependence of the Third World on the First. While modernisation theorists like Rostow postulated that developing states could leapfrog stages of development through innovation and technology, dependency theorists held that the power imbalances render this hypothesis untenable (Goudge 2004). Baran held that, after colonialism, the development and geo-political hegemony of the First World was assured by reproducing similar socio-economic and political structures in developing states (*à la* modernisation theory) to serve the interest of the ‘developed’ state and transnational capital (Servaes 1991). How debt is structured and conditionalities of international banking institutions are also serious exogenous impediments to sustainable local development strategies (CPSI 2004:44; Bond 2006). For example, some

African states have been repaying more for debt to the international banking institutions than they receive in aid or relief from Western countries despite years of colonial exploitation or international banking institutions' support of post-colonial dictators (Bond 2006). Debt repayments limits the funds that local governments have to potentially service the needs of their people, while increasing reliance on donor assistance and dependency on Western countries' largesse. Consequently, Dependistas called for peripheral states to disassociate themselves from the world market and strive for self-reliance (Servaes 1995).

Modernisation theorists emphasise 'development as economic growth', while dependency theorists, who emerge from a critical humanist tradition, foreground economic growth as merely an instrument for extra-economic development (human or social development) (Berger 1992). Dependistas further consider that economic growth must also be accompanied by better power and wealth equity (Berger 1992). Dependistas regard the 'developed' status of some Western countries with high GDP as hypocritical, given that the same states often fail to address their own internal inequalities between income or ownership of wealth. They would remark that even in the United States of America and European Union, 15% of the population lives below national poverty levels, and some 'developed' states demonstrate obscene differences between their wealthiest and poorest citizens (Servaes 2002a).

The communication component of the dependency paradigm is linked within the media imperialism thesis (Servaes 1991). Boyd Barrett refers to media imperialism as "the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media are...subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries, without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected" (1977:58). As such, Dependistas sees the global capitalist media as a contributor to underdevelopment. Imperialist systems are based on exploitation, penetration through bridgehead (peripheral elite), fragmentation and marginalisation (Servaes 1995). Dependency theorists would regard Price's definition (2002) of media assistance as a "foreign policy of media space" as a euphemism for cultural imperialism exported into a sovereign state under the guise of 'media development'. For dependistas, the national state is central to resisting cultural imperialism of foreign states and corporations and to building up national capacity, including national *media* capacity and local content production.

Dependistas consider the true role of media to promote self-reliance against “financial, commercial, technological, cultural and psychological dependencies on the First World”. (Berger 2005:238 citing Rogers 1976). To counter the hegemony of Western media pluralism, Dependistas argue that communication flows have to be two-way, not simply in one direction (from centre to periphery). The paradigm’s emphasis on equity and redistribution has further substantiated a need to balance global (between centre and periphery) and local flows (between urban and rural centres) of information. In this context, it is also often advocated that the task of development communications is better served by governments than private enterprises (Servaes 1991). A global debate pertaining to calls for free and balanced information flows reached its peak with the outcomes of the International Commission on the Study of Communication Problems (aka the McBride Commission report *Many Voices One World*). The fall-out when countries in the Non-Aligned Movement moved to rearrange the international information space through a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) led to the USA and United Kingdom leaving UNESCO (Banda 2007; Padovani and Nordenstreng 2005).

Dependency theorists foregrounded ‘development journalism’ as a solution to counter what they saw as cultural imperialism as well as negative portrayal of the developing world through transnational media like news agencies and a solution to balance the internal rural/urban bias of local media (Banda 2007). Development journalism was also meant to motivate citizens to foster national pride and help integrate traditional and modern societies. Ogan (1982) suggests two views of development journalism emerged, and these closely resemble Christian et al’s (2009) monitorial and collaborative media roles.

In the ‘monitorial’ view advocated by bodies such as Press Foundation Asia and Freedom House, development journalism functions in a decentralised media system where the media is autonomous and can be openly critical of government *à la* the liberal watchdog media role. Ogan (1982:6) citing Aggarwala (1979:181) writes that this approach to development journalism should:

- critically assess the relevance of development projects to national and local needs;
- evaluate the differences between planned project schemes and actual implementation;
- report on the difference between projects’ actual impacts on people and the impacts claimed by government officials.

In the 'collaborative' approach (which was practiced in the Phillipines, India, Indonesia and Tanzania), the independent media is an instrument of development support communication alongside state or public media and government agencies (Ogan 1982). Lent (1977) suggests that this model of development journalism is not majorly different from authoritarian media systems. He explains the rationale for state-led development journalism as follows:

Because the Third World nations are newly emergent, they need time to develop their institutions. During this initial period of growth, stability and unity must be sought; criticism must be minimized and the public faith in governmental institutions and policies must be encouraged. Media must cooperate, according to this guided press concept, by stressing positive, development-inspired news, by ignoring negative societal or oppositionist characteristics and by supporting government ideologies and plans (Ogan 1982 citing Lent 1977:18).

Consequently, development journalism as a concept suffered following the fall-out of NWICO and its problematic implementation in some Third World states. One principal criticism was that this type of development journalism's emphasis on government as the subject and content of communication led to inappropriate political interference in the media (Ogan 1982).

Servaes writes that a development-oriented approach to national media systems often leads to self-censorship, licensing, broadcasting regulation, government praise-singing and glorifying of leading politicians in order to boost the legitimacy of governments (1986). This diminishes the capacity of independent media to challenge or question, and gives the state control over national discourse, debate and dissent (Campbell 2004). "In many cases in Africa...this strategy became perverted into propaganda aimed at trying to persuade the masses that the dictatorship of the day was working in their interests" (Berger 2005:238 citing Okigbo 1985). This in turn detrimentally impacted on development by limiting critical scrutiny in the allocation of benefits (Campbell 2004; Servaes 1986).

The shortcomings of development journalism therefore led some development academics to suggest that the dependency paradigm is "good on diagnosis, poor on the cure" (Servaes 1995 citing Friberg and Hettne 1985:212). Its critics argue that a singular focus on exogenous causes of underdevelopment from the centre blinded the dependistas' ability to account for local impediments to development such as feudal capitalism, tribalism and internal class

formations (Servaes 1991:60). Servaes contended that the greatest weakness of dependency theory was that it provided an oversimplistic, homogenised view of the centre (developed states) and failed to analyse how class dynamics within the centre and the periphery can lead to underdevelopment. This, he argued, undermined “international class solidarity” by lumping together the centre’s exploitative elite and its own exploited masses (1991:60). Finally, the dependency claim that underdevelopment can be addressed by withdrawal of states of the periphery from relationships with the centre did not hold water. Globalisation increases political, economic and social interdependence between all countries in the world. While globalisation produces variable effects between nation states, “...no countries are completely autonomous and self-reliant, and at the same time, no countries develop (or underdevelop) merely as a reflection of exogenous (outside) factors” (Servaes 1991:66; see also Boutros Ghali 2002). Even if they wanted to, many developing states are often too indebted or weak to operate outside the global framework. For example, in 2004, foreign aid constituted 20% of Mozambique’s GDP (AfDB/OECD 2005). Furthermore, as Boutros Ghali notes, in the modern world certain problems such as drug trafficking, finance and the environment cannot be tackled by sovereign states alone (2002).

Media development orientated towards the dependency paradigm would focus on state-owned traditional mass media (newspapers, radio and television) as vehicles to transmit information important to support national development imperatives (Berger 2005). At its extreme, the dependency paradigm consequently has much in common with Siebert et al’s (1956) authoritarian normative media model or Christian et al’s (2009) collaborative media role. Development journalism thinking has had greater resonance and arguable success in states where media is regulated as a government-controlled instrument for development, as in Malaysia and the People’s Republic of China. Consequently, media assistance from these countries advocates the state-led development journalism model and most often works to support state-owned or dominated media, and/or local content production.⁴² However, dependency media approaches can occasionally be seen in Western states – as an example, when US media like the *New York Times*⁴³ and other

⁴² Research by Myers (2009) suggests that while Chinese media support is difficult to quantify, assistance continues to mainly be provided to state telcos and national broadcasters. China spent \$6 million refurbishing the Liberian state broadcaster and provided transmission equipment to government owned radio in Guinea, Nigeria, Kenya and Zambia.

⁴³ *The New York Times* subsequently issued an apology for its part in failing to qualify or challenge claims of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ by the USA government. It stated: “Articles based on dire claims...tended to get prominent display, while follow up articles that called the original ones into question were sometimes buried. In some cases, there was no follow up at all” (Lynch 2008:292).

media directly or indirectly supported USA government messages relating to the supposed threat of Iraq's so-called 'weapons of mass destruction'. Effective public support from national media provided legitimacy for an invasion of that country in 2003 (Lynch 2008:292). The link to traditional legacy media does not mean that dependency-oriented approaches to media development would disavow use of new media technologies like satellites, social networks and mobile technology, rather that their approach to support of the technologies' use would envision vertical transmission from the centre, instead of interaction and horizontal networked communication flows as well.

4.3.3 The Multiplicity Paradigm

Criticism of the modernisation and dependency paradigms stimulated a third theory of development – one that argued for a greater role for local communities, democratic participation and culture in development (Berger 2005; Banda 2007). Servaes argued that both growth and dependency paradigms had been elitist and aimed to increase the power of the dominant classes at national and international level rather than help society as a whole (1991). "It is apparent that the modernisation paradigm accommodates the interests of Western power holders and their Westernised 'bridgeheads' in the Third World, while the dependency paradigm meets the political and economic needs of those Third World elites who want to play a role of their own" (Servaes 1991: 80).

While the modernisation theory blames endogenous variables for underdevelopment and the dependency theorists attribute exogenous variables for underdevelopment, the multiplicity paradigm attributes development's central problem to the "inequalities in the distribution of power" (Servaes 1986, 1995; White 2004). Also known as 'another development', the multiplicity paradigm stresses horizontal communications between persons and collectivities as opposed to the top-down or grassroots transmission of information *à la* modernisation and dependency models. Multiplicity holds that there is no universal path to development, or even definition thereof, and that structural change is needed at multiple levels of society (both local and global) for inequalities to be arrested (Servaes 1995, 2002a). Advocates of the multiplicity paradigm view development as an "integral, multi-dimensional and dialectical process" which varies from one place to the next (Servaes 2002a). In other words, every society must find its own development strategy while accounting for a global context in which variables at the center, periphery and its subdivisions have to be considered. Although this comparative parochialism ignores the UN MDGs that span all countries (in varying

degrees), it does stress that citizens everywhere should also actively and equally negotiate the process and outcomes of development (Servaes 1991; Servaes 1995). The multiplicity paradigm therefore regards participatory democracy and the right to communicate as inseparable from development itself (Servaes 1991; Servaes 1986). This changes the mass sender-receiver models of information transmission that modernisation and dependency theorists foregrounded in their own approaches. An emphasis on active citizens and social collectives employing horizontal-approaches to grassroots media production aligns the multiplicity paradigm closely with McQuail's democratic participant theory.

Servaes and other development scholars use the idea of 'empowerment' to describe public participation in collective decision-making. Melkote and Steeves describe empowerment as a process "in which individuals and organisations gain control and mastery over social economic conditions, over democratic participation in their communities and over their own stories" (2001:37 in White 2004:8). Given asymmetries in power and the unequal distribution of socio-economic resources by geography, gender and education, multiplicity theorists advocate that development should occur through local independent social movements like cooperatives, community groups and farmers' unions which are run by the 'beneficiaries' of development. This would limit the potential for development to be captured or managed by bureaucracies remotely controlled by the development industry's urban elites (White 2004). Servaes envisages a participatory communication structure that empowers democratised development services that build from a local level, "within a framework of recognition and support by government and international agencies" (White 2004:9). Self-reliant decentralised units will each have their own particular model and therefore multiple paths to development where development is defined in culture rather than through politics or economics (White 2004).⁴⁴ Affirmation of culture and local resistance of global cultural hegemony is an important component of the multiplicity model. While modernisation theorists considered culture and particularly 'backward' traditions as impediments to development, contemporary theorists view affirmation of local culture and indigenous knowledge as an important part of generating appropriate and sustainable interventions.

In this model, social movements that are able to establish their own independent systems of communication and organisation are a critical part of the media ecology and principal agents for 'another' development (White 2004). 'Another development' favours a plurality of small

⁴⁴ Such cultural relativism implies that 'development' would come to mean whatever anyone would want it to be. As such it undermines a view which sees "expansion of productive capacity" as central to the achievement of broader development.

media controlled by local communities, organisations and movements. Participatory communication empowers grassroots movements and organisations to take control of their lives and affirm their perception of reality to themselves and their community (White 2004). This permits groups to question the ideologies which depreciate them, select the information that is truly important for them, and project more positive images of themselves (White 2004). Organisations that produce their own media would be able to influence the agenda of the national mainstream media. The role of the journalists (and representative organisations themselves) in the multiplicity model is to facilitate communication in and between the social movements so that policy proposals come from the people (White 2004 citing Servaes 1999).

Servaes held that while the multiplicity paradigm had gained ground in academic circles, in practice it is looked upon as a “sympathetic though idealistic side show” (2002b:19). This thesis holds that this is becoming less the case more particularly with the rise of networked personal and mobile media. Media assistance in the vein of the multiplicity paradigm emphasises media pluralism and diversity with the goal of empowering social collectives to produce their own media, rather than remain passive recipients of mass media messages. Since the ‘70s, community radio and more recently community television has allowed for the production and broadcast of decentralised media that are more compatible with the needs of the grassroots communities that manage them in their own interests (Servaes 1995). The potential for ‘another development’ is enabled through small, user-friendly, media technologies that connect individuals, niches, networks and massively multiple (previously mass) audiences and offer the capacity to link local development to a national and global framework via traditional mass media. Participatory media development emphasises a diverse and plural media. New media in the form of low-cost, easy to use and accessible tools like camcorders, DVD, Internet and mobile and associated online platforms like blogs, social networks and social media arguably broaden scope for media pluralism and diversity by allowing communities (particularly underserved groups) to take charge of their own communication around development issues. However, a critique of this assumption that suggests new media can be employed for a relativist form of participatory development can be found in Chapter seven.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter highlights the ways in which media assistance can be delivered with the motive of advancing various notions of ‘development’. This study’s definition of development

suggests that expansion of productive capacity is a necessary (though not a sufficient) condition for holistic development (Berger 1992; Midgley 1995), as it is difficult to envisage sustained media development without investment in material (including technology) and human resources that contribute to a strong and sustainable media environment.

Various concepts of ‘development’ envision the developmental role of media differently and these also have corresponding forms of media assistance. Despite Servaes’ contention that “no all embracing view (of development) is on offer” (1995:20), modernisation views remain common in development practice including international media assistance. In its favour, modernisation stresses the expansion of the material infrastructure and economy as a basis for its vision of growth which is a common feature of ‘developed’ Western states. In addition, modernisation theory shares the recognition of the multiplicity theorists that culture and values play an essential role in development (although its theorists view these as impediments to progress). Modernist media development further supports liberal pluralist media values such as watchdog journalism (which is also essential for forms of development journalism which scrutinise and hold the powerful to account in the allocation of benefits) (Campbell 2004; Ogan 1982). This does not mean there are no shortcomings in the modernisation development approach or that other development models do not have anything to offer.

For example, modernisation style development needs to acknowledge the influence of power in ownership, structure and distribution of media in deepening or maintaining relations of information inequality within and between societies as per the dependistas criticisms (Berger 2005). However, while the dependency approach correctly stresses the need for national planning and policy and national media capacity plus endogenous content development, self-reliant development strategies may themselves hamstring development (as productive growth) due to the political, economic and social interdependence of states (Boutros Ghali 2002; Berger 2005 citing van Audenhove et al 1999). Finally, while the multiplicity paradigm stresses horizontal relations between citizens and social collectives that represent their own issues and needs, it also needs to emphasise the importance of vertical information access and communication at local, national and global level to ensure critically informed and integrated development outcomes. Notwithstanding, the multiplicity paradigm is also the only development approach which lends itself to integrating a vision of economic development with democratic participation. Both the modernisation paradigm and dependency paradigm aver any reference to democracy as a feature of development through horizontal dialogical communication. As this study’s vision of development originally suggests, while

development can occur without democracy, more durable development may be possible when democratic institutions and culture and policy become compatible with the objectives of economic development (Midgley 1995). Critically informed media assistance should exhibit knowledge of the abstract distinctions and interrelations between the three different approaches to development (as well as democracy) as media development practice often fuses all these and works with hybrid and muddled notions as a result.

In the case of new media and development (discussed in Chapter seven), the tableau becomes even more complex. As will be discussed subsequently in this thesis, the nature of what counts as 'media' is also tied into conceptions of development and the role of communications as the boundaries between ICT and traditional media increasingly begin to blur.

The next chapter addresses the nature of new media and its variable influences on national and global media environments, particularly in terms of journalism production, distribution and consumption and debates around the changing nature of media development.

CHAPTER 5

‘NEW MEDIA’

5.1 Introduction

The preceding three chapters of this study presented a context to help understand media assistance and various theoretical frameworks to problematise the complex objects of ‘media development’. Much of the literature related to that discussion is rooted in the era of mass media newspapers, radio and television as the primary forms of mediating culture (including journalism). This chapter examines the changing character of media in the subsequent era of ‘new media’. This sets the stage for an assessment of the assumptions about causative relationships between ‘new media’ (like mobile phones, social networks, online media and practices like citizen journalism) and the fostering of good governance, democracy-building and democratic development.

New media challenges media assistance and media development assumptions by introducing ruptures into the continuities within traditional media production, distribution and use. As Marshall states: “...old rules and orders cannot be applied *perfectly* (own emphasis) under the new regime of communication and thus formations of power are under threat from these new forms of expression” (2004:1). As a result, approaches to media assistance and media development will have to (and have begun to) shift as populations in the developing world gain access to new technology like the Internet and mobile phones (Kalathil 2008).

This chapter explicates how the social shaping of ‘new media’ may influence patterns and consequences of mass media and communication. Section 5.2 introduces ‘new media’ as a contested but critical concept for assessing the potential uses and influence that may follow from the natures, ‘institutionalisation’ and practices of the ‘new media’ in a rapidly evolving media ecology. Most attempts to define the catch-all term ‘new media’ remain inadequate, because ‘new media’ itself is a misnomer. Section 5.3 considers some of the fundamental qualities of ‘new media’ technologies – in particular digitality, interactivity, individuation, convergence and networking. These characteristics are neither comprehensive nor universal features for a ‘new media’ taxonomy. However, they especially help to highlight some ‘disruptive’ influences that features of some ‘new media’ may have for contemporary mass communications. Section 5.4 postulates the importance of historicising ‘new media’ in a way

that foregrounds the importance of convergence and the social shaping and socially shaped nature of technology – in other words, understanding ‘new media’ from a critical humanist as opposed to techno-modernist perspective (Stöber 2004; Lister et al 2003). The chapter draws on various examples and contextualises them from the vantage point of critical media studies.

5.2 Towards an understanding of ‘new media’

‘New media’ is a “definitional puzzle” (Peters 2009). How ‘new media’ is conceptualised (or in most cases under-conceptualised) may influence its integration and operationalisation, and provides clues to the values at play in fields that use it like media development, education, media entrepreneurship and journalism, among others. As ‘new media’ are often (though not exclusively) technologies that are in the process of being contested, negotiated or ‘institutionalised’,⁴⁵ they remain objects of uncertainty. As a result, when ‘new media’ are first presented, the technologies’ terms are unclear and their purpose and impact are often not fully understood (Peters 2009).

New media can be viewed as a composite of (usually digital) hardware and physical infrastructure, software (at various levels), and content which are increasingly part of a network or the network of multiple networks – i.e. the Internet. The concept is variably applied to the technical layer of information and communication technologies (e.g. telecommunications), its artefacts (e.g. DVDs, BlueRay discs) and devices (e.g. tablet computers like the iPad) which bear particular characteristics or variable permutations thereof (see below) but is also applied as a description of communication activities (e.g. podcasting, blogging) or practices (e.g. peer-to-peer networking, crowdsourcing) that involve those devices or artifacts and the social arrangements that form around those practices and devices (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002:7).

⁴⁵ Peters (2009) and Stöber (2004) use the term ‘institutionalisation’ (see section 5.4) to refer to how society discovers new possibilities for communication by formatting new media functions, adapting new media, developing new economic models and creating a new political and legal framework that accommodates the innovation. The concept of ‘institutions’ in mass media studies is value-laden and is most often associated with formal commercial institutions and their relationship with big capital (Watson and Hill 2000). However, this thesis will use the term ‘institutionalisation’ with a similar meaning to that of ‘mainstreaming’, in other words, making normal or common. The use of the term does not suggest that institutions are a prerequisite for new media production or consumption, or that ‘institutionalised’ media are rigid and inflexible (though neither do Peters and Stöber imply this reading of traditional media institutions). In fact, what is disruptive about new media technologies and practices is precisely that they are often de-institutionalised and decentralised. For example, a huge amount of the occurrence of these is outside the formal realms of media houses and the media circuit of production, distribution and consumption, and they only come to be co-opted into these realms when their uptake grows from fringe to mainstream.

‘New media’ are socially shaped and socially shaping technologies. The Greek roots of the word *technology* (derived from *techne* meaning craft or skill and *logos* meaning word or knowledge) imply that technologies are not merely the sum of their features but arise from knowledge derived from their social and cultural use and context (Lister et al 2003; Marshall 2004). ‘New *media*’ as combinations of these technologies and uses therefore refers to a wide range of changes – not only technological – but also textual, conventional and cultural, and in media production, distribution and use (Lister et al 2003).

‘New’ is a reference to how something compares to its historical predecessor or has changed from the status quo. The term ‘new’ also suggests a temporal binary (new versus old) or alternatively a continuum (with modern technology like mobile smart phones and touch screen computers on the one end and older forms like smoke signals on the other). However, emphasis on the temporal attribute of ‘new media’ or novelty is too limiting because the idea of ‘new’ is often historically relative and subjective in the eye of the beholder (Lister et al 2003; Marvin 1992).

As an example, the ‘Internet’ is over 50 years old but still widely considered a ‘new medium’ by some. The Transmission Control/Internet Protocol by Vint Cerf which gave rise to ‘the Internet’ was invented in 1969; similarly the World Wide Web has been around since 1991 after British scientist Tim Berners-Lee developed a system of written addresses and hypertext links to file information (Harrison and Barthel 2009; Stöber 2009). Only recently have these technologies come to Africa. It was as only as late as 2002 that all African capital cities were connected to the Internet (Sonaike 2004). In the context of reference to developing countries and marginalised peoples (sometimes referenced in the language of the “digital divide” [See Chapter six]) therefore, this sense of a ‘new’ media still has some resonance. It is for this reason, Peters argues, that any conceptualisation of ‘new media’ requires that its novelty be continually re-examined relative to the time and place of its making (2009). Hence, old and new media are “relational terms” and not absolute concepts (Marshall 2004:2). This characteristic has been partly captured by references to ‘digital natives’ and ‘digital immigrants’, thereby positioning novelty in relation to generational differences between users.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The terms ‘digital native’ and ‘digital immigrant’ are attributed to Prensky (2001). ‘Digital natives’ refers to young people who are born into a technological milieu and who, it is argued, are consequently “native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet”. Digital immigrants are those who live through the technological transformations and gradually learn to adopt aspects of the new technology while “keeping a foot in the past”. These buzzwords, while widely used, have been criticised for being too simplistic, especially since generational difference is only one factor that

The focus on ‘newness’ can be viewed as ideological in the sense that it valorises particular aspects of technology – novelty, modernity and progress – over other attributes or applications, frequently with claims that the technology is in itself a positive social development that may deliver “increased productivity, educational opportunity and open up creative and communication horizons” (Lister et al 2003). Marvin uses the concept of the ‘technological imaginary’ to explain how many modernists project desires for a better or more stable society and a solution to social and cultural ills onto any new technology – from tractors to TV, Internet and mobile phones (Lister et al 2003; Alzouma 2005). Stöber noted that after telegraphy was introduced some predicted that it would bring a golden age of “human intercourse and...harmony among men and nations and bring men into closer moral contact with each other” (2004:496 citing du Boff 1989:209). Similarly, for example, in a report on the rise of mobile media, one author claims:

Mobile telephony ...holds unprecedented opportunity for media in developing countries to engage their core audiences more deeply, reach new audiences and provide interactive and customised news services that are both profitable and life improving... (West 2008:5)

On the opposite pole are dystopian views that postulate negative consequences of technological development such as social alienation, information overload, and social and political fragmentation, cultural homogenisation, reliability of information and erosion of professional standards and creativity among others (Lister et al 2003, Keen 2007). Dystopians also warn of direct use of new technologies for authoritarian ends such as surveillance, rule by the machine (or rule by the companies that run the machines),⁴⁷ cybercrime and cyberterrorism.

The term ‘new media’, rather than having definitive and ideologically-neutral meaning, therefore remains imprecise, general, coloured and (over) inclusive (Lister et al 2003). Yet, despite its disputed nature, the use of this generic concept does offer some advantages. Notably, it avoids reference to more limiting conceptualisations related to the specific technical qualities of emergent technologies or practices such as digital media, hypermedia, interactive, online media and convergence media (Lister et al 2003; Peters 2009). The use of

influences access and qualitative use of new technologies like the Internet and mobiles by various groups (see Helsper and Eynon 2009).

⁴⁷ These are themes that can be found in such techno-dystopian literature and films as Isaac Asimov’s *I-Robot*, the *Terminator* series and Wachowski Brothers’ *Matrix Trilogy*.

the term ‘new media’ as a general category also escapes the trap of having to constantly redefine media innovations as this is a constantly shifting target.

‘New media’ possess all of the features that define analogue mass media, namely that it can be fixed to a surface, that it is reproducible, that it permits time-space distanciation and that it requires particular skills or competence for coding and decoding (Thompson 1995).

However, ‘new media’ also have (to varying degrees) their own qualities that distinguish them from traditional mass media (e.g. transactionality, virtuality, multimediality, hypertextuality). These permit new effects and/or can deepen, broaden and disrupt the consequences of traditional mass media cycles. As will be shown in section 5.3.2, what has changed is the use of certain core media characteristics that may replace or augment traditional mass media’s generally “hierarchical, bureaucratic and sender-oriented communication” with a more “horizontal, participative and receiver-oriented approach” (Servaes 1986:215). This is through one-to-one (interpersonal), one-to-many (broadcast) and many-to-many (network) channels being constituted using digital technologies. They may also enable interactive experiences with texts, new representational possibilities, possibilities for use and reception and (re)creation of media, and for identity formation. They often blur boundaries between genres like news and entertainment resulting in new forms like the ‘fake news’ genre seen on Comedy Central’s Daily Show (or South Africa’s satirical news website Hayibo and ZA News) (Lister et al 2003; Stöber 2004).

In new media’s case, the nature of the ‘mass’ is fundamentally different to the use of the term by mass culture theorists who saw these audiences as passive undifferentiated consumers (Strinati 1995; Thompson 1995; Marshall 2004). Section 5.3.4 will further discuss new media’s other qualities, including the distinction between personal, interpersonal and ‘mass’ media, as well as the strength and challenge of ‘personal’ media to contemporary communication contexts and goals (Lüders 2008; Lievrouw 2009).

As indicated earlier, ICTs are increasingly being counted as media in media assistance (see Kalathil 2008), as a consequence of the blurring between ICTs and media caused by digitisation and convergence of their associated hardware and software. These processes transformed the computer (and subsequently smaller and more portable mobile devices) into ‘new’ media for interpersonal, group and mass communications (Harrison and Barthel 2009). Business lines have also been distorted as digital messages can reach their audiences through

terrestrial systems, satellites, cable TV, the Internet, gaming consoles, set top boxes or TV-enabled mobile handsets, among others (Locksley 2009).

‘New media’ ICTs (sometimes referred to as ‘new media technologies’ [NMTs]) demonstrate several new communicative capabilities and are central to the filtering, structuration, analysis, publishing and exchange of data, information and content for interaction and use by institutions, individual users and networked communities. Alzouma considers some ICTs as ‘new media’ inasmuch as they help develop “intellectual content, circulate information and ideas and exchange objects” (2005:341). For example, telecommunications systems (an ICT which previously only carried voice calls) now also carry data in the form of information, photographs, video, music and live conferencing between many people at the same time. Telecommunications and computers are therefore a critical part of the ‘new’ media ecology inasmuch as they are used as carriers of media and as production tools, as the broadcast technologies of television and radio. The World Summit on the Information Society also acknowledged the role of media as carriers of mass communications, when it allowed electronic mass media (broadcasting) to be included on its 2004 agenda despite initial exclusion (Berger 2005). The move provided recognition for the critical role of mass media technology in information provision (particularly in the developing world) and for facilitating national communication, even though they are not fully fledged ICTs. An evolving and wider view of media and ICTs have implications for media support and development. Already, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has an explicit policy on ICTs that includes not only mass media like TV and radio, but also mobile phones and the Web. Donor countries like Japan have similar practices (Myers 2009). Consequently, media development today may frequently involve projects like training broadcast journalists for election coverage in Windhoek, as well as cellphone journalism in Kenya, disseminating human rights videos on YouTube in Myanmar or developing social networking platforms for the Iranian blogosphere (Nelson 2009:6).

‘New media’ finds its present apogee in the converged technology of Internet. Indeed many presume that the Internet and ‘new media’ are interchangeable concepts (although ‘new media’ may also be online as in the Internet or offline as in DVD-Roms, and not all communications using electronic networks equates to Internet access – for instance, GSM cellphone communications) (van Dijk 2006). The Internet is seen as the backbone of a potential patchwork of electronic communications. It is a technology and a meta-medium as it not only carries other complex media, channels, genres and formats, but it also networks

other networks (di Maggio et al 2001). Modernists, including most media development institutions celebrate the positive effects of increasing levels of Internet penetration in developing countries, the growing use of mobile devices for news and information messaging, and the proliferation of blogs and social networking sites on everything from economic growth to agricultural and industrial productivity, efficiency of public administration to participatory democracy (van der Werff 2008; Alzouma 2005). For this reason, the ideological optimism around new media generally translates into enthusiasm about extending Internet access. The chapter that follows critiques this and other teleological assumptions about ‘new media’ development in relation to democratisation, democracy building and development.

5.3 Characterising new media

The following section focuses on the general properties of new media (including especially, but not only, the Internet). Attempts to derive a set of characteristics that are universally applicable across all modern technologies – from the Internet, to IPTV, DVD-Roms and computer games – are problematic as the breadth and depth of new media’s features vary not only across technologies but also in the context of institutionalisation (see Stober [2004] and Peters [2009]) and application. As a result, Van Dijk prefers not to speak about new media characteristics but rather “communication capacities” present in ‘new’ and ‘old’ media (2006). The focus here, however, is on characteristics/capacities that mark out the new media in general from earlier types of media. While not all new media afford these features, taken as a whole the phenomenon does represent a distinctive historical development.

If we proceed from the view that new media are based on innovation and/or convergence of ‘old’ media which are in the process of being ‘institutionalised’, we may be able to consider how the use of some new properties (e.g. virtuality, collaboration, multimediality) or combinations thereof may disrupt any number of sectors from media activism to journalism education (Peters 2009, Stöber 2004). Manovich lists five characteristics of new media viz. numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability and transcoding (Peters 2009). Lister et al identify the key concepts underpinning the ‘new media’ as digitality, interactivity, hypertextuality, dispersal and virtuality (2003). Other authors have also considered

multimediality, transactionality, networking, convergence, customisation, non-linearity, hypermediacy, non-linearity, virtuality etc. as additional features.⁴⁸

A feature of some of these characteristics is that they tend to describe the nature of progressively complex media forms but cannot be applied equally to older analogue varieties of the ‘new’ media of the 16th century like the printed book or 19th century like the telegram (which were also ‘new media’ at some point) (Lister et al 2003; Stöber 2004). However, this serves only to highlight that novelty as a criterion is relative to the existing or preceding generation, and that its content may vary according to particular historical characteristics. The section that follows unpacks some of the most important features of new media as relevant to assumptions about mass communication in general and mass media in particular. Particular attention is paid to only five qualities of the ‘new media’ viz. digitality, convergence, interactivity, individuation and networking. These properties have been purposively selected as they relate most directly to interrogating teleological claims that suggest causative relationships between ‘new media’ and democracy building and development (whether or not as an outcome of media development). Examples of such claims, for instance cited by Alzouma (2005), include the assumptions that ICTs foster greater transparency, as well as participatory and or deliberative approaches to political decision-making and development in general. These views are assessed further in Chapters six and seven.

5.3.1 Digitality

Most literature on ‘new media’ considers the split between analogue and digital as fundamental to distinguish it from ‘old’ or ‘traditional’ or ‘legacy’ media (Lister et al 2003; Negroponte 1995). Negroponte has suggested that one of the main distinctions between new

⁴⁸ Multimediality refers to capacity to re/combine a range of facilities (such as text, display, sound, animated graphics and video) into a single system (Watson and Hill 2000).

Transactionality refers to the capacity to exchange digital currency for real or digital goods and services.

Customisation: refers to the capacity to manually change the presentation of media in terms of its combination, or features or interface according to a user’s preferences. Alternatively, the presentation may change automatically based on information stored about that user’s perceived preferences. Non-linearity: refers to a flexible ordering of information without much regard to traditional chronological or conventional patterns of storytelling or consumption.

Hypermediacy: Time shapes and structures how news is gathered, produced and disseminated. Users and producers’ perspectives of ‘news’ as a temporally bound object can change in consequence. For example, the Internet creates a space for continuous, real-time (as it happens) or near-real time (slightly delayed) representation of happenings and events through technologies and tools like Twitter (real-time 140 character messaging), Qik (real-time mobile video streaming) and Audioboo (live audio streaming via an iPhone) (Watson and Hill 2000).

Virtuality: simulation of the real by technological means of re-presentation fostering “interactive windows on reality”.

Virtuality includes immersion technologies (VR – virtual reality helmets), augmented reality and three-dimensional (3D) simulated environments with avatars (Second Life or World of Warcraft) (Lister et al 2003; Watson and Hill 2000).

and old media is the ability to break down generally analogue media composed of physical atoms (like written text, graphs, moving images, diagrams) into not just electronic forms, but into digital media composed of bits (Lister et al 2003; Anderson 2006; Negroponte 1995). In particular, new technologies permit personal, interactive internetworked ICTs to transfer and share information at speed or in near-real-time and can fundamentally alter how citizens access news and the technical means that journalists or others use to produce it. Digitisation can dematerialise media texts, separating objects from their analogue substrate like paper in a book or a roll of film. This allows digitised content to be easily accessed at high speed, compressed, made interactive, compared, made available on multiple devices, almost anywhere, anytime. Digital content is more easily editable and converged (mashed up), and is easier to copy and reproduce at marginal cost – compared to ‘old’ especially material and even analogue electronic media forms (Lister et al 2003; Anderson 2006; Negroponte 1995; Gurevitch et al 2009; Watson and Hill 2000). Digital archivability reduces the need for limited shelf and storage space and facilitates not just time-space distantiation but also time-shifting as witnessed through listen-again podcasts or digital personal video recorders (PVRs) like Tivo (van Dijk 2006). Digital data compression makes possible the creation and distribution of rich media content (for example through Digital Terrestrial Television) or content optimised for bandwidth scarce environments in many developing states (Berger 2009).

While digitisation is not necessarily a recent feature, it is a characteristic of new media that enables several other features and consequences of emerging media. These include:

- Characteristics (e.g. real-time distribution, convergence, miniaturisation, searchability, space-time distantiation),
- Practices (e.g. citizen journalism, hyperlocalisation, geotargetting, timeshifting, crowdsourcing) and
- Phenomena (e.g. information abundance, information ‘overload’, attention economies, ‘smartmobs’) (Anderson 2006; Lister et al 2003).

The list below illustrates a broad though necessarily incomplete view of some general though often-contradictory claims and effects derived from the digital quality of new media that can have significant influence on mass communications and mass media.

- Digital transforms the spatial horizon of community or national based media (Berger 2009 citing Lister 2003). This unchains communities from geographic limitations allowing remote communities to engage with international associations and vice versa (Bimber 1998). It also allows marginalised groups, particularly youth, minorities, disabled and the African diaspora to connect and organise with each other (Gurevitch et al 2009).
- Increasing ubiquity of the means of media production and consumption due to reductions in expense and opportunity cost of access. In turn this permits a multiplicity of social discourses – especially those created by amateur citizens – to flow. Consequently, new media may decentralise the mass media and professional journalists’ privileged position as “exclusive storytellers” and their ability to interpose between source and public (Lüders 2008; Marshall and Burnett 2003; Nelson 2009). Deuze refers to this process – where members of the former audience and sources may engage in horizontal communication without relying on the media or professional journalism – as “disintermediation” (2007).
- Viability of mass media has been challenged as digital shifts media economics from systems of centralised information scarcity to decentralised information abundance (Anderson 2006). The capacity to reproduce content at a marginal cost of zero (after the cost of production of the first artefact is factored) destabilises traditional revenue structures. It also facilitates piracy and free riders. More focused and accurate models of advertising targeting have reduced mass media’s traditional sources of income that support the business of journalism. Online is also increasing its share of a shrinking advertising market as mass media compete with new media including social media in a fragmented attention economy.⁴⁹ Consequences have included the search for new business models to support mass media (often conflated with journalism), bail-outs, mergers and consolidation, retrenchments and closures, among others (Anderson 2006; Ndulo 2006).
- The mass audience in many places is fragmenting into distinct issue publics: users there want to be addressed in relation to issues that matter to them, in the channel that

⁴⁹ In 2010, social network Facebook hosted over 500 million active users (Facebook 2011), YouTube drew a high of 14.6 billion video views a month in May (TechCrunch 2010) and Wikipedia hosted over 14 million articles in more than 260 languages drawing on a pool of 85000 volunteers (Wikipedia 2010). As a result, users in UK, Australia and USA spend more time online than watching television, and online advertising overtook UK TV advertising for the first time in 2009 (BBC 2009).

matters to them, when it matters to them (Gurevitch et al 2009; Anderson 2006). While information is abundant in some environments, attention is the new scarce commodity (at least in contexts with high ICT density) (Anderson 2006; di Maggio et al 2001). However, as well as facilitating the possibility of content diversity and pluralism, digitisation can also facilitate continued patterns of media concentration. Media attempts to focus on only the most lucrative online audiences or to generate populist content to appeal to large audiences are thought to have implications for any notion of a public commons or sphere. An early study by Waxman also found that despite the scale and scope of content on the Web, 80% of site visits accounted for only 0.5% of web sites (di Maggio et al 2001).

- Digitality facilitates potential for multimediality – the capacity to combine a range of facilities (such as text, display, sound, animated graphics and video) into a single system with various permutations across a range of platforms (Watson and Hill 2000). The consequence of the exploitation of multimediality has seen the transformation of traditional legacy media, like newspapers, into publishers of news for multiple modalities and channels (from online video to microblogs), and devices (from computer screens to mobiles and tablets like the Apple iPad). Multimediality and convergence also contribute to media consolidation, transformation of the structures of news organisations, as well as requirements for reporters to work across several platforms producing different forms of content for specific audiences (Deuze 2007; Quinn 2009). Meanwhile, the possibilities of increasing the modes of media reception has raised suggestions that public service broadcasters should generate content for platforms other than linear broadcasting and transform into public service media (Berger 2009).
- Transformation of the means for production and reception, and speed of transmission of the new media require learning new skills and competencies on the part of journalists, and greater attention to fundamental practices. Media and journalism literacy, and public education needs to keep pace (Kellner 2002; Nelson 2009). At a minimum technical level journalists need to develop a basic understanding of the unique capabilities of different communications media especially as media companies begin to deliver content on multiple platforms (Gordon 2003). New technologies pressure journalists to retool and diversify their skill-set to produce more work subject

to a rolling deadline that potentially (though not necessarily) sacrifices context for event-based coverage and accuracy for speed.

- Regulation: Changes in the nature of the distribution of media on multiple platforms required revisions and in some cases new legislation to deal with aspects related to: distribution of the spectrum (digital migration), digital transactions and communication and laws pertaining to the surveillance and interception of messages, controlling content that may be unconstitutional or run foul of other points of reference, general regulation of media (mass and private), intellectual property, as well as laws relating to electronic privacy.
- This is happening at the same time as there is a groundswell of campaigns to facilitate access to new media, especially Internet, and ensure that it remains free for those who wish to use it to promote other individual rights – particularly freedom of expression (Berger 2007).
- The personal, digital and interactive nature of the new media and its social use, adaptation and institutionalisation results in a fundamental shift from modes of information transfer (in the main) to the potentiality of communication as a process (Servaes 1986).

The sections below examine a number of these features in greater depth.

5.3.2 Interactivity

‘New media’ interactivity stands for the possibility of greater user engagement with media texts, more independent relations of users to sources of knowledge, individualised media use and greater user choice (not just of content but also the capacity to transform the flow and presentation of how content is used) (Lister et al 2003; Gurevitch et al 2009; Marshall 2004). Drawing on Lister et al (2003), McMillan (2002) and Williams et al (1999), Archer (2006) identifies different kinds of interaction – not all are equal; not all presuppose feedback; some are deeply immersive; some permit the illusion of choice and others permit horizontal and vertical communications. Those authors have distinguished between several levels and degrees of media interactivity: peer-to-peer conversation, feedback loops between people and

medium, and interactivity between people and systems like databases from which information can be retrieved (Archer 2006).

Hypertext is the most basic form of ‘new media’ interaction. It is found online as well as offline – for example in navigation between scenes on DVDs and between web pages. At its most basic level it permits interaction with documents, fragments of documents or other hyperlinked objects including pictures and even image maps within video frames. The result of such interactions is that users can construct their own individualised texts by selecting what segments or aspects they wish to consume through their navigation process (Lister et al 2003). As a consequence, the basic form of interaction (between user and text) through hypertext navigation permits possibilities of intertextuality and the opportunities for deeper (and aberrant)⁵⁰ engagement with a text which may be unforeseen by the encoder.

Intertextuality orients the reader to exploit a text’s ability to have more than one meaning by activating the text/s in such a way that that reader may see certain meanings rather than others (Fiske 1987).

Affordances in user interaction with media texts, the media and each other have equally been assisted by the rise of new technologies for media production that facilitate behaviours of the audience as producer (Lister et al 2003). The new media (in particularly the ‘new’ Web) is principally about participating rather than passively receiving information – what citizen journalism pundit, Dan Gilmore (2004) has termed the ‘Read-Write Web’, or Web 2.0 – a buzzword coined by Tim O’Reilly and Associates in 2004 (Harrison and Barthel 2009 citing Tapscott and Williams 2006). ‘Web 2.0’ principally refers to increasing levels of participation and interaction facilitated by the web architecture that allows users to share knowledge and information with each other, construct content and crowd-source collective intelligence (Harrison and Barthel 2009). Marshall refers to this approach of the audience as producer and active consumer as the cultural production thesis (2004). Notwithstanding, the cultural production thesis can also be associated with participatory and collaborative media experiences that predate the institutionalisation of the Internet, like community radio and radical media (Harrison and Barthel 2009).⁵¹

⁵⁰ The concept of ‘aberrant decoding’ is credited to Umberto Eco. Aberrant decoding refers to when a text is decoded using a different sets of codes or conventions than the encoder intended, resulting in meanings more determined by the social situation of the decoder than the encoder (Fiske 1987)

⁵¹ The convergence of traditional participatory media with interactive new media tools offers the potential for deepening audience engagement towards civic journalism. Beckett (2008) offers the example of the Kenyan slum of Kibera. While the 500 000 strong community was written off as “too poor and too illiterate” to buy newspapers, a new community radio

It should be qualified that the web and particularly Web 2.0 and Mobile 2.0 applications and channels facilitate the increased *potential* for greater user interaction with texts, media institutions and each other. These interactions are possible because Web 2.0 applications enable users with little technical knowledge to construct and share their own media and information products, as they do on social networking and media websites like YouTube, Amazon, Wikipedia, Zoopy, Ushahidi and blogs like Thoughtleader (Harrison and Barthel 2009).⁵²

Some traditional mass media have embraced the Web 2.0 trend by creating opportunities for collaborative newsgathering and storytelling, filtering and aggregation of user generated content, story development and promotion. These include:

- User/media interaction (citizen journalism, user generated content, crowd-sourcing and professional-amateur (pro-am) journalism models)
- User/user interaction (open or moderated comments)
- User/document interaction (wikis, interactive databases, hypertext navigation)

As Lüders writes: “The effort to include the audience can be seen as a response to the success of the participatory web and the increased significance of individually and collaboratively produced content” (2008:695).

It is not hard to see how new media interactivity (either latent or activated) creates possibilities to change the way that people use texts (non-linearly, intertextually, collaboratively) and how this may facilitate more active and participatory meaning creation (Lievrouw 2009). One way that this happens in online media is through horizontal user-to-user communications facilitated through comments on articles and other media. In this way, journalistic (and other) texts often evolve into being part of public conversation. The inclusion of space for public commentary (by those users who enjoy access) problematises the artificially constructed closure of news texts and permits (at least the possibility) of change to extend the opinions and perspectives on offer beyond the journalists’ text itself (Bruns 2005). Users may also bypass online media entirely and communicate directly with the public whether by making their own opinions known whether through podcasts, blogs,

station, *Pamoja FM* uses cheap mobile texting to enable community members to contribute stories, ask questions and request help.

⁵² It does not mean that interaction, particularly mass interaction and networking, follow naturally from engendering interactive functionality.

forums or anonymously publishing information on platforms like Wikileaks. Consequently, some have claimed that while offering an opportunity to facilitate direct democracy and mobilise publics towards democratic transitions, the public diplomacy or direct influence goals of some media development thinking may be weakened by the dialogic potential of ‘new media’ (Adler 2007).

Uses and gratifications theory and cultural studies offer valuable tools to engage and understand the position of the user/subject in new media textual relations – especially with regard to claims of more ‘active’ reading (Lievrouw 2009). This issue will be more fully addressed in the final chapter.

5.3.3 Convergence

Convergence is a multi-dimensional construct that assumes a host of meanings when used in relation to new media. Convergence broadly describes the coming together of parts that were formerly discrete and constituting a new whole. As a particular form of convergence, media convergence describes a range of processes, phenomena and consequences in the media sector that often follow as a result of digitality (see section 5.3.2). This does not necessarily suggest the disappearance of old media, institutions and practices but a shifting of boundaries that is reshaping the media environment and consequently related practices such as media development (Grant and Wilkinson 2009).

There are several forms of media-related convergence and different forms of extra-media related convergence that influences media environments. At the level of media-related convergence, Gordon (2003) suggests effects and processes related to dimensions of ownership, tactics, structure, information gathering and presentations (storytelling) (cited in Grant and Wilkinson 2009). At the level of extra-media related convergence are forms of convergence that may not be directly aimed at the media sector but which influence it nonetheless. These include, among others:

- Technological convergence – described by Marshall and Burnett as “the blending of media, telecommunications and computer industries, and the coming together of all forms of mediated communications in digital form” (2003:1) – enables the development of new industries and practices and the merging of old industries and practices in fields such as labour, government, education, the economy and media, amongst others.

- Device convergence –can result in the development of new media tools capable of carrying a broader range of modes or performing a broader range of functions than previous discrete forms. For example, the iPad performs the previously distinct functions of a laptop, PDA, telephone, video-phone, game console and e-book reader, among others. This form of convergence creates new platforms and possibilities for the consumption, use and distribution of media. Device convergence, particularly in the form of smartphones has facilitated easier cultural production by the ‘former audience’⁵³ – and has resulted in the potential for the merging of roles of media producer, consumer and distributor in what some call citizen journalism. This may change the traditional role of the audience in a media environment and similarly alter the role and position of the journalists in relation to institutional sources (Bruns 2005). The convergence (and similarly divergence) of new audience groups and activities around new media devices and multimedia, peer-to-peer and interactive content poses opportunities and challenges for existing media institutional workflows, organisational structures and roles. Old audiences are fragmenting, while new audiences are capable of forming around content on a global scale based around online streaming of content, peer-to-peer distribution or download.
- Convergence of legislation and regulatory institutions (for example, the merging of the regulatory entities governing broadcasting [The Independent Broadcasting Authority] and telecommunications [South African Telecommunications Authority] to shape the production, distribution and consumption of information networks) (see also Gordon 2003; Deuze 2007; van Dijk 2006).⁵⁴ It also relates to the development of new legislation that takes into account the use of changing technologies such as the South Africa’s Electronic Communications and Transactions Act of 2002 or revision of existing legislation such as media ownership and content regulation laws. An example of the latter is the South African Film and Publications Amendment Act of 2009 which broadened that body’s regulatory powers to include any content, including digital content accessed or created and distributed through the Internet or on any device.

⁵³ The description “the people formerly known as the audience” is credited to New York University Professor, Jay Rosen. The description “the former audience” is credited to author of *We the Media*, Dan Gillmor.

⁵⁴ The South African Telecommunications Authority and Independent Broadcasting Authority merged in 2000 to form the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, with national authority over broadcasting and telecommunications regulation.

Media convergence often accompanies or enables consolidation in media ownership for purposes of obtaining cross-media synergies otherwise known as institutional convergence (for example, the merging of *Tampa Tribune*, Tampa Bay Online and Channel8-TV; integrated converged media start-ups like South African newspaper, *The Times*; or the transformation of existing mass media publications or broadcasters into multimedia institutions e.g. *The Mail & Guardian* and Mail & Guardian Online) (Huang et al 2006; van Noort 2007). Daily (2005) suggests a continuum to describe various degrees of convergence within media institutions that starts with cross-promotion, and advances to “cloning”, “coopetition”, “content sharing” and finally to “convergence” (cited in Grant and Wilkinson 2009; Deuze 2007 citing Daily 2005). Various forms of institutional convergence may be employed as a strategy to permit the potential for mass media organisations (and start-ups) to diversify content, grow audiences particularly the youth, broaden revenue streams and achieve economies of scale by activities such as institutional and departmental mergers and outsourcing of journalistic and institutional functions. These cost savings may also be achieved by centralising media production through the use of Content Management Systems or decentralising media production through outsourcing of roles like subbing, layout and design to third parties in other countries.

Institutional and structural media convergence therefore also assumes changes to work cycles, institutional design and job profiles for cross media publishing and multiplatform journalism. For example in converged or convergent media organisations, journalists are required to perform functions typically related to librarian, writer, camera operator and editor. This range of possible institutional and role changes has implications for a different capacity building than previously provided in mass media oriented media development including journalism education and training, regulatory reform and support for financial sustainability (Deuze 2007; Kellner 2002). Convergence also influences strategies for revenue generation. Central in this issue is whether business models can be found for institutions – whether market-based models or subsidy-models – that allows for the development of multiplatform multimedia journalism that ensures media viability or profitability. The roles of media managers to “communicate, implement and practice convergence” is also key to successful digital integration of mass media (Grant and Wilkinson 2009:145).

The multi-dimensional process of media and other convergences therefore have profound implications for the shapes of the media environment and the role of media support involving journalism production, distribution, participation and regulation of media systems. However,

some media development assumptions around old media will remain because converged media often builds on mass media as the main site of the public sphere and agenda setting.⁵⁵

5.3.4 Individuation and networking

Another key aspect of ‘new media’ is the blurring between personal and mass media (Lievrouw 2009). A similar distinction between private (which mirrors aspects of the personal) and public media (which mirrors aspects of mass media) can also be made (van Dijk 2006). Particular effects may arise (though not always directly) from the decentralised, highly personalised or individuated nature of some ‘new media’. Properties of individuation (mass customisation of media to meet needs of individual users) can refer to several aspects of new media’s institutionalisation and use. di Maggio et al (2001), Lister et al (2003), Lüders (2008), Lievrouw (2009), van Dijk (2006) and Anderson (2006) offer examples of the individuation phenomenon:

- The growth of a market for media narrowcasting tools e.g. iPhones and Flipcams aimed not at the professional market or the mass amateur market, but the producer-consumer (prosumer)⁵⁶ market;
- The refragmentation of the mass audience resulting in a shifting and expanding locus of media consumption from public spaces like theatres, arcades and living rooms to private spheres and personal spaces. For example, videogames shifted from communal arcades to hand-held Gameboys, PlayStation Portables and mobile phones, while television and video similarly moved from the living room to the bedroom to mobile.⁵⁷ World Wide Web ‘inventor’ Sir Tim Berners-Lee has cautioned around the use of web “walled gardens” like Facebook and iTunes and mobile ‘apps’ that also

⁵⁵ However this is a conceptualisation that may unravel as more and more communications (including journalism) take place outside the realm of the mass media institutions.

⁵⁶ The term ‘prosumer’ is attributed to futurist, Alvin Toffler. In his book, *The Third Wave* Toffler (1981) referred to changes in consumer behaviour that permitted users to do-it-themselves using newly available technologies rather than outsourcing particular functions to professionals – like doctors, lawyers and even journalists (for example, diagnosing pregnancies using home-kits, producing legal contracts using templates or producing news on blogs). Bruns (2005) similarly uses the term ‘produser’ – a portmanteau of ‘producer’ and ‘user’ – to describe the condensing of the roles of producer, distributor and consumer through individual use and adaptation of digital media technologies.

⁵⁷ Notwithstanding, gamers are still able to experience social interaction through the use of tools that allow users to play simultaneously through e.g. through Massively Multiple Role Player Games (MMORPGs) or online games linked to social networks (e.g. Zynga’s Farmville).

fragment users' experience of the public World Wide Web in favour of closed systems or silos (Berners-Lee 2010).

- New media's capacity to customise content to fit the needs and requirements of individual users or hail them as consumers based on personal profiles and media consumption patterns. 'New media' have the capacity to micro-segment their digital content by geography, taste, gender, age or other criterion or preference to allow targeting of users for marketing purposes or the extreme localisation of news and information by geographically situated users, also known as hyperlocalisation.
- Changes in the mode of media distribution from public one-to-many multicasting models to private many-to-many and networked peer-to-peer communications (narrowcasting models);
- The growth of new hybrid genres – such as Machinima (the editing of actions 3-D video game characters and scenes to create new narratives) – due to convergence, as well as increase in demand for old and new esoteric genres of literature, music, art and culture;
- The rise of interpersonal oriented networks and tools like Facebook or Instant Messaging Services (IMS) like MXit and private blogs.

The potential for new media to be individuated and personal (while at the same time also retaining the potential for mass public character, as on Twitter) speaks to a particular difference between Web 2.0 and Mobile 2.0 and most mass media.⁵⁸ The Web and smart mobiles are some of the first media that combine all the powers to reach a large audience that operate in broadcasting and newspapers, with all the intimacy and multi-directional flow of information that exist in telephone calls (Marshall and Burnett 2003 citing Godwin 1997). The impact of these technologies can be powerful, useful, interactive and intimate, especially as personal communications strengthens ties with audiences. This facility is particularly important at a time when mainstream media in some states are facing increasing challenges to

⁵⁸ Modernists view the personal medium of the mobile media as the most powerful of the new media, not least because they replicate and draw on all the characteristics of the preceding 'mass' media – print, cinema, radio, television, and the Internet while also having their own unique benefits (Moore 2007). With over 3,3 billion mobile phones in global circulation, mobiles have become important tools for disrupting existing mass communication process, for producing, sharing and passing along own information or news from the mass media. Handsets are becoming cheaper all-in-one personal digital devices as result of convergence (Moore 2007). "Coupled with higher rates of mobile phone ownership, these technologies may help to drive digital access to information and news in developing countries" (van der Werff 2008).

perceptions of their public trust and credibility (Marshall and Burnett 2003; Lister et al 2003; Lüders 2008).

New media technologies have destabilised distinctions between interpersonal and personal media (such as mobile phones, email) and mass communication (websites) (Lievrouw 2009; Lüders 2008; van Dijk 2006). New media may be personal or ‘mass’ or both depending on platforms and context of use. Blogs and podcasts can reach massive audiences. Similarly, personal new media can also become ‘mass media’ – for example, YouTube clips are rebroadcast to a mass audience on television news or clips shows. This does not necessarily make these audiences ‘mass’ (in the mass culture critics sense of “a vast sea of passive, undifferentiated individuals” (Thompson 1995:24). But it does pose a challenge to interventions that attempt to use these new media based on traditional mass broadcasting models, especially as audiences fragment or are constituted afresh on the fluid basis of individualised interaction or networked community. Information abundance (in media and ICT dense countries) forces audience members to become more selective, thus deepening their segmentation and possibly enhancing direct relationships between source and audience as well as between other audience members (Lister et al 2003 citing Castells 1996). Castells writes that relationships between individual members of the former audience are transforming in significant ways as traditional community structures weaken and individualised networks become the major form of sociability (at least in ICT-dense countries) (2001). Humans generally have primary relationships in families and communities and secondary relationships embodied in associations. A tertiary system of computer-mediated social relationships centred on the individual has now emerged in many countries. It manifests in the phenomenon of social networking and social media on sites like Facebook, Bebo, MXit, YouTube and Renren (Castells 2001).⁵⁹

The Web and individuated media like mobile phones cannot create and maintain networks and communities themselves, but they do provide the material basis to construct and diffuse new forms of sociability (Castells 2001). These networks are interconnected channels built on participants’ shared interests, values, affinities and projects often complementing (though not replacing) shared relationships based on geographic proximity or kinship (Watson and Hill 2000; Castells 2001; di Maggio et al 2001 citing Wellman and Gulia 1999). Castells suggests

⁵⁹ Traditional media’s interest in social media and networks as a source of revenue, as well as a publishing platform in the attention economy was signalled by Rupert Murdoch’s purchase of Myspace for \$580 million (BBC 2005) and their increasing presence on social networking and media sites like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

that when online networks stabilise, they will give rise to virtual communities, which while different from physical communities will not necessarily be “less intense or less effective in binding and mobilising” (2001:131). However, this process is hardly automatic and the actual evidence supporting this claim is ambiguous at best. From a political point of view, some of these networks can be used for purposes of mobilisation even for brief periods of time such as the SMS-organised 'smart mobs' that contributed to the deposing of Philippine president Josef Estrada in the People Power II demonstrations of 2001 (Rheingold 2002). On the other extreme is what Morozov (2009) dubs ‘slacktivism’ – “harmless activism that is not very productive”. One example is a popular Facebook group that emerged during the height of the post-election turmoil in Iran – “100 million Facebook members for Democracy in Iran” which did not reach its goal and did little or nothing to contribute to democratic transition in Iran (Morozov 2009).

Castells himself notes:

...most online communities are ephemeral communities, and they rarely articulate online interaction with physical interaction. They are better understood as networks of sociability, with variable geometry and changing composition, according to the evolving interests of social actors and to the shape of the network itself (2001:130).

As a result, much literature on this subject focuses on the *potential* effect that ‘new media’, particularly the Internet, will have for civic interaction by enhancing the capacity for an engaged public and minority voices or fracturing an already strained public sphere (di Maggio et al 2001). This theme is picked up again in the final chapter.

Debates that compare the merits of citizen journalism and collaborative media practices like wikis to traditional journalism often emanate from a view that mass media and new media are binary or opposite ends of a quality continuum. Mass media are often viewed as professional and institutionalised media, whereas many individuated new media tend to be de-institutionalised and de-professionalised. This binary suggests that mass is better than personal media; professional is better than amateur; expensive content and equipment beats cheap; vertical, centralised and institutionalised media are superior to horizontal, de-

institutionalised and prosumer models, and so on (Servaes 1986; Lister et al 2003).⁶⁰ Gurevitch et al are concerned that a “broadcast ethos still prevails in most policy thinking which treats [new media’s] many-to-many interactivity, social networking, and user generated content as a secondary tier of public communication” (2009:178). On the other hand, digitisation has pressed a rethink even of broadcasting itself with the idea that linear public service broadcasting needs to transform to offer its content across all digital media and to provide a platform for public communication as well (Berger 2009). Gurevitch et al maintain that what is needed is an end to a view that new media exists on a hierarchical media continuum. Instead they argue (as did Postman [2000]) for viewing the media sphere as an interdependent ecology where newer media result in the necessary “reconfiguration and recasing” of roles and relationships within an evolving media landscape (Gurevitch et al 2009:167).

Uses and gratifications theory as well as cultural studies – which assume an active and engaged audience able to attribute their own purposes and meanings from plural media offerings based on personal needs and interests – can be used to consider the properties of new media individuation and its general effects (Lievrouw 2009). The challenges of individuation and networking to the concept of the democratic public sphere, and media development debates, are addressed in the final chapter.

5.4 New media (r)evolutions

Of particular relevance to the ‘media development’ community is how new media is seen to emerge and evolve.

Interest in the properties and assumed power of ‘new media’ might presume that humankind has not seen new media or anything like its disruptive influence on prior communication patterns, practices, and industries before. However, even before Gutenberg (the father of the modern day printing press in the West), nearly every century (and increasingly, each decade) has celebrated the rise and institutionalisation of a new technology from movable type to the telegraph to radio to videocassettes to computers, Internet and mobile media (Alzouma 2005).

⁶⁰ To escape this polarising view of the media ecology, Bolter and Grusin adapted Foucault’s model of genealogy to conceive ‘new media’ – not on a continuum or hierarchy – but in terms of clusters and webs of ‘affiliations’ (attachments and connections between media) and ‘resonances’ (the sympathetic vibrations between media) (Lister et al 2003).

Most media history is the history of once ‘new’ media, as the modern moment exists because of the moments and contexts that came before it (Peters 2009). Every old media was ‘new’ at one time and every new medium will pass from novelty to mainstream to obsolete, or alternatively redefine its role and become ‘old’ at some point in its existence. For example, Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone innovated on the telegraph and gramophone. When mobile phones were introduced they were seen as wireless telephones, not as fully fledged multimedia ICT. Digital miniaturisation coupled with increased microprocessor and memory (which doubles every two years according to Moore’s law)⁶¹ allowed for more complex applications, as well as convergence of built-in camera, video camera, microphone, output speakers, gyroscopes and accelerometers that has changed what a tool like the iPhone could be used for (Stöber 2004; Lister et al 2003). The result is that what was primarily a tool for telephony now facilitates a convergence of activities including reading, shopping, voting, gaming, researching, writing, chatting – anyhow, anyplace, anytime (Gurevitch et al 2009 citing Livingstone 2004:76). This shows that the use of new media like mobile phones does not necessarily follow from their properties; instead they are improvised on the basis of old practices and may work differently in other contexts (Harrison and Barthel 2009).

Theorists have used various terms to describe this relationship between new and old media. Bolter and Grusin dubbed the process whereby the new media refashion themselves to the nuances of the old media (while the old media attempt to answer the challenges of the new in terms of design, strategy, content) as ‘remediation’ (Lister et al 2003). A similar concept is represented by ‘mediamorphosis’, a term coined by Roger Fidler. Like remediation, mediamorphosis considers how new communication media emerge as a result of the complex interplay of perceived needs, competitive and political pressures and social and evolution and adaptation of old media forms (Quinn 2009; Fidler 1997).

Endogenous and exogenous factors help foster new media in ways that sometimes cannot be foreseen – though Stöber (2004) suggests, the newness can be planned for by understanding how media are socially and historically shaped, diffused and institutionalised (see also Peters 2009).

⁶¹ Moore’s Law states that transistor density of integrated circuits double every two years (and storage capacity doubles every year) which has meant that more people have been able to access desktop computers – first for work, then home use, then personal use in forms of mobile information devices (MIDS) like netbooks, mobile phones. The result of Moore’s law tends to be a decrease in price and increase in accessibility to ICTs (Lister et al 2003).

Derived from Everett Roger's Diffusion of Innovations Theory, Stöber has conceptualised a two-phase approach to media evolution: technical invention and social institutionalising. Technical invention improves on older forms, like Gutenberg improved on writing and mobiles improve on wireless telegraphy (Stöber 2004). Social institutionalisation happens when society discovers new possibilities of communication from old inventions. Stöber's model of 'social institutionalisation' can be broken down in terms of four sub-phases according to a model by Peters (see below).

Peters (2009) suggests a five phase approach to media evolution. This covers:

- Technical innovation during which old media or technologies are converged or enhanced to provide an 'old plus' – which is a convergence where fresh configurations of what already existed are articulated as 'new' technology (for example, the Apple iPad is a touch-screen tablet computer that combines the ease of use of an application based smart-phone and the processing power and functionality of a netbook computer).
- Cultural innovation – during which new social uses, outputs, channels and genres are developed for the medium (for example, the convergence of the online diary, blogging and the success of social video channels like YouTube and Vimeo have encouraged the rise of video blogging or vlogging).
- Legal regulation – during which the groups explicitly contest and negotiate media power through regulatory means. Older media and communications regulations are often adapted in the innovation phase until fresh regulations governing 'new media' are developed (for example, popular use of social media and networks by the former audience and journalists has encouraged some media organisations to develop and adopt institutional policies to regulate strategy, roles, approaches and responsibilities when using social media and networks).
- Economic distribution – during which a revenue or business model/s for a medium emerges and continues until it becomes mainstream (for example, the mainstreaming of revenue models such as micropayments that take advantage of the way users can consume digital media as bits [like individual articles or music tracks] instead of [or in addition to] editions or music albums).

- Social mainstreaming – during which the medium becomes widely adopted and used to the point that its forms, practices and effects are no longer ‘new’ within *that* context.

Both models demonstrate that new media emerge not from natural evolution but through negotiation and competition of particular economic, political and cultural claims and interests (and innovations) that seek to define what constitutes our media as carriers of signification, knowledge and power (Marshall 2004).

Research on diffusion suggests that the public wants to know that an innovation is generally useful before it is more widely adopted (Stöber 2004 citing Rogers 1995). This goes for any new media including personal computers, mobile phones, videocassette recorders, satellite television and DVD players. Lower cost of any new media is a powerful tipping point that encourages mainstream dispersal of that new technology to the wider communications landscape (Stöber 2004). The reduction in cost which may facilitate the mainstream diffusion of a new medium beyond the early adopters and elites may have unforeseen consequences for society. For example, the first newspapers were expensive but ten times cheaper than handwritten newsletters. This cost was reduced considerably as printing technologies improved, making newspapers available to the masses, and printing was in time further subsidised by advertising. The historic possibilities of the rise of printing lent themselves to the growth of literacy and education among the bourgeoisie classes which contributed to the Enlightenment and the Reformation and the overthrow and destabilisation of such institutions like the church and monarchies (Stöber 2004; Groshek, 2009).

Standardisation of formats is another important contributor to the mainstreaming of a new technology. This is primarily a social, rather than technologically-driven, matter. In the 1980s, Sony’s Betamax provided superior video playback but was surpassed and made obsolete by the success and popularity of JVC’s VHS format (Lister et al 2003). Internet Protocol itself constituted an agreed lingua franca that enabled the exchange of data between different computer systems. Similarly, the standardisation of a range of well known programming technologies such as Javascript, HTML, Cascading Stylesheets, Extensible Mark-up Language and Ajax which allow for near instant interaction between webpages and servers has made the participatory web (Web 2.0) possible (Harrison and Barthel 2009).

Intellectual property regimes that control costs by limiting the innovation and distribution of copyrighted ideas or patented technology has also meant success and broader distribution for *some* Open Source hardware and software. One example is the free Open Source web server Apache software that has a 54% market share in this sphere without a marketing budget (in comparison with its arch rival Microsoft which licensed and sold its server software). The free availability of Apache as the standard architecture underpinning most web servers has also been a key driver of Internet growth.

As a consequence of the influences of new media ‘institutionalisation’, each innovation cycle has its share of utopians and dystopians. When the first feature films appeared in the USA at the beginning of the 20th century, the moral leaders of the time expressed fear that they would destroy morality of the youth. More recently, the rise of computers and mobiles have engendered concerns of government surveillance and the corruption and predation of children by online paedophiles (Stöber 2004; Lister et al 2003). Interestingly, the criticisms of the dystopians often echo the logic of the mass culture critics of the early 1920s like the Frankfurt School who were deeply critical of new popular cultural forms (of the time) and the influence of the cultural industries on society (Strinati 1995; Lister et al 2003). The dichotomy between the two views is sometimes reproduced in the media development debate (see next chapter).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter unpacks new media’s various meanings, and described the concept (as well as some of its influences) by reflecting on its characteristics and ‘institutionalisation’. Any reflection on the import of a ‘new media’ in media development should begin not simply with an assessment of the positive qualities of the medium, but with a historical reflection that accounts for the social shaping of technology in the context of a wider media ecology. Technological teleology is critiqued with an understanding that the properties and potential of new media technology do not result in pre-determined outcomes (Groshek 2009). Instead, as section 5.4 suggests ‘new media’ are historically and socially shaped, and may allow individuals and groups to produce new meanings from technologies in situ. This perspective is key for media assistance and development as it once again suggests user agency to harness technologies to serve specific community aims and use new media as a catalyst for new interpretations and alternative paradigms (Srinivasan 2006). Notwithstanding, one should

also be alert to cultural, economic and regulatory shapers of new media adoption and use in any environment.

Regardless, while acknowledging how ‘new media’ is changing national media ecologies, many governments, regulators, and mass media executives still “cling to long-standing paradigms and models to explain and regulate it” (Gurevitch et al 2009:178). This thesis does not suggest media assistance practitioners should abandon long-standing mass media technologies, institutions or practises (many of which persist in interaction with new media) but that a more integrative approach to new media development is needed if its objectives are to be conceptualised holistically.

The next chapter places assumptions regarding ‘new media’, democracy and development under the microscope by using contemporary media studies and by examining recent research studies and examples.

Chapter 6

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT, NEW MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

6.1 Introduction

Chapter three of this study problematised the media development object of democratisation by explicating historical, theoretical and ideological inflections of the democracy concept, as well as media-democracy role relationships. This chapter synthesises case material and literature from several academic disciplines to critically interrogate claims of new media's role in democracy.

Section 6.2 discusses the overarching impediment of 'digital divides' as a key obstacle to improve density, access and use of new media for democratic, developmental or other goals. Technological neutrality is critiqued by looking at power distribution in and through new media.

Much modernist media development focuses on progressive outcomes of new media use to the neglect of examination of its mixed consequences for goals such as democratisation. Accordingly, section 6.3 scrutinises the view that new media is a powerful facilitator of democratic attitudes and practices by assessing claims related to increasing civic engagement, democracy building and democratic consolidation, democratising the media, and so on. New media's potential to integrate and polarise, extend and fragment, the political commons or 'public sphere' is discussed. Theoretical and practical considerations of improving deliberative democracy through a virtual public sphere and democracy building are also reviewed.

Questions carried over from previous chapters, such as the effect of networked sociability on civic action and participatory democracy and the impact of cultural production on public diplomacy, are responded to in relevant sections. The chapter also notes resonances and relations between concepts and models mentioned in previous sections where possible.

6.2 Digital Divide(s)

The digital divide describes a challenge to both democracy building and development in general and has been identified as an obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium

Development Goals in particular (Padovani and Nordenstreng 2005). To understand how the concept of the digital divide relates to the local and global distribution of power and new media development, one must consider the phenomenon of globalisation. Communication and networking technologies such as the telegraph, telephone, satellite broadcasting and the Internet deepen and accelerate global interconnectedness and interdependence in several aspects of contemporary life – including transformation of economic development and political democracy (Servaes 2002; Strelitz 2005; Inoguchi 2002). Globalisation is exemplified in closer trade relationships between states, the growing number of transnational corporations, the expansion of ICTs, Internet, e-commerce and e-governance, the emergence of global health, environmental and human rights issues and common styles and trends in consumption of material and cultural products (Inoguchi 2002). The phenomenon is also typified through distinctions between competitive and uncompetitive economies and differences between the elite and marginalised communities of the developed and developing world. Globalisation seems to aggravate inequality (at least in the short term), and is criticised for depreciating the autonomy of nation states (Inoguchi 2002). The digital divide broadly speaks to particular kinds of relations of power and inequality within a global framework of nation states or internal asymmetries in equality and power – that is within nation states.

Media development has always been associated with the improvement of media density, quality and access. However, in the ‘new media’ age, media development is equally concerned to address issues of access to computers, cellphones and the Internet through skills provision, infrastructure, regulatory reform and affordability (Kalathil 2008; Berger 2009). As new media become an important part of the media mix that citizens rely on for their relationship to power, so the various realities referenced by the concept of the digital divide become an critical problem for media development. In many instances, the digital divide principally relates to inequalities in ICT density and access between nation states. However, asymmetries can equally occur along the lines of geography, language, literacy, gender, age and class (Alzouma 2005). However, the term, as it is applied within related literature and contexts, varies in emphasis – from the broadband divide that exists within states that enjoy high ICT density, to the Internet connectivity gap that exists between developed and developing states or the urban-rural split within states, to variations in ICT access and skills between states themselves, among others.⁶² The digital divide, therefore is not one thing – for example, the quantification of a country’s Internet connectivity – but a complicated

⁶² Aker and Mbiti (2010) refer to an ‘intra-African’ digital divide between African states.

patchwork of varying levels of qualitative and quantitative ICT access and usage that may vary within countries and communities and between states, and which may symbolise and perpetuate inequalities at different levels. This chapter adds two more aspects to the digital divide – information and communication flows and power relations that are often embedded in and around technology like the Internet (see below). It is therefore more accurate to speak of plural digital divides. For purposes of this study, the term digital divide will refer to the asymmetries in ICT in general and differences in Internet access and use between developing and developed states in particular, unless otherwise specified. The divide influences the potential of ICTs to promote both democratisation (this chapter) and development (see Chapter seven).

Poor infrastructure is a major cause of Africa's low ICT adoption rates. The low level of networked computing is largely dependent on inadequate electricity and telecommunication infrastructure. Poor transmission quality over existing copper wire telecommunications networks and switches (mainly restricted to urban areas, especially capital cities) constrain bandwidth and cause scarcity of certain kinds of data and applications – for example, bandwidth intensive software updates or online video conferencing (Sonaïke 2004; Alzouma 2005). In rural areas only five percent of sub-Saharan Africans have access to electricity. Electricity access is higher in urban areas (17%), but even this has to be set against the expense and opportunity costs of ICT access (Heacock 2009; Sonaïke 2004). Wired Internet access is prohibitively expensive for most Africans. Internet prices in Uganda can be as high as \$350 per month –nearly one third of that country's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (Heacock 2009). Africans access Internet mainly at work, at educational institutions and cyber cafes. Due to the limited availability of fixed telephone lines on the continent, populations in sub-Sahara Africa are increasingly reliant on mobiles for Internet access using 3G or Global Packet Radio Service (GPRS). For example, the Communications Commission of Kenya has estimated that 98 percent of that country's 1,7 million Internet subscribers access the web through mobile phone networks (Aker and Mbiti 2010:10). However, the high costs and limited bandwidth of mobile Internet access continue to limit cellphone connectivity to an urban minority.

While three subterranean sea-cable projects (the East African Submarine System, the West African Cable System and SEACOM) offer increased international bandwidth at decreased cost, many African ISPs still use satellite connections which are five times more expensive

(Heacock 2009). Sonaike (2004) identifies further limitations to global and local ICT access, including:

- Psychological factors that inhibit Africans' use of ICTs and new media, and relate to a lack of confidence or trust in the technology;
- Skills factors: such as basic literacy and access to technology in indigenous languages and metaphors. Literacy rates in many African countries range from 16 to 80 percent. Most written media therefore have elite audiences (Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2007). The capacity to change, modify and build own new media platforms is another impediment (as is the brain drain of some of Africa's most capable scientists and engineers) (Sonaike 2004);
- Temporal factors: the structure of the dominant form of economic and social life (i.e. agrarian or industrial and seldom information based) limits the time that users have to access technology (note here that Sonaike was speaking specifically about wired desktop and not mobile internet);

As a consequence of these and other challenges, Africa which is over 14% of the world's population, has less than 4,2% Internet access (Aker and Mbiti 2010:10 citing ITU 2009). Conversely, North America, which is five percent of the world's population, constitutes over 14% of the world's Internet users (Heacock 2009; Internetworldstats 2009). Many African countries have a national Internet penetration of less than one percent (Heacock 2009).

Media workers and citizens also need to be empowered to generate, distribute and share information about local resources and activities to contribute to a diverse and plural media ecology (Alzouma 2005 citing Mansell and When 1998). However, economically wealthy elites are usually the ones who enjoy access to networked computing and communication and have the skills and confidence to use them. These narrow techno-elites often advocate a progressive teleological perspective of ICTs that reinforce their own dominant positions in society. This has stark implications for notions of cyber democracy which assumes that all citizens are or should have an equal voice (Alzouma 2005; Goudge 2003). This view is related to similar criticisms of the often elitist nature of liberal pluralist media which limits equality of expression (see section 3.3.1). Hence, it is significant to consider issues of Internet diffusion (i.e. who is connected) and not simply how many people are connected when considering the potential for broad based democratic effects of new media on national

politics (Groshek 2009). These issues of influence of online groups or classes on democratic participation are discussed further in section 6.3.3.

To avoid the limits of a modernist and quantitative view of the digital divide, attention must also be given to issues of information flows and communications, as well as the issues of infrastructure and access discussed above. This suggests that any consideration of a digital divide must be conceived more broadly as incorporating not just asymmetries in the means of disseminating information, but also as encompassing other factors that relate directly to the digital divide as an information gap and a communication gap. One reason for free information flows is to ensure accountability and to use the media as a tool for civil society to impact on targeted local, national and global policy and governance (Zuckerman 2003). It is acknowledged, certainly in Africa, that information flows are circumscribed by state repression, economically weak media houses, constraints on media reach, low literacy, inaccessible rural populations, low per capita income, hostile political culture, poor skills, inadequate infrastructure and other factors (Berger 2001). Added to this, research conducted by Zuckerman (2003) indicates a deficit in global information flows from and about the developing and underdeveloped nations on the Internet (Zuckerman 2003).⁶³ Similarly, research by Tankard and Royal (2005) to identify omissions and bias of information on the web by examining completeness of search engine results showed (among other things) positive correlation between online population size and number of pages found on the web. These findings – when considered in conjunction with Africa’s ICT infrastructure, low Internet population size and access and small economies – may suggest that even on the Internet information flows from and about the developing world in general and Africa in particular will not necessarily be balanced until digital divides are addressed. Digital divides may lead to ongoing representation of developing world issues within a mainly Western linguistic, value and cultural frameworks. Concerns that globalisation, facilitated by the new media, will lead to consumption of Western content and cultural values on public/state television, satellite TV, on video games, internet channels and CDs and DVDs (particularly contraband CDs and DVDs) are equally pertinent (Alzouma 2005). Such views accord with the dependista paradigm of development and its media imperialism thesis, but within the focus of this chapter this digital divide is viewed as detracting from national and global democracy. While there are counter-arguments to the media imperialism thesis (see Strelitz

⁶³ Zuckerman’s Gap Research Study demonstrated that the most accurate predictor of Western media outlet’s attention to a state in international news is the size of a nation’s gross domestic product (GDP). He concluded that even “violent conflict seems to have less effect on media attention than the size of a nation’s economy” (2003).

2005; Hall 1982), cheaply produced Western content can have a devastating impact on national cultural heritage, as well as the potential for economic expansion of local media industries (Locksley 2009). On the other hand, exposure to liberal democratic culture through satellite television reception has also been said to widen horizons about human rights in Arab States – particularly women’s rights – and has led “to an emboldening of popular expression of opinion” (Ghareeb 2000).

Other evidence of digital divides resides in cleavages in the structure and architecture of new media which are often obscured by notions of technological and Internet neutrality.

Technology such as the Internet is often presented as a decentralised, free and “independent domain, which has its own life, detached from society and social stakes” – much like models of liberal pluralist media (Alzouma 2005:137). In truth, the Internet is heavily structured with technical bodies and committees that determine its structure and standards. These include the Internet Engineering Task Force, the Internet Architecture Board, the World Wide Web Consortium and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers among others. These institutions and committees deal with the technical, juridical, economic and tax issues of the Internet and advise national governments on these issues (van Dijk 2006). Parties struggling for greater influence over the Internet view control of its architecture, institutions and standards as increasingly important (van Dijk 2006). Given the history of the Internet, its maintenance and design, few countries outside of the United States of America, European Union or increasingly China are able to affect the shape of the Internet or the global communications agenda, which continues to be set and implemented by the world’s most powerful nations (Sigal 2009; Ojo 2004).

National and corporate influence of Internet policy tends to be based strongly in the West. For example, van Dijk points out that Microsoft, Apple and Adobe also have a disproportionate amount of influence on the architecture of the Web through the influence of operating systems, browsers and search engines (2006). The dominance of Microsoft’s Internet Explorer (an average of 58% of market share among Internet users) means software developers and programmers often have to adapt to Microsoft’s technical standards and code for their content to work on users’ browsers (Wikipedia 2009; van Dijk 2006). This further entrenches corporate hegemony on the Internet (but has also led to a growing movement for open standards in browsers, software and servers). Power relations can also be found in search engines and social media – media (mainly user generated content) shared through online or networked social interaction. Wikis and blogs which often curate and aggregate

existing content can reflect and replicate global and corporate relations of power through their perspectives, language, architecture and algorithms. As Goudge suggests: “The organisation of information is no more a neutral activity than its production” (2003:192). Freedom of speech on the Internet’s blogs, social networks and virtual communities may also be constrained and choreographed to varying degrees by individuals and groups that have their own content rules and gate-keeping norms (van Dijk 2006; Bruns 2005). Search engines like Google and Bing, that are the main tools used to find and satisfy information needs, favour the most popular web sites. Tankard and Royal’s study suggested search engine results (or online content bias) favour the values of youth, immediacy, larger online populations and big corporations, among other things (2005). A study by Spink et al (2002) suggested that only about 85% of users only look at the first search page. Consequently, search engines and their algorithms “have considerable influence on the search behaviour and search results of internet users” and may influence what and whose data users are likely to access about states in the developing world (van Dijk 2006 citing Silverstein et al 1999). These factors influence access and development of indigenous content that might otherwise promote local democracy and more global equity.

Given the rapid expansion, ubiquity and cost of cellular telephony technology, mobiles are increasingly being held out as the next big thing for media development – the developing world’s solution to the digital divide. Africa is the world’s fastest growing cellphone market averaging 50 percent growth per year (Sigal 2009). In 2007, Africa had 28,5 million landlines and 198 million cellphones. Device ubiquity, portability, cost and flexible budget options (the so-called 'pay as you go') packages are key to success of mobile telephony in Africa, particularly due to the expense of rolling out telephone cable in rural areas where most people live. With mobile, even residents without a fixed address can own a phone. The promise of mobile is that it will help developing countries circumvent infrastructure and distribution limitations and leapfrog the fixed line Internet phase of most developing countries (West 2008). However, the transition of the mobile phone from interpersonal communication device to affordable mass medium and network tool is not automatic. Indeed, the promise of 'mobile politics' also faces its own problems such as the availability of handsets, the high costs of mobile telecommunications in Africa, the need for more sophisticated handsets for multimedia mobile journalism and related citizen capacity building, and the constraints of SMS which limit mobile use mainly to publicity and polls rather than deep reflective

interaction required to foster a deliberative public sphere (Verclas 2008; Moore 2007; West 2008; Davis 2009).

The result of these divides may be the exacerbation of local and international class and other digital divides, for at least the short term, and the need for conceptualising approaches to media development that bridges these divides if new media in Africa is to avoid becoming a mainly elite and bourgeois tool or being put into service for anti-democratic purposes. In the sections that follow, further analysis will be conducted into the nexus and democracy assumptions around new media, often returning to issues raised here and in chapters three.

6.3.1 New Media and Democracy

In contemporary ICT-dense states, new media, alongside traditional mass media, is one of several influences on the sophistication and pace of representative democracy (Bimber 1998). This section evaluates key modernist assumptions concerning new media's influence and transformation of democratic governance. The identification of these assumptions has rested on purposive selection of thematic areas based on a literature review of the democratic roles of media, particularly the new media. It draws on concepts and background described in chapters three (democracy) and five (new media), and it problematises beliefs in new media's capacity to:

- facilitate a deliberative and plural public sphere
- increase civic and political engagement
- foster democratisation
- democratise the media itself

These premises are among the core motivations for new media support in the media development and assistance sectors. While the above are distinctive points in their own right, the taxonomy is artificial in the sense that the issues are often conflated in media development discourse. Highlighting them individually serves the purpose of clarity.

Much literature related to new media's role in contemporary democracy takes a decidedly utopian techno-determinist tone and tends to focus on forms of direct and deliberative democracy envisioned in Habermas's public sphere (Bimber 1998). The modernist supporters

of these ideas, including authors like futurist Alvin Toffler (1980), Nicholas Negroponte (1995) and US vice-president Al Gore advocate the Internet and computers' role in more inclusive public participation and engagement in democracy (Davis 2009; Groshek 2009; Bimber 1998, Clinton 2010).⁶⁴ Their conclusions, similar to those of advocates of liberal pluralist media systems, are based (at least in part) on the belief that increased, decentralised communication capacity through new media will foster popular political engagement, participatory citizenship and democratisation (Bimber 1998; Marthoz 1999). Dystopians on the other hand are concerned about the unravelling of democracy through the fragmentation and atomisation of the community through new media's networking and individuation properties. There is also a viewpoint that the Internet has no intrinsic democratising character, as evidenced by its co-option into Chinese authoritarianism, and fears that emerging versions of Internet Protocol may eliminate anonymity and increase surveillance on the Internet (Mackinnon 2010). As they unfold, the sections below will also deal with these contradictions as they highlight different issues and paradigms of democracy. Section 6.3.2 unpacks the relationship between the new media and the notions of a plural and inclusive public sphere to revive or create representative democracy. Section 6.3.3 contemplates the view that increased access to new media increase users' levels of political and civic engagement. New media's dual role in democratisation and authoritarian surveillance is discussed in section 6.3.4. Finally, section 6.3.5 evaluates assumptions pertaining to the new media's 'democratisation' of media in general.

6.3.2.1 The virtual public sphere

The first assumption tackled here relates to new media's role in fostering an inclusive electronic civic commons or 'public sphere' based on the principles of deliberative and participatory democracy. As Kalathil observes:

The overarching theme, at least as far as the media-development world is concerned is the rise of a pluralized, diverse and multi-mediated public sphere, with individuals, groups, corporations, governments

⁶⁴ However, in most modern democracies with high ICT density, despite increased media density and ownership, voting patterns in the main have been in decline (Bimber 1998).

and other entities freely comingling to influence public opinion (2008: 12).

The gist of this view is that new media provide an opportunity to decentralise power from the urban political authoritarian elite to empower all citizens, especially the rural and urban poor through grassroots and radical democratic processes (Alzouma 2005). New media network individuals and collectives and lower the cost of political communication and action, particularly for marginalised communities – thus increasing the prospects for democratic pluralism (Bimber 1998). This view relates closely to the assumptions of democratic-participant media systems which aim to empower media audiences as active citizens through plural, small scale, accessible ICTs while mass media play a facilitative role (Christians et al 2009).

As indicated in Chapter three, Jurgen Habermas's description of the public sphere is at the heart of re-visioning modern deliberative democracy underpinned by stronger citizen participation in public affairs. In this light, the media's role in the public sphere is to provide citizens with a venue for sustained debate, deliberation, and criticism, and as a channel through which citizens express their interests to their leaders and each other, i.e. an arena for vertical and horizontal forms of political opinion sharing, formation and communication (see Dahlgren 1991). Mainstream mass media were once the sole producers and providers of credible information which "formed and informed" citizens into a political community, "creating a common culture, fostering national identity and a shared arena for political debate" (Karpinnen 2007:497).

However, a public sphere is not a unitary discursive arena, nor is it exclusively rational. It may consist of multiple overlapping and conflicting public spaces and forums for political deliberation (Kanyegirere 2006 citing Verweij 2006). The Internet, which provides a virtual public space where political deliberation may occur, itself consists of "a plethora of public spheres" (see also Sassi 2001:90; Dahlgren 2001; Papacharissi 2002). Virtual public spaces form part of a wider mediated public sphere consisting of other broadcast, network and interpersonal media and communication channels and platforms. These spaces facilitate an area of life where groups can contest social power, consolidate their cultural identities or fragment into smaller sub-niches or communities using services like Facebook, personal websites or blogs (Castells 2001; Wasserman 2003). This may either fragment the virtual public sphere further or serve to integrate like-minded people into new public spaces that may

or may not link to larger forums of discussion (Dahlgren 2001). Out of such interactions may come plural interpretations and enactments of citizenship (Gurevitch et al 2009).

Pluralism acknowledges the importance of representing the diverse nature of social groupings in the process of deliberation and negotiation of the common good. Advocates of this dimension of democracy point to the potential of new media to both integrate and fragment persons into social networks and virtual communities. These processes may include me-centred networks like Facebook, special interest groups organised through listservs, and forums or diasporic communities like expatriates, economic migrants and refugees connected through social media like YouTube and blogs. Diasporic virtual communities may also be politically involved in national democratic struggles by influencing policy through economic support, international lobbying for aid, trade or debt relief, debate and discussion (Alzouma 2005; Taylor 2003).

As suggested in section 5.3.4 the Internet can also help foster virtual communities with weak ties, such as ad hoc interest groups that spring up on the Internet, often with variable fates (Castells 2001:129). ‘Smart mobs’ such as these contributed as noted in Chapter five to the deposition of Philippine president Josef Estrada and alerted the world to the struggle the indigenous peasantry, the Zapatistas, in Mexico (Rheingold 2002).

While all the above leans towards a utopian view of new media in relation to representative democracy, various authors have raised criticisms of the virtual public sphere, namely elitism, fragmentation and corporatisation. These judgements find resonance in similar critiques of liberal pluralist media systems (see Curran and Gurevitch 1991; Kupe 2003). In addition, the digital divide (see section 6.2) obviously remains a principal challenge. While attempts to bridge it promise opportunities for increased involvement by all social groups in political life, hierarchies of political participation along the lines of income, education, age, race and an existing predisposition to real-world politics are still likely to be perpetuated (Davis 2009). As a result, the virtual public sphere often represents social elites as opposed to grassroots collectives. Clay Shirky (2009) refers to this as ‘Power Law’ distribution that posits that similar to the Pareto Principle where 20% of the population holds 80% of the wealth, predictable imbalances persist even in cyberspace.

Davis’s research on the Internet’s role in representative politics in the United Kingdom found that new media accelerated the decline of the traditional mass-mediated public spheres and contributed to exclusionary political ‘elite discourse networks’ despite assumptions to the

contrary (2009: 12). Research by Davis (2003, 2007) and Lewis et al (2005) observed “a tendency of policy elites (politicians, officials and journalists) to form ‘closed information systems’ or ‘elite discourse networks’ that are relatively shielded from the wider public” (Davis 2009). Davis concluded that despite the promise of new media politics to increase lateral engagement between political parties and citizens, for those already engaged (NGOs, journalists, political actors, public relations) political communication is becoming denser, wider and possibly more pluralistic and inclusive. However, at the same time, the mass of unengaged citizens is often subject to greater communicative exclusion and increasing disengagement from the virtual public sphere (Davis 2009).

A study by van der Werff (2008) concluded that these elites or ‘poli-fluentials’ use their online access to help drive debate in their own interest. Early adopters of newer technologies make extensive use of the Internet and mobile technologies to consume news and information and communicate with their own “tightly linked, cross-referencing and self-regarding” networks – often in the interest of their own group or class (van der Werff 2008; Davis 2009).⁶⁵ Given the challenges of the digital divides, there is the problem of a mobilised elite using new media technologies to set their own agendas and suggest it as that of the majority – particularly to the outside world (Gurevitch et al 2009).⁶⁶ However, while the demography of the online public sphere may not always reflect the sentiment of the majority, these elites have proved increasingly important in the international media ecology to keep the diaspora and international audiences, diplomats and development organisations aware of particular events and crises in states like Iraq (2009) and Myanmar (2007) (particularly in lieu of the closure of several international desks of foreign news agencies in recent years).

Notwithstanding these arguments, the dependistas’ perspective is that the virtual public sphere is just another medium for elites to organise and manipulate the ‘masses’ with “the illusion of political choice” (Koch 2005:165). They also regard the majority of content on the Internet as ‘nonsense’ and criticise its failure to engender rational discourse (*à la* the original notion of the public sphere). Likewise, Keen suggests that the Web 2.0 revolution “is really delivering superficial observations of the world around us rather than deep analysis” (2007: 16). He attributes the web’s deterioration of civic debate and reputable information

⁶⁵ Bimber presumes the reason that the Internet’s role in fostering political community and engagement is overestimated in most literature likely derives from the early adopters of new media technologies – ICT professionals, communicators and political actors – who may disproportionately represent their own interests as those of the majority or use their position to influence or slant international perceptions, national policy or even public diplomacy on certain issues (1998).

⁶⁶ Government may alternatively ignore the technologically connected minorities because they are regarded as politically disconnected (Gurevitch et al 2009).

consumption to ‘democratisation’ of media production on the Internet and the fragmentation of a ‘universal truth’ by using many unaccredited sources (Keen 2007). It has also been suggested that the Internet’s capacity for free horizontal political communication arouses “enraged discussions” through anonymous flaming or may alternatively contribute to spirals of silence (Papacharissi 2007:10). Noelle Neumann’s Spiral of Silence concept suggests people are less likely to express themselves in contexts where they know “the profile of preferences and views on certain issues” (Inoguchi 2002). Some groups or persons in such social spaces may remain silent for fear of criticism or marginalisation. Indeed, research on virtual bulletin boards indicates that ‘communities of interest’ form with homogeneous ideologies even when discussions are designed to represent diverse opinions (Davis 1999).

Choices resulting from information abundance (in states where high ICT density is enjoyed) may encourage adoption of Internet customisation and individuation strategies such as filtering which allow users to opt-out of the public sphere, to reduce opportunities for dialogue or deliberation or to exclusively seek out content and networks that reinforce existing biases (Koch 2005; Rice 2002 in Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002). Papacharissi cautions that the Internet has the potential to create fragmented discourse and that if users of the Internet merely transfer existing patterns of public discourse, it will offer no new advantages over traditional media (2002). The increase in niches on the Internet may therefore present a barrier to deliberative democracy and social interaction, as people tend to engage with a select few foregoing discussions with community members who might challenge or inspire their ideas. This has led Barber (2002) to caution against claims that associate new media with the creation of consensus. He warns that digitalisation is a “divisive and polarising epistemological strategy”. Through niches, segmentation, hyperlocalisation and narrowcasting, digitalisation may create knowledge niches for niche markets and customise data in ways that can be useful to individuals but does little for common ground (i.e. the public sphere) that underpins both representative democracy and participatory democracy (Barber 2002 in Thorburn and Jenkins 2002).

Hence, while new media like social networks are posited as the new public spaces, they may result in mixed consequences. They may both integrate users around common interests but simultaneously permit existing social wholes to re-fragment into special interests, sub-niches or me-centred networks that may not necessarily connect with each other or permit rational democratic discussion within the public sphere (Castells 2001). Serious concerns have been raised about this increasingly fragmentary, transient and ephemeral pluralism, which allows

for the rapid mobilisation of issue publics for action (including political action) often followed by their dissolution (Rheingold 2002; Alzouma 2005; Bimber 1998; Castells 2001).

Fragmentation is another serious problem for political messaging for democratic purposes. For both political communicators and the media, publics scattered over a considerable number of decentralised, disaggregated networks are difficult to apprehend, especially in one place and time (Marthoz 1999 citing Kahan 1998). Without a single point of convergence for political communication, enhancing good governance becomes an increasing challenge in democratic and non-democratic states alike. Fragmentation, which enables and problematises a plural sphere, also raises red flags for democratic engagement and citizen participation. The growing fragmentation of media markets may thus reinforce individual, traditional or special interest identities at the expense of a broader civic affiliation, thus eroding the very foundation of the public sphere. The more fragmented society becomes, the less opportunity there is for discussion and debate between large communities on public issues that affect them all.

Another threat to the public sphere may come from the media itself. Habermas warned of the dilution of public debate through commercialism where the mass media is characterised by one-to-many communication, citizens are regarded as passive consumers and limited space exists for horizontal contact between citizens (Maher 2006). In the case of the mass media in several ICT dense countries, the impact of the failing analogue-era media business model and declining revenue and circulation further imperil the content and quality of the public sphere (this issue is discussed further in section 6.3.4).

6.3.2.2 Conclusion

Hence, the promise of a plural, participatory and deliberative virtual public sphere as Negroponte (1995) and others suggests is not without serious challenges. New media fragments and polarises audiences and communities through the creation of social networks and virtual communities that may make it difficult for publics to be informed and form public opinions in a shared public space. Alternatively, as in the case of ‘flash mobs’ or diaspora communities, new media may be used to integrate publics, although interest in ad hoc interest groups is often transient (Castells 2001). This has consequences for contemporary political communication, organisation and mobilisation. These range from influence of the elite political influentials on local and global perceptions of the national and public interest, to echo

chambers and ‘Spirals of Silence’ that may result as a consequence of online digital divides (van der Werff 2008, Inoguchi 2002).

6.3.3.1 Increase in civic and political engagement

A second key assumption for examination is that new media may engender more responsive politics than traditional mass media – and by implication greater levels of “engaged and active” citizenship and concomitantly more open and responsive government (Reese et al 2007:237 citing Giddens 2000; Davis 2009; Jenkins and Thorburn 2002; Alzouma 2005). Snider theorises that as public officials perceive citizens have access to sufficient information to become informed, they are more likely to act accountably in the present (Bimber 1998:144). New media is therefore held out as a partial solution to the general decline of civic society and civic involvement, and consequently government accountability in most Western states (Dahlgren 2001).

This overall premise does have some tie-in with democratic participant media theory. Media studies theory and a degree of empirical research tend to challenge these claims however.

From a cultural and media studies perspective, the suggestion that online users are more ‘active’ users of media texts or that they exhibit greater tendencies towards political activism than non-online users needs to be questioned. Some literature implies new media fosters more active user positions than previous generations of mass media (Reese et al 2007 citing Giddens 2000). The basis for assumptions pertaining to more active audiences could be based on new media’s potential for direct and continuous as opposed to indirect interactivity (Marshall 2004) (see section 5.3).

In the populist model the Net simply serves as a corrective, restoring democracy to its proper levels of citizen engagement in accordance with this ideal standard of citizenship – by democratising the flow of information (Bimber 1998:143).

The view that new media accounts for more active media use or participation coincides with old mass culture theory that sees the audience as largely docile or passive consumers of mass media transmissions (Watson and Hill 2000). This view does not account for contemporary media studies (uses and gratifications) and cultural studies (active audience) (Marshall 2004).

Cultural studies, reception studies, media studies has always regarded mass media consumption as ‘active’– that audience members ‘work’ on media texts by actively decoding information they receive and using it to make sense of their world (Marshall 2004; Harrison and Barthel 2009). Media (whether new or mass media) offers different ways for audiences to decipher information through users’ interpretative acts (Castells 2003). Users are active by choosing and using the media to construct and share meaning about and through one’s lived experience, uses and gratifications, intention and cognitive processing, becoming involved in a text or articulating resistance to it (Harrison and Barthel 2009; Lievrouw 2009 citing Blumler 1979; Morley 1993). While it is true that the properties of some new media enable potential for decentralised cultural production and direct interactive modification of the new media text itself, it may be incorrect to suggest that the level of activity and engagement of someone reading a novel is lower than the claimed interactivity of someone playing computer games (Marshall 2004; Fiske 1987).⁶⁷ For example, it cannot be taken for granted that a user would exploit the intertextual possibilities of hypertextuality or interactivity in an online website or DVD to alter the linear flow or offer a different reading of the text, as much as it can be assumed that a television viewer watching Dallas or the evening news is not actively negotiating new meanings from those texts. What should be acknowledged is that ICTs merely permit more “direct interactive and participative user-to-user interaction than heretofore experienced” (Harrison and Barthel 2009:157). Applying this theory to assumptions of democratic engagement suggests that there is no necessary one-to-one correlation between new media density and use and the potential for more active and participatory citizenry or its corollaries of more deliberative, open and responsive governance.

This does not mean that new media like the Internet do not possess the *potential* for increased civic engagement. The Internet does provide a shift in traditional ways of interaction. Whether such potential is realised is based on many issues, including pre-determined cultural mindsets and the context in which it occurs. However, changing politics and political culture cannot happen through media alone – let alone new media – and cannot solely rely on altering information density or increasing the amount of conversation to ensure democratic change. Notwithstanding this, over-rated expectations are embedded in several new media development projects. For example, the Dutch media donor, HIVOS, states that the object of

⁶⁷ This does not mean that this will always be the case, just as it would be wrong to assume any fixed relationship between new media and the audience’s orientation.

its ‘Citizen Journalism in Africa’ project was to “increase the outreach in local media of balanced, objective and informative reporting which contributes to increased involvement and participation of these groups on a national level” (Citizen Journalism in Africa 2010).

Ultimately, for social change, there has to be translation of communications access (however limited) into debate, deliberation, decision-making and action (Morrisett 2002). Citizens can use new media tools (including blogs, online applications, social networks and mobile media) for a range of political activity such as mobilisation for democratic reform (see section 6.3.4), direct leader/legislator contact, public opinion formation, participating in civic discussions and agenda building, mediated interactions with candidates and other political actors and donating to political causes (Bucy 2005). Democratic information pluralism has limited effectiveness if not accompanied by direct citizen involvement and corresponding government policy and action (Bucy 2005).

Citizen engagement also extends to the realm of political communications through activities like crowdsourcing for political action by outside bodies. Crowdsourcing uses the capacity of online publics (generally amateur users) to perform tasks traditionally done by professionals (like journalists, astronomers, researchers). For example, in 2009, the United Kingdom’s House of Commons released over 700 000 documents detailing members of parliament’s expense claims between 2004 and 2008. It would have taken an investigative team of journalists several months to analyse the documentation for evidence of impropriety. *The Guardian* newspaper built an online application that resulted in over 20 000 citizens lending their time and computer processing power to organise and filter through the data for MP expenditure that violated Parliamentary rules (Guardian 2009). In *The Guardian’s* case, citizens were activated to hold public representatives to account by assuming a watchdog role traditionally performed by the liberal media (albeit in this example, in collaboration with the same). In this example however ICT was clearly an enabler, not a catalyst or determinant as often implied in media development discourse.

Popular new media use may also challenge traditional political communications by disintermediating the hierarchical politician-journalist-citizen relationship resulting in horizontal and flat political communication and increasing potential for direct contact between political actors and voters (Gurevitch et al 2009; Marshall 2004). Disintermediation has been argued to realise freer, faster and hopefully more responsive vertical communication between public representatives and the electorate who can “question, challenge, redistribute

and modify the message they receive” without the bother of the media as moderator (Gurevitch et al 2009:171; Taylor 2003; Davis 2009). Again, however assumptions about increasing democratic participation are not inevitable. Thus for example, a study by Davis into UK political actors’ use of the Internet shows that there is evidence to suggest that new media does increase political communication (particularly by increasing the capacity of smaller parties) (2009). However, contrary to the hopes of some advocates that the Internet may stimulate more horizontal and direct communication between politicians and voters, Davis’s research found UK politicians instead increasingly using the tools for intra-party communication and lobbying and communicating with journalists. At least in this case, the promises of new media resulting in flat and more deliberative public-politician communication were proved incorrect (Davis 2009). Instead, increased transparency through public scrutiny and possibilities for political action through new media has complicated modern political communication, increased demands on government communication capacity and compelled political actors to master new communication tools and strategies.

The influence of new media on political engagement is limited by the will and capacity of political actors and the public to engage in complex political life. While new media use may further complicate the environment for political communication, some current research suggests it will not intrinsically alter ordinary citizens’ overall interest in public affairs or their ability to assimilate and act on political information (Bimber 1998). Again Shirky’s ‘Power Law’ applies (2009). In a study which analysed user participation through analysis of over 46 000 messages and 3000 contributors on a Usenet group on abortion, Schneider (1996, 1997) found 5% of contributors posted 80% of the content (Jankowski 2002 in Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002). In 1999, three research studies showed early adopters of Internet technologies were no less (and no more) civically engaged than anyone else (Castells 2001).

One also cannot ascertain whether the use of new media technologies like the Internet will be used for political or empowerment purposes (like searching politically oriented and mass media websites to inform voter choices) or social networking, entertainment or searching for pornography (Groshek 2009). Even the prospect of mobile’s increasing sophistication, access and ubiquity in the developing world as a tool to increase political participation and thus the potential for more deliberative politics cannot overcome the fact that political activity is relatively small in comparison with elite, social and leisure pursuits (Davis 2009).

With notable exceptions (such as ICT-facilitated uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, the Philippines, Iran and Moldova among others), digital activism does not automatically contribute to actual mobilisation for political action. While it is possible that the use of Internet tools, including exploitation of possibilities for cultural production, may grow the longer users are online (the experience curve), there is no evidence to suggest that users will inevitably flock to the online space as a replacement for offline political communication. Bimber (1989) notes that historically there is no proof that political engagement increased with the rise of other new media of their time such as the telephone and television either. In fact, he points out that voting turnouts were highest during the 1800s (even excluding women and slaves) when literacy was lowest and information constrained to an elite. It seems that new media, like old media can be identified as a function or enabler in certain conditions, though not necessarily a cause, of political mobilisation.

These findings therefore raise serious concerns regarding claims that new media like the Internet and mobile would lead to an increase in participatory and deliberative democracy (Davis 2009). Real participation is currently low and heavily slanted in favour of those with access to the means of new media production and the interest for politically activity – generally a marginal political elite (especially due to digital divides and more particularly in developing contexts). Hence Rice argues:

Even if the Internet represents the potential for greater political involvement, the unequal access to Internet resources by various groups in society, relative to traditional outlets such as newspapers, radio and TV, should paradoxically narrow the basis of political participation and government legitimacy (2002:109 in Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002)

The Pew Centre for Internet and American Life's Internet and Civic Engagement Study for example found that the Internet did not transform the socio-economic character of civic engagement in USA, instead deepening the divide between the elite and politically interested and marginalised and political disinterested (Smith et al 2009; Woodly 2008).

Just as in offline civic life, the well to-do and well-educated are more likely than those less well off to participate in online political activities such as emailing a government official, signing an online petition or making a political contribution (Smith et al 2009:3)

From a practical and theoretical perspective there is little (current) evidence to support the view that new media use generally results in more active politics in already established democracies. What has changed however is the introduction and use of social media like YouTube, social networks like Facebook and realtime information networks like Twitter which have begun to alter long-standing patterns of political communication at least in particular cases, and particularly among the young elites (Smith et al 2009). The success of Barack Obama's 2008 USA presidential campaign has been credited in part to the use of social media and networking services and websites like myBarackObama.com to communicate to youth and other groups that were politically apathetic or unengaged. Obama's campaign organisers particularly employed Facebook and Twitter to engage young supporters between the ages of 18 to 24 (52% of USA Internet users) as conduits, rather than consumers, of information. (Smuts 2010). Youth voter turnout during the 2008 presidential elections – the second highest since 1972 and about six percent higher than the previous 2004 elections – has been identified as one of the reasons for Obama's victory (Smuts 2010)

6.3.3.2. Conclusion

Evidence of new media's contribution to political mobilisation notwithstanding, it is noted that this is not sufficient to achieve this goal on its own. The promise of deepened engagement and more active politics (online or offline) is therefore subject to particular limits. At a theoretical level, the Cultural Studies perspective points to active media use or engagement but does not equate this with interactive communications or civic mobilisation. At a practical level, active political participation is still low and heavily slanted in favour of those with access to the means of new media production and the interest for politically activity – generally a marginal political elite. However, some evidence does exist for use of new media to augment the involvement of groups such as youth in established democracies (like the USA) and facilitating political mobilisation in states like Egypt and Tunisia (Woodly 2008; Smuts 2010). More research is also required to show how the use of ICT for journalism (as a distinct form of communication) could serve to deepen democracy.

6.3.4.1 Democratisation

A third assumption for interrogation is that new media support democratisation in general by circumventing media censorship and diffusing political communication. The premise is

embedded in views which claim that Internet powered protests like those took place in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria (2011), Iran (2009), Moldova (2008) and Myanmar (2007) and thus will “extirpate all forms of authoritarianism” (Morozov 2009).⁶⁸ There is a similar logic in the assumptions of de Sola Pool (1983) who wrote that freedom could be fostered when the means of communication was decentralised from control of government and became more dispersed and accessible to the public (Jenkins and Thorburn 2002). Some empirical research does support such assertions by identifying a positive correlation between new media (particularly the Internet) and democracy. For example, Kedzie (2002) found Internet connectivity – “more than any of democracy’s traditional correlates” – is a powerful predictor of democracy (Groshek 2009:118; Bimber 1998). Similarly, a study by Groshek (2009) using panel data from 152 countries also found that Internet diffusion was a ‘meaningful’ predictor of democracy. Groshek argues that the low Internet penetration in Africa (an average of 4,2%) reaches an insufficient public to permit meaningful democratic effects (2009). The average connectivity in most developed countries where Internet diffusion saw “increased levels of democracy” is 34,68% (Groshek 2009; Heacock 2009; Internetworldstats 2010). However, this does not mean that less developed or democratic countries were “unresponsive to the introduction of the Internet *vis a vis* democratic changes” (Groshek 2009:132). Nevertheless, quantitative studies like these have to be carefully qualified to avoid exaggerating media influences, and are not without their problems (as will be shown later) (Morozov 2009). Also open to question is the kind of democracy being described and the actual role of ICT in a given dispensation. As discussed in Chapter three, democracy can come in many variants. In addition claims of a ‘democratisation’ role of the Internet and other new media need to clarify whether what is meant refers to transitions from authoritarian rule as in the case of Libya and Tunisia or democracy building and consolidation in states that already employ systems of popular rule like the USA (Huntington 1996).

Democracies that are said to have transformed in the final quarter of the 20th century, at least in part as a consequence of the liberalising influences of globalisation, are sometimes known as ‘third wave democracies’. The idea of third wave democracies emanates from belief in the influence of technologies as platforms for democratisation by broadening the space for political communication (Huntington 1996; Kanyegirire 2006; Inoguchi 2002). The view is that freedom of expression in part enabled by the Internet, mobile phones, social networks and satellite television encourage democratisation by exposing citizens (mainly the educated

⁶⁸ This quote is not a claim made by Morozov (2009) but prefaces his critique of similar claims.

elite, students and middle classes) to alternative information and views and enable them to share ideas and mobilise political activity (Madon 2000). Aker and Mbiti suggest that this may explain (in part) the hesitation of some sub-Saharan African autocracies to liberalise their telecommunications sector, as improved access to information and communication could threaten their authority (Aker and Mbiti 2010:29).⁶⁹ New media may also be used to monitor government and hold it to account *à la* one of the functions of liberal pluralist media. For example, in 2008 Zimbabwe, NGOs used mobile phones to aggregate, calculate and publish the results for individual polling stations before the state-controlled Zimbabwe Electoral Commission could audit the ballots (Dugmore 2009). Those actions arguably minimised the potential for fraud in the counting process and provided hard evidence of the results to poll observers.

In this perspective of ICTs assisting democratisation, while states may promote Internet access to expand national productive growth and global economic influence, the Internet's alternative channels for decentralised political information, mobilisation and communication can also undermine authoritarian censorship and information control and help liberalise the public sphere (Madon 2000; Groshek 2009 citing Sunstein 2007). This view echoes Christian et al's radical media role (2009). Increasingly satellite TV, social networks, mobiles and social media are employed to undermine the media monopolies of authoritarian regimes and provide alternative sources of information in states where media freedom is restricted (Marthoz 1999; Barber 2003; Lüders 2008). The globe has thus witnessed the rise of new media being used to mobilise anti-government/pro-democracy protests in Lebanon (2006), Myanmar (2007), Moldova (2008) and Iran (2009) and drive political transitions in Tunisia (2011) and democratic concessions in Egypt (2011). During the 2009 post-election protests in Iran, that country's high Internet penetration (48% of all citizens have access) made it nearly impossible for the Ahmadinejad regime to shut down the Internet without creating a significant backlash or affecting government's own productive (and surveillance) capacity (CIMA 2009; Internetworldstats 2010; Heacock 2009). As Starr points out, shutting down Internet may impair "social capacity to create wealth...sustain power internationally and meet a variety of internal demands" (2004:8).

However, the power of the new media to foster democratisation, consolidation or transitions from authoritarian rule is not sufficient on its own. Local and international political factors,

⁶⁹ Aker study found that 27 percent of non-democracies had a monopolistic communications structure, as compared with only 15 percent of democracies (Aker and Mbiti 2010:29).

economic development, mass media density and independence and depth of democratic culture are some factors that also play a role. Research by Kedzie (2002) found that the attainment of a certain level of democratic processes and policies are equally important for democratic effects of the Internet to occur (Groshek 2009: 132). Further, in a mixed media ecology, new media has still largely had to rely on the world's broadcast networks to curate and broadcast social media content to increase its public and impact (CIMA 2009). As an example, despite the tiny Internet penetration in Myanmar (0.2%), journalists and activists used new media – especially mobiles – to draw the attention of the global media and groups like Amnesty International to the junta's persecution of protestors during the 2007 'Saffron Revolution' (Sigal 2009; Internetworldstats 2010). These moves resulted in intensification of USA, European Union and Canadian sanctions, among other things which arguably led to political concessions that saw the eventual release of Burmese opposition politician and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest in 2010. Conversely, while international media continue to play a role in democratisation, the number of foreign news bureaus has shrunk in recent years leading to reduced coverage of the developing world. Stories from the South involving abuse of human rights in states increasingly receive global coverage on blogs like Global Voices, social networks like Facebook and Twitter and alternative news networks like Al Jazeera (Groshek 2009). Therefore mass and new media as part of a global media ecology contribute to information flows and may also stimulate democratisation by encouraging the international community to call for foreign policy action like sanctions, support for military intervention or public diplomacy efforts from their governments.

6.3.4.2 Anti-democratic new media use

However, as much as networked technologies may enable public participation and pro-democracy mobilisation at a speed and scale not previously possible, they may also inflame tensions or be used for anti-democratic purposes. This is part of the mixed consequences of new media deployment or support for democratisation. For example, the same social media technologies that were used to foster free flows of information for mobilising opposition in Myanmar and Moldova were used to coordinate the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks and the 2005 Cronulla race riots in Sydney, Australia and looting mobs during the 2011 London Riots. Historic abuse and the potential for misuse of new media technologies for purposes such as crime, terrorism, child pornography or hate speech frequently results in

implementation of government regulation of electronic communication – though this can itself be misused as a veil for censorship and repression through monitoring, filtering and surveillance. For example, the Ethiopian Telecommunications Agency requires Internet cafes to log name and addresses of customers in order to track down customers' illegal activities online. Zimbabwe's Post and Telecommunications Act requires Internet Service Providers to turn over information to government on demand and allows the monitoring of citizen electronic communications like e-mail through the State Monitoring and Interception of Communication Centre. Consequently, during the Zimbabwean 2008 presidential elections, government fired eight state media journalists after hacking into their e-mail accounts (Heacock 2009). Nonetheless, journalists are also no longer the sole targets of state repression. In 2009, Reporters without Borders reported that 151 bloggers and cyberdissidents – who are critical contributors to free flows of international news and information particularly from states where information is state controlled – were arrested worldwide. The new media also offer governments and large corporations new methods for information manipulation and propaganda through e-mail, SMS and social networks like Twitter (Marthoz 1999). While journalists and citizens may learn to encrypt their communications, van der Werff et al argue that these kinds of new media surveillance and repression cow most into self-censorship (2008).

While authoritarian regimes' that shut down national Internet access to limit citizen's sources of information or communication for political mobilisation remains undesirable as this affects national productive capacity, censorship or even Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks remain possibilities (CIMA 2009; Van der Werff et al 2008; Morozov 2009). In Armenia in 2008, the government blocked access to YouTube after the opposition used it to post video clips from political demonstrations (van der Werff 2008). And in 2009, Twitter crashed for several hours following a DDoS attack that was rumoured to have emanated from Russian attempts to silence controversial Georgian blogger Cyxymu.

[Governments] hope to dampen the liberating or contentious repercussions of the Internet by erasing 'hostile' sites using labelling and blocking systems, sanctioning access providers which tolerate them, and multiplying administrative or financial obstacles (Marthoz 1999:74).

Furthermore, authoritarian states are increasingly targeting pro-democracy' activists using their own social networks for information gathering, surveillance, propaganda and psychological operations – thus endangering their lives or identities (Morozov 2009; Sigal 2009). As an example, Morozov raises a concern that Twitter and Facebook unwittingly provided Iran's secret service hitherto unparalleled access to information on democracy activists and how they connect to each other using their social networks (2009).

6.3.4.3. Conclusion

It seems therefore that claims that new media can help foster transitions to 'third wave democracies' and assist in the process of democratisation require careful scrutiny. When the literature is aggregated and considered, it suggests that the influences of the new media on democratisation and democratic reform are variable but may also be significant depending on a range of social, economic, political and cultural forces (Jenkins and Thorburn 2002). Bimber writes the Internet is "leaving the structure of political power ... altered but not revolutionized or qualitatively transformed into a new epoch or era of democracy" (1998:136). In short, while new media can facilitate decentralised one-to-many and many-to-many communication that may circumvent authoritarian censorship using the Internet and digital devices like mobile phones and digital cameras, there was still no evidence of successful transition from an authoritarian regime to a form of representative democracy through new media at the time of writing (Morozov 2009; CIMA 2009). The best that can be argued is that new media may break the monopoly that some governments have over information and broadcasting and extend the capacity of groups (notably elites in countries with low ICT density) for mobilisation and organisation to various ends (and which at the time of writing were still unfolding).

6.3.5.1 Democratising the media

The final assumption for examination suggests that new media may improve prospects for democratisation of the media *qua* institution and *qua* practice by broadening the scope of media production and ownership. The democratisation of media practice involves the disintermediation of political communication which challenges top-down information flows, as well as increasing involvement of the audience/citizens in journalism production. The democratisation or pluralisation of media ownership relates to increasing content outputs and

channels by diluting media concentration and broadening access to the means of media production (Bimber 1998; Jenkins and Thorburn 2002). These two points are discussed in order below, followed by a critical assessment of their premises and claims.

6.3.5.2 Democratizing media production

In traditional democratic political-communication, information is mediated between a source/political actors and the audience/citizenry via the media and subject to journalistic standards and functions such as gatekeeping and agenda-setting. Gatekeeping regulates the flow of content emerging from media processes and its dissemination to audiences (Bruns 2005). Agenda-setting is how a medium determines the importance of events by defining the context of transmission of the message, its terms of reference and the parameters of the debate (Watson and Hill 2000). Gatekeeping and agenda-setting, among other mass media functions help regulate the circulation of certain knowledges by presenting or prioritising independent liberal media's commercial agenda or state controlled media's political agenda. These processes of omission, limitation or commission may colour or distort media users' worldviews (Watson and Hill 2000; Bruns 2005). Historically, the two processes emerged as much out of a need for commercial quality control as they did from traditional media's analogue economies of space and time. In the contemporary media space, digitisation delinks news content from the analogue media economies of space and time, theoretically increasing the capacity for new media to deliver more news and greater background detail and opinion than previously possible. Interactive networking also expands the potential for news to be disseminated in the public domain by groups and persons other than institutional mass media or professional journalists. Information flows can be disintermediated between sources (political actors) and the audience (citizens) and also between audience members (citizens) themselves (Davis 2009; Lüders 2008; Harrison and Barthel 2009). This broadening of access to the political communication space has allowed the possibility of a shift in the audience's role in agenda-setting. Users can collaborate, pool knowledge and construct content to share horizontally with each other or vertically with political actors.⁷⁰

Citizen journalism is an umbrella concept appended to the practice and output of participatory reporting. It is based on the principles that media freedom belongs to everyone and that every citizen is a potential media producer who can contribute to the construction of

⁷⁰ However as suggested in section 6.3.2 this does not mean that the majority of citizens everywhere can or that the majority of users do (yet).

news (Corrêa and Madureira 2009). The concept of citizen journalism is still disputed often on the grounds of comparisons between liberal journalism and amateur reporting in the public domain. The former practice is founded on centralised nominally independent institutions and self-regulated professional media, while the latter is often used to refer to decentralised, unregulated reporting generally originated by novices or activists *à la* democratic participant media theory.

The rise of citizen media was encouraged by the rapid adoption of blog technologies as accessible forms of personal expression. Since 2001, blogging (and other social media) have become additional forces in the media ecology which contribute to shaping public opinion, particularly among elite and young audiences (Hudock 2005). Blogs became the primary medium for the dissemination of citizen media. Citizen media's potential to express alternative or oppositional messages in multiple media (independently or in collaboration with traditional media or other institutions) is often celebrated on the basis of the assumption that it promotes more diverse reflection, interpretation and analysis (Marshall 2004; Harrison and Barthel 2009). Citizen journalism varies in form – from independent bloggers like Cyxymu to radical citizen journalism such as Ohmynews and Global Voices,⁷¹ to collaborative citizen journalism such as *Mail & Guardian's* Thoughtleader, CNN's iReport,⁷² and to neighbourhood partnerships like *New York Times' The Local*. Citizen media can take a range of forms including unmoderated or moderated comment posts, professional-amateur (pro-am) citizen journalism, guest blogs, hyperlocal journalism and crowdsourcing, among others.

New media tools like blogs have in part empowered the audience/citizenry as a 'fifth estate' to interact, monitor and keep the performance of the other four estates of the body politic, including politicians and the media, in check. Another mark of a more 'democratic' mediascape relates to the new media audience's capacity for feedback through channels like comments, notes, blog posts and microblogs. Open and unmoderated feedback on news or hyperlinked items limits the ability of media institutions to 'fix' the meaning of news events. This creates the opportunity for what Bruns terms 'multiperspectival news' – open news that can represent as many perspectives as possible resulting from users' potential for (mainly)

⁷¹ Radical media are non-traditional commercial media enterprises that produce and distribute oppositional messages, often articulating public, sectoral and special interest views from grassroots rather than the commercial mainstream (Harrison and Barthel 2009).

⁷² To traditional media, active and creative amateur 'producers' are increasingly important to engender trust with audiences, deepen spaces for free expression and monetise users' time and attention for free content ranging user generated comments, blogposts, photos, links and other materiel (Bruns 2005).

horizontal conversation on the meaning of events (2005). This is argued to increase content diversity and plurality of points of view circulating and competing in the public sphere and shift audiences to a stronger gatekeeping role.

There are variable open journalism models where commercial and radical media institutions, organisations and laypeople generate news stories through 'redaction' (Bruns 2005). This would include Al Jazeera and CNN's curation, filtering and editing of thousands of Twitter and media streams during the 2009 Iran uprising to obtain real-time information from places and people who were inaccessible to its journalists. Furthermore, since the retrenchments in the news industry in the USA, several laid off journalists have begun to set up their own enterprise and municipal blogs to fill the gap in coverage left by the departure of local newspapers like the *Rocky Mountain News*, *Cincinnati Post* and *King Country Journal*. This expansion or diffusion of media production away from the political communication duopoly of political actors and mass media journalism towards more plural and diverse news and news production is viewed as a sign of a more democratised media (Gurevitch et al 2009).

However, the above experiences promising a freer, horizontal, participatory and plural media warrant closer scrutiny given their significance to donor support for 'new media' development and its goals. Citizen journalism and other open journalism services like Wikinews have been criticised on the grounds that variable gatekeeping, random agenda-setting and inconsistent quality will threaten the quality of civil public discourse (Bruns 2005; Keen 2005).

Blogs may be more democratic in that they invite fluid and open communications, but not all are responsible, reliable sources of information or serving the public interest (Hudock 2005:103).

Despite the promise that the Internet increases the available space and range of available content including political news it is *not* inevitable that 'do-it-yourself media' like blogs, podcasts and online video provide an alternative to the fodder of commercial or state owned media systems (Jenkins and Thorburn 2002). In fact, research conducted by Reese et al on six popular blogs showed 99% of content consisted of previously published material in some way or form – merely with added comments and analysis (2007).⁷³ This may suggest a

⁷³ Most blog posts curated content from elsewhere and added general comments (38.5%), or analysis on such material (60.5%) (Reese et al 2007).

general dependence of bloggers on mainstream media agenda-setting even while allowing for more diverse interpretation of events. This situation may be exacerbated when one considers that a Pew Centre Study (2006) points out only 11% of USA users blogged on politics and government and only a third of respondents viewed their blogging as journalism. This figure is significant as the promise of multiperspectival news depends not only on the fact that users participate but also on the question of who is represented (and who is not) among the multitude of perspectives online and subject to the digital divide (Bruns 2005).

6.3.5.3 Conclusion

The structure of contemporary new media is argued to be more ‘democratic’ since it permits greater potential for horizontal and dialogic communication between source and audience and opportunities for personal media production. Influential online channels like blogs number in the millions and may help to mobilise public opinion across geographic borders and influence the agendas of political elites (Woodly 2008). However, these changes do not necessarily ‘democratise’ the media in the sense of increasing media pluralism and diversity.

Furthermore, changing the nature of mainstream media’s approach to the audience-as-producer does not necessarily change the power structures and agendas of mainstream media itself. However, the transformation of the media space through the broadening of capacity for media production may encourage traditional media to be more responsive and accountable to a formerly passive audience who will continue to play a more active role in the information environment.

6.3.5.4 Broadening media ownership and competition

There remains a further assumption to address that the Internet will decentralise control over privately owned media, “perhaps militating against the trend towards media concentration” (Bimber 1998:158). As of 2007, there were 112 million blogs tracked by blog aggregator Technorati.⁷⁴ Social media sites like YouTube host amateur (and increasingly professional) news content in a range of genres (music, comedy, standup, analysis, interviews, animated, automated) that may not be viable for broadcast or dissemination in commercial media or mainstream television networks. New media has also allowed users and groups with relatively small budgets to generate content that could attract mass audiences. Blogs like Huffington Post, TechCrunch and Salon.com command millions of readers and remain

⁷⁴ Not all of the 112 million blogs being tracked were necessarily active.

outside of traditional mass media ownership, arguably providing greater pluralism in ownership and minimising the influence of commercial media and state media agendas (especially in authoritarian states).⁷⁵ However, while the Internet has resulted in the proliferation of millions of self-publishers – the dominance and role of mainstream media players remains largely unchallenged. Popular news aggregators like GoogleNews and Yahoo!News merely replicate the top news stories from mainstream news organisations providing some competition for their offline versions, but driving users to the online versions of stories (Reese et al 2007). The top 50 blogs worldwide also account for 50% of all outbound links creating another kind of online media hegemony (Reese et al 2007 citing Shirky 2003).

Instead of leading to divergence and a multiplicity of new media owners and voices, the network economy has stimulated increased media concentration as large media multinationals attempt to gain control over more delivery channels of multimedia content in order to increase economies of scale. The new media groups and social networks are frequently owned or invested in by companies that have established interests in consolidating software, delivery technologies and content (Marthoz 1999; Marshall 2004). Relationships with online properties and social media networks offer mass media an opportunity to learn more about their users' consumer and social behaviours and sell this data to marketers and advertisers (Marshall 2004). Mergers and alliances aimed at controlling the production of content and every type of medium for transmission have become the norm for the information and entertainment industry. This has led to the formation of “multimedia mega groups” such as the merger of media groups like Disney/ABC/Marvel and Time/Warner/AOL and online buyouts like Newscorp's purchase of social network Myspace in 2005 (Marthoz 1999).

The economic woes of traditional media and the threat and opportunity of new media offer another motivation against hopes of increased media pluralism. Increasing economic pressures resulting from declining revenues due to advertiser and audience migration have seen newspaper circulation haemorrhage, radical staff and cost cutting and even media closures (particularly in the North where ICT density is higher). Technological convergence around content management systems allow diversified media organisations to maximise content distribution while minimising costs. As competition intensifies, content may be

⁷⁵ However, the numbers of users that follow blogs may not necessarily be as important as the level of influence that the readers of that blog like “journalists, elected officials and other influential elites” have within a particular context (Woodly 2008:119).

increasingly shaped by the demands of advertisers and sponsors who financially support an increasingly overcrowded and abundant media landscape. Commercial mass media imperatives may also challenge the availability of various genres and forms of journalism – from international reporting to more time-consuming investigative and contextual journalism while simultaneously demanding “an increased premium on the production of arresting content” (Gurevitch et al 2009:172). The fear is that this may compromise the political commons by prejudicing hard news coverage at the expense of soft news or infotainment (Davis 2009). Pressure to remain profitable can also result in increasingly urban-biased, consumer-oriented media with diminishing interest in, or concern for people living in poverty (Deane 2005; Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002).

Advertising goes where the moneyed audiences are. Conversely lost audiences mean lost revenue (Berger 2009:9).

Commercial demands may also have profound effects for citizen’s political knowledge, participation and voting behaviour (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002; Gurevitch et al 2009). Hence, Davis (2009) argues, increasing economic pressures resulting from declining revenues plus the commercialisation of the public sphere threaten to alienate the mass public from the political centre by reducing mass media coverage of institutional politics.

6.3.5.5 Conclusion

The view that new media use contributes to democratisation of the media through an increase in independent media production and dilution of media concentration needs to be carefully qualified. As Marshall suggests, (currently) media democratisation amounts to little more than a promise of change and empowerment intersected with the audience’s desire for greater control of its media forms (2004). Mainstream mass media agendas continue to dominate the virtual and public spheres in spite of increasing growth of self media production of journalistic content and channels. YouTube may not be owned by a traditional media player but it is a subsidiary of a mega-corporation, Google. On a positive note, new media may break the monopoly that some governments have over information and broadcasting and extend the capacity of groups (notably elites in countries with low ICT density) to set up outside the media industry and contribute towards political mobilisation and organisation for democracy. New media is increasingly forcing traditional media to defend its ethics and relevance in terms of reliable journalism and respond to weaknesses in its approaches and business model.

The long term consequences of these changes to media's structural arrangements remain to be seen.

6.4 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter reveals that claims relating to the potential of new media for democracy are not as clear as some may suggest. This relates to digital divides and assumptions around cyberdemocracy and a virtual public sphere, to increasing and deepening potential for political engagement, aiding democracy building and increasing pluralism of mass media channels and ownership. The virtual public spaces are part of a wider mediated public sphere which includes new interpersonal and networked media, as well as mass media.

The promise of pluralism in the virtual public sphere is prone to integration, fragmentation and polarisation that follow as a consequence of the online distribution of power, digital divide and networked individualism. As regards the premise that new media can broaden and deepen political engagement, it is argued that real participation remains low (for the moment) and slants heavily towards those with access, means and interest in political communication – generally a political elite. There is no necessary one-to-one correlation between new media density and use, and the potential for more active and participatory citizenry or more deliberative, open and responsive governance. New media complicates contemporary politics by influencing processes of agenda setting, elite opinion formation and strategies for political mobilisation, which has a complex significance for media development and democracy (Woodly 2008). While there is increasingly multiple self-produced media, mass (as opposed to networked or interpersonal) media is still the dominant force on the political landscape. However, structural changes to the media that have emerged partly as consequence and/or response to the new media networking and convergence can force mass media to consider its role, business model, operations and relationship with the audience/citizenry. Citizen journalism has at least in part increased the breadth of available coverage in democratic and non-democratic states within certain constraints. Independently-owned and citizen media can complement the political role of mass media through radical media journalism, and this allows for more pluralistic democracy to a degree.

Understanding new media and the limitations of their roles, and the implications for convergences and divergences in regard to normative media-democracy theory (see Chapter three), could contribute to clarifying media-donor relationships around common or

complementary goals or ends. The practical implications for media development are discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 7

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT, NEW MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Introduction

Chapter four of this study outlined the contribution of the media to a holistic conception of development premised around the centrality (though not exclusivity) of ‘the expansion of productive capacity’.

Key lessons to emerge in that chapter that inform the ideas in this section are:

- That development is not unilinear, inevitable or technologically determined. Development varies in approaches (modernist, participatory, dependency) and objectives (economic development, human development).
- That democratic development is dependent on the right to communicate and the equal opportunities for participation of members of target communities in the process of personal, community, national and other forms of empowerment. The possibilities of this kind of development *à la* the multiplicity model may be made more feasible through networked, interpersonal and mobile new media tools.
- That democracy and development have a complex interrelationship (see Chapter three). The connection between development and democracy in media development may occur as result of deliberate planning or as indirect effects.

This chapter will assess claims pertaining to new media’s potential to enhance development relative to various research studies and cases. Some of the work in this chapter falls into the terrain of media’s contribution to development, rather than strictly media development. However, as this study suggested in Chapter two, media assistance is increasingly blurring the fields of ICT4D and media for development with media development (see also Myers 2009). Notwithstanding, the development of media as a particular sector is still seen as a necessary condition for media’s contribution to the social, economic and other development (Berger 2010).

Current literature on development in general and media development in particular seldom frames initiatives, including those involving new media, ICTS or the practice of

journalism, in relation to development paradigms. This is not to say that there are no examples of the use of new media and ICTs to facilitate development aligned to the principles of the dependency, modernisation or multiplicity paradigms, just that development projects are not often explicit about their mode and approach to development in general. Notwithstanding, as indicated in Chapter three, modernisation views remain common in Western developmentalism. The benefits of a theory- and research-enriched approach helps to problematise the objects, practice and relations involved in media development. As indicated in Chapter four, modernisation and dependency approaches to development are commonly oriented toward vertical or top-down approaches using mass media to influence the behaviour of largely passive audiences, and ICTs can be conceptualised within these perspectives. The multiplicity or ‘another development’ approach to media development provides grassroots (bottom-up) and horizontal communication approaches where local individuals and communities – as the frequent subjects and/or objects of or for development – are actively involved in investigation, analysis and dialogue to influence attitudes and behaviours and to define and solve developmental problems (Locksley 2009).

These development approaches are also influential in the critique of media development assumptions since most literature and international institutions almost exclusively celebrate the progressive influences of development through new media and ICTs such as through the facilitation of economic growth, cost-saving, operational efficiencies and accountable public administration, and democratic participation in development choices, among others (see Alzouma 2005).

Section 7.2 outlines the modernist discourse and assumptions evident in various statements and claims related to new media and development, as well as assessing these from the dependista position. Similarly, section 7.3 considers the multiplicity paradigm’s relation to issues arising from an emerging and often hybrid media development context.

7.2 Problematism modernisation and new media for development, and examining the dependista critique

The key assumption contained in the statements and discourse of various global development agencies such as UNESCO, international banking institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and transnational corporations like Microsoft is that

investment in ICT will foster development and usher in a society based on an information economy like most developed states (Ojo 2004; Groshek 2009). The view is that new media like computers, mobile information devices and the Internet would integrate Africa and the developing world into a global 'free' market and provide opportunities for (mainly) economic development. For example, according to the executive chairman and founder of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab:

ICTs continue to offer the best hope for developing countries to accelerate their development processes (cited by Groshek 2009:116).

The World Bank also famously claimed of the increasingly computer mediated and networked nature of the global society and economy:

If African countries cannot take advantage of the information revolution and surf this great wave of technological change, they may be crushed by it. In this case they are likely to be even more marginalised and economically stagnant in the future than they are today (Ojo 2004:144 citing M'Bayo 1997:351)

These notions were well-represented in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) preparations, plans and principles. The World Summits on the Information Society were an attempt by the International Telecommunications Union, backed by UNESCO, to ensure that new media and ICTs are appropriately incorporated to bridge the digital divide and help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (Padovani and Nordenstreng 2005). Article A8 of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles (2003) asserts that the rapid development of ICTs and related infrastructure facilitates opportunities for higher levels of development:

The capacity of these technologies to reduce many traditional obstacles, especially those of time and distance, for the first time in history makes it possible to use the potential of these technologies for the benefit of millions of people in all corners of the world.

Such visions of an Information Society⁷⁶ grounded on a digital economy are strongly influenced by modernist notions of technological and economic determinism that are

⁷⁶ Webster (2000) highlights how writing about a global Information Society is grounded in assumptions of a world defined by: ubiquity of ICTs; the contribution of significant portions of a country's national GDP from the information sector; changes in the occupational mode of production; an increased shrinking of time and space; and transformation of cultural life as a consequence of the democratisation of platforms for cultural production and consumption, as well as information overload and attention economies.

seldom critical about the mode of development or its attendance costs such as unemployment through labour redundancy or pollution. Instead, views on the global information society often obscure or obfuscate “complex political factors influencing poverty and inequality at local and national and international levels” (Wilson 2003 cited by Berger 2005:236).⁷⁷

Modernists regard media and ICT as both means to, and indicators of, development and as symbols of growth and progress (Ojo 2004; Servaes 1995). In particular, the Internet and access thereto are seen as core requirements for improving national economic productivity and growth.⁷⁸ There is some research and examples that support these assumptions, but many of the proofs of modernist development assumptions regarding ICT and new media influence remain speculative and are insufficient to generalise causality (see Song 2010). As in the case of teleological claims of democratic effects credited to new media, exemplars and research pertaining to new media’s influence on development also need to be assessed in context and there should not be a rush for them to be universalised as evidence validity.

Modernisation-influenced claims pertaining to the promise of ICTs and new media for development include:

- International research on joint projects between developed and developing world institutions and universities can now be facilitated less expensively (Madon 2000 citing NRC 1996). From an educational perspective, mass distance learning and even individual coaching as a means to educate Africa’s geographically dispersed population also becomes possible (Madon 2000 citing Unesco 1985).
- Computer or mobile networks may connect interest groups to each other, sources of power or critical information to facilitate economic and human development potential.
- ICTs reduce the opportunity cost involved in searching for information – from the availability of health services or jobs to agricultural practices and market prices (Aker and Mbiti 2010).

⁷⁷ It is not the goal of this section to problematise the notion of an Information Society but rather to critically examine the relationships between new media and development. In doing so, some key issues related to the Information Society debate are discussed tangentially.

⁷⁸ In this view, social divisions, categories and identities seem to play no role in the introduction and reception of technology (Alzouma 2005).

- Increased access to knowledge raises national literacy, which strengthens human capital for higher productivity (Locksley 2009).
- Allocative efficiencies deriving from new media and ICTs such as reduction of local, national and global opportunity costs of coordination, search, communication, trade and investment stimulate market growth and consumption. (Aker and Mbiti 2010)

Empirical research and examples that lend some credence to the promise of the modernist claims above can be found in a wide range of research on development.

Telecommunications infrastructure, particularly mobile telephony seems to be an important contributor to foreign direct investment in Africa (Castells et al 2007; Aker and Mbiti 2010). The World Bank estimated that investment in ICTs might result in rates of return of between 13 to 20 percent to local economies (Madon 2000). Empirical studies by Norton (1992) and Roller and Waverman (2001) found that ICT density – and telecommunications in particular – positively influences economic growth and consequently empowers individuals and communities to expand their choices and improve their lives (Myers 2009; Ojo 2004). It has been shown that the marginal impact of improved network communications in developing countries can be high, leading to improved economic productivity, governance, education, health and quality of life, especially in rural areas (Madon 2000).

One example, in relation to claims relating to reducing opportunity cost in relation to searching for information is the use of mobiles by day labourers in Niger to find out about the job market in the neighbouring state of Benin. The use of new technology enables workers to learn about conditions without incurring opportunity costs of time or the \$40 expense of a taxi across the border (Aker and Mbiti 2010). There are also examples of farmers and others in the agricultural sector using mobile phones and computers to obtain market and productive efficiencies. A study by Jensen on the influence of mobile phone coverage of the fisheries sector in Kerala, India, found better communication and coordination through mobile increased fishermen's profits by eight percent, decreased consumer costs by four percent and increased consumer surpluses by six percent (Aker and Mbiti 2010). These examples of the use of new media for expansion of economic capacity demonstrate how the network effects of new media tools can be used to change the lives of ordinary people. In particular, new media like mobile allows illiterate people, poor people, and rural people whose needs may

not necessarily be serviced by national broadcast media or urban-based newspapers to search for information that can expand their productive capacity and access to opportunities⁷⁹.

In regard to networking and international or regional cooperation, African states have already reaped some benefits from the use of new media and ICTs by using network connections to improve regional collaboration and competitiveness in trade and research in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the United Nations Conference on Training and Development (UNCTAD) (Madon 2000 citing Adam 1996).

Notwithstanding new media's particular applications for economic development, the role of the media as an economic sector in itself, and as a stimulus to economic activity through advertising, should also be considered. The content sector, including media, publishing, marketing, and advertising is also a substantial contributor to modern economies. In the European Union, this sector accounts for an estimated five percent of GDP, or €433 billion (Locksley 2009). In many parts of Africa, the mobile telephony and new media sectors have created new jobs and job opportunities from internet kiosks and cafes, computer repair stores, to roadside telephone providers, airtime vendors and so on. For example, formal sector employment in private transport and communication sector in Kenya increased 130 percent between 2003 and 2007 (Aker and Mbiti 2010).

Digital media like IPTV has also been shown to help drive e-commerce and economic development in countries like China and Russia by providing the initial stimulus for investment in next-generation networks (Locksley 2009). Critics would point out that IPTV is a far cry, however, from African conditions where cable-based internet services are limited and wireless connectivity is generally low bandwidth. Nevertheless, the switch from terrestrial analogue TV transmission to digital signals (also discussed below) is also often presented as stimulating economic growth, such as investment in new channels, and set-top box local manufacturing capacity (as in South Africa) (see www.doc.gov.za).

Around much of Africa, SMS and mobile technologies have created simple tools for mobile banking such as M-Pesa in Kenya which makes it easier for poor and underserved

⁷⁹ Development projects often muddle up or hybridise their media approaches to development within media development interventions. For example, projects such as the Kerala Fishing Project that have economic outcomes which are often strongly associated with modernisation development may employ participatory and endogenous modes of communication which may relate it more closely to multiplicity. Other projects that employ participatory forms of communication which are normally associated with multiplicity development may be driven vertically or top-down, implying a modernist orientation – see the *Guardian* example below. The problem appears to be related to who participates, the level of participation, as well as the end goal of development. Consequently, the classification of some projects involving new media and development into development paradigms may not necessarily be neatly resolved.

people to transfer money, obtain loans and pay bills and for members of the diaspora to transfer funds home in the form of remittances (Castells et al 2007; Aker and Mbiti 2010). Remittances to developing countries totalled \$338 billion in 2008. Sub-Sahara Africa's virtual diaspora contributed \$21 billion to local economies (Aker and Mbiti 2010 citing World Bank 2009; see also Moyo 2009).

Besides a vision of ICTs impacting on development via m-commerce as in the M-Pesa case, there is a volume of writing about m-health (for instance, sending SMS reminders to tuberculosis sufferers to take their medication), and m-governance. In South Africa, government has a vision of public information and forms being readily disseminated to citizens through the transition to digital broadcasting and smart set-top boxes (see www.doc.gov.za).

However, while there are links between new media, ICTs and the expansion of human and economic capacity either directly or indirectly, there are still question marks over its feasibility and role particularly in developing contexts like Africa. Digital divides constrain potential for equitable and democratic development both trans- and intra-nationally, especially as most of the developing world is on the wrong side of the partitions. Duncan (2010) has criticised the optimism of writers like Castells (2007) who appear to have over-estimated the influence of cellphones based on a largely bourgeois Western view of the "mobile network society" and blind spots about high tariffs limiting usage in developing contexts, rural areas and among the poor.

While some analysts like Alzouma (2005) are optimistic about progress to use new media and ICTs to address the gap between developed and developing states, others (Groshek 2009; Ojo 2004; Sonaike 2004; Castells 2004) have declared that communication technologies, including the Internet, are unlikely to drastically alter asymmetric power and economic relations within and between countries specifically in the short term.

Consequently, the assumptions of international non-governmental organisations and international banking institutions that access to, and use of, new media and ICTs can help Africa leapfrog beyond its long-standing development problems of illiteracy, poor health, crime and poverty, need to be qualified, problematised and localised (Alzouma 2005; Sonaike 2004; Ojo 2004).

While modernisation theorists attempt to correlate connections between ICT density and access and development, Castells maintains that the intensification of inequality, poverty and social exclusion throughout the world is systematically related to the new, knowledge-based, global network economy (2004). These kinds of views have some tie-in with those of dependency theory (see Chapter four) that holds that power imbalances between the developed and developing world render modernisation assumptions about ‘leapfrogging’ development untenable. The ‘leapfrog’ view speaks to a particular modernist vision of development that often fails to recognise issues of inequality and the history and choices of developing states. Dependency theorists would argue that technological opportunities are unevenly distributed within African countries where extreme inequalities lead to small elites holding power, economic resources and knowledge. Members of this group can use ICTs to consolidate their power and their class dominance (Goudge 2003). This view extends to the developed world as well in the form of a broadband divide. Sixty percent of USA citizens have broadband access, while those in rural areas or the poor do not.

Research conducted by the Knight Foundation and Aspen Institute (2009) found strong perceptions that users who possess broadband access, digital tools and skills have distinct political, social and economic advantage over those without them (Aspen Institute 2009).

Furthermore, as has been suggested in Chapter five, inequality is built into the structure of new technology like the Internet itself. Dependency theory’s critique of the modernisation perspective on ICTs, including new media for development, may inform media development to the tensions in the nature of the use and access of new media, particularly in relation to equitable development outcomes.

To illustrate this, Castells (2004) points out:

- Given the history of new technologies, early adopters (generally Western elite) will shape the structure and use of new technologies and platforms. The Internet is no exception in this regard. Tankard and Royal’s *What’s on the Web* study (2005) suggests that online hierarchies of power based on the nature of the Internet’s link structure and search algorithms (circa 2002) can compromise entities (individuals, corporate, states) that are late adopters or entrants into cyberspace.
- Education, technological literacy and the capacity to maximise ICT become key development resources but also contribute to the growth of social elite and internal digital divides (Castells 2004). This elite tends to be mainly among the young and educated, who by virtue of their training and profession and ability to adopt

technologies early, have a vested interest in broadening the use of ICTs as this perpetuates their social and economic power and position (Alzouma 2005). However unskilled people and classes also risk further marginalisation and exploitation if they do not find a way to use the technologies on their own terms (Castells 2004).

- Computer mediated economic integration, telecommunications infrastructure and networking may enhance local and foreign direct investment but similarly speed up transnational capital flows that bypass and reduce the role and power of national governments to regulate cultural and economic capital. Governments thus suffer double crises of functionality and legitimacy (Castells 2004).
- Technological developments and globalisation also facilitate the growth and spread of global cybercrime, online terrorism and corruption and fomenting ethnic divisions and civil conflict (Castells 2004). On the other hand, the origination of many Internet scams in countries like Nigeria and Russia would seem to indicate that dependency theory applies less to these instances, where fraudsters operate under the shelter of low-capacity national state bureaucracies. The regulation of ICTs in these kinds of states also means a flourishing pirate industry that exploits intellectual capital from developed countries – while also, however, undermining local content industries.

Dependency theorists remain concerned that the poor financial, technical and human resources in developing countries would perpetuate further ties of dependence such that developing countries would be kept economically subservient by the need for Western equipment and expertise (Madon 2000 citing When 1998). Consequently, some like Schiller (1993) regard new media and ICTs as vehicles of cultural imperialism (Ojo 2004 citing Nulens and Audenhove 1999). Indeed much media development does not empower developpees as active researchers, developers or producers of own technologies and platforms but as largely passive consumers of Western media technologies.⁸⁰

A number of African intellectuals (e.g. Sonaike 2004; Ojo 2004) are sceptical about who benefits from new media and ICT development since some evidence shows that previous approaches in this field have ostensibly benefited the donor economies (more especially international consultants) to the detriment of developing states. Ojo (2004) cites several examples of this. For example, when many African governments began to upgrade and

⁸⁰ The situation is different in some BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) which have developed the capacity to research, manufacture and even export their own ICTs often in competition with well known Western brands. This represents a triumph from a dependista point of view, but it is still overshadowed by R&D exports from developed countries.

expand broadcast and telecommunication facilities in the '90s, a \$14 million project to improve telecommunications in Ghana collapsed (Ojo 2004 citing Bofo 1991). The Canadian contractor provided a telephone switch that was obsolete, ill-designed and incompatible with the specifications for the project. Such projects were often supported with advice, loans and bilateral aid from Western donors and international bodies like UNESCO with the intention of fostering socio-economic development through information and communication media. Ojo regards the Canadian government which granted Ghana a \$5,7 million loan for the project as the sole beneficiary of this project (2004). Similarly a \$200 million Aerostat Balloon System meant to improve national communication infrastructure in Nigeria was cancelled after considerable expense was incurred. US consultants on the project failed to consider that the balloons were a risk to aircraft or that the idea was obsolete (Ojo 2004 citing Sonaike 1989).

More recently, the global digital migration process initiated by the United Nation's International Telecommunications Union demonstrates asymmetries in the global communications policy arena that have economic costs for developing states, especially Africa, with questionable returns. The agreement for nations of the world to migrate television production, dissemination and consumption to digital to free up spectrum for high definition TV, interactive TV and cellular services is less a priority in the developing world (Berger 2010b). In Africa, spectrum is often not overextended and broadcast industries do not have the content to even fill up existing opportunities for analogue broadcast. The driver of African digital migration has thus tended to be the European members of the International Telecommunications Union who come from contexts where it makes sense to have more efficient spectrum usage so as to cater to businesses wanting more TV channels and transnational electronic communications companies stand to benefit from the provision of production equipment for digitising analogue signals, providing set top boxes and new television viewing instruments and technology for distribution of signals (Berger 2010b). The needs of the developing world, particularly Africa, did not drive this process. Instead, digital migration illustrates the dependista view of how developed state agendas impact on globalisation and how international elites and multinationals set the global communications policy agenda (Berger 2010b; see also Ojo 2004).

What is particularly troubling is that expenditure on information and communication media and technology in developing countries often contributes to the debt burden and is often at

the expense of other key areas for social development like social welfare, health or housing. Africa has a huge debt burden. In 1999, African debt amounted to US\$231 billion, which translates into 76% of the continent's Gross Domestic Product. Seven years later, only a small percentage of this debt had been cancelled (Britz et al 2006). This adversely affects national projects for sustainable social development and growth (Ojo 2004). Taken together, dependency theorists would likely present the above as evidence that the modernist view of ICTs for development does little more than serve the interests of capitalist interests and former colonial states and provide a bridgehead for ongoing exploitation of those countries' natural resources (Servaes 1995).

The media orientation of the dependency paradigm relates to development journalism approaches (see Ogan 1982), the use of state owned mass media to transmit national development imperatives (Berger 2005), as well as creation of local content to counter what is viewed as Western media imperialism (Servaes 1995). Dependista related new media policy can be found in the Geneva Declaration of Principles for the World Summit on the Information Society which calls for the establishment of ICT public access points in post offices, schools and libraries to help ensure universal access to the infrastructure and services of the Information Society (WSIS 2005). Similarly one of the goals of the African Information Society Initiative Action Framework is to encourage member states to take immediate steps to facilitate the establishment of locally based, low-cost and widely accessible Internet services and indigenous African information content. Dependista principles can also be found in the motivations of such new media projects such as Global Voices⁸¹ which is a community of bloggers and translators who seek to address media imperialism by aggregating, curating and amplifying the global conversation online "shining light on places and people other media often ignore" (Global Voices 2010).

⁸¹ While the objectives of Global Voices are not clearly aligned with a development objective and their journalistic output is still clearly supportive of a strong monitorial or watchdog media role, their motivations can be seen to be broadly supportive of principles found within the dependency school.

7.3. Problematising multiplicity and new media development

The multiplicity approach strives towards an idea(1) of “development as empowerment” that involves expanding the assets and capabilities of traditional beneficiaries of development “to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affected their lives” (Narayan 2002:14; see also Servaes 1991, 2007). The introduction of converged, personal and networked new media like camcorders, smart phones or online channels like blogs, podcasts and YouTube has been central to the potential of multiplicity style development. ‘Another’ development which frequently employs participatory approaches may emerge spontaneously or as a consequence of planned and systematic organisation of local collectives facilitating citizen participation in much the same way as democratic participant approaches indicated in section 6.3.3. The relationship between a project and the multiplicity paradigm relates to the degree to which the development strategy emanates from and serves the traditional ‘receivers’ of development as opposed to outside sources (such as media assistance bodies or mass media institutions),⁸² the level of participation and the object of development (Servaes 2007). For example, the use of interactive and participatory technologies does not necessarily make a project an exemplar of ‘another development’ if the project does not account for local culture and participation, if it addresses the needs of a facilitator (government, donors, the media etc.) but does not address basic needs of a community (directly or indirectly) and if it does not encourage self reliance (see Servaes 1995).

Multiplicity-related claims pertaining to the influence of new media on development include:

- New media broaden the scope for media pluralism and diversity by allowing communities (particularly underserved groups) to take charge of their own communication around development issues and facilitate direct horizontal communication and information sharing between governments and national and local NGOs and civil society organisations offers the potential for more effective targeting and distribution of resources (Madon 2000).
- Instant and interactive communication flows through social networks and websites make commodity producers and service providers, including government, more

⁸² This does not mean that outside bodies and communities might not share similar development goals as a primary or secondary object.

responsive to complaints, facilitating progressive product iterations and improvements to policy and outcomes (Roy 2005).

There is some evidence to support these claims, at least in situ. For example, the use of ICTs during crisis such as natural disasters and conflict may foster development outcomes by helping to minimise exposure to risk and providing information that can help in search rescue and recovery operations. Ushahidi, an open source crowdsourced information portal, was employed to help coordinate and visualise aggregated data from mainstream media, bloggers, social media channels like Twitter and YouTube, and SMS from citizens on the ground, following the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010. The service helped connect and coordinate information between survivors, the diaspora, emergency rescue and aid agencies which facilitated the relief effort (Aker and Mbiti 2010) as well as being an information medium in its own right.

Mobile for peer to peer networking also has a role to play in local development. Research in economic and human development shows how social capital and interpersonal contacts (for example through face-to-face gatherings, online social media and forums) are more likely to influence behavioural changes than models of mass media transmissions (Servaes 1995). In South Africa, mobile instant messaging service and social network MyMsta has been used as a tool to extend national mass media communication campaigns around youth empowerment and HIV prevention to over 55000 users (Bizcommunity 2010).

Much of the software produced in the ICT for development sector in fields like online education, m-health and even m-agriculture is Open Source. This permits potential for horizontal collaborations and product development that fosters local technology solutions in a manner that can reduce the opportunity costs of redeveloping tools, decrease the expense of licensing proprietary technology and take into account local conditions, language and culture.

The above examples do not suggest that media development organisations should abandon mass media in media for development campaigns around human rights journalism or health messaging. Mass media continues to play a part in both multiplicity and modernisation style development (see Chapter four) in the developing world (though emphasis on democracy effects arising from new media tends to be foregrounded in much Western media development literature). As noted in the concluding chapter of this study, media developers will increasingly need to be aware of how hybrid approaches can be used where

mass communications tools improve awareness of new possibilities and practices, and personal communications contribute to helping people make decisions (Servaes 1995; Nelson 2009). For example, community radio not only functions to support local democracy, but also facilitates information provision and even communications that may help to improve local health practices, small business development and provide a vehicle for cultural expression. Radio content can also be accessed through mobile phones via radio receivers that are increasingly popular feature on mobile phones in Africa (Aker and Mbiti 2010). Audio programming can also be accessed over the Internet through streaming audio and podcasts which enable individuals and communities' to access special interest or language programming that may not have been otherwise available within the limitations of local spectrum distribution, economies or capacity. Such information provision programming can now be augmented through the two-way communication channels of online and mobile like polls, comments, SMS, blogs, Facebook and Twitter. In the multiplicity model, new media viewed in tandem with traditional media arguably permits greater involvement of individuals and communities in agenda-setting for their own empowerment and may augment the limited range of information sometimes provided by local mass media (Aker and Mbiti 2010).

Media practice aimed at participatory development to improve the quality of citizen's lives is more commonly associated with community and activist communications, rather than public and commercial mass media organisations (Christians et al 2009). This is not to say that public and commercial media organisations may not realise development goals either through the direct or indirect use of new media and ICTs for goals that are not necessarily directly related to development. For example, *The Guardian* newspaper's crowdsourced analysis of UK MPs parliamentary expenses could have outcomes related to more transparent and accountable politics but similarly has implications for development by contributing to knowledge and information whose indirect consequences may save public funds through the exposing of corruption, improve service delivery or encourage more efficient spending of public resources *à la* Christians et al's (2009) monitorial role (see also Berger 1995; Servaes 2002; Roy 2005).

Similarly non-profit organisations are also getting involved in new media journalism – with development consequences. One case is the use of citizen funded community and investigative reporting facilitated through the USA based Spot.us website that enables the public to submit tips and fund investigative or community stories pitched by journalists.

Spot.us provides a decentralised model for funding journalism and a mechanism for communities (but critically also those with money) to support journalism and influence media agendas that influence their lives. For example, the project funded an investigation into the problems of potholes in Oakland and ran a feature on the influence of micro-loans on small businesses. In South Africa, the *Mail&Guardian's* Amabhungane investigative team has a similar model which serves both a public media role, as well as a source of revenue for the funding of costly investigations.

On the other side, citizen-provided information in the form of amateur journalism blogs, tweets or leaked documents often needs to be aggregated, verified and curated prior to publication – a role which has fallen to mass media organisations. For example, the crowdsourced Wikileaks principally publishes its documents through mainstream news organisations such as the *New York Times* and *The Guardian* who play an additional role of subjecting content to editorial scrutiny. While Wikileaks is credited with particular democratic influence by suggesting that governments, corporations and the diplomatic corps should be more transparent (or at least more circumspect), the indirect effect of publication sourced from grassroots netizens may also have particular development implications by holding institutions like governments, political leaders and corporations accountable for the distribution of material benefits. In a similar way, citizen media that contributes to knowledge or information that can accelerate growth and efficiency of public administration and economic reforms – whether it is service delivery, or local government spending – has an influence on national development (Roy 2005). In the multiplicity paradigm, the facilitative and monitorial mass media role (Christians et al 2009) is augmented through individuals' and groups' use of new media technologies.

However, while the interpersonal, interactive and networking features of some new media does promise greater levels of (media) participation *à la* the multiplicity paradigm, increased potential for users to take a more active role in media production, information gathering or analysis does not necessarily mean that everyone is involved in the participatory process for one reason or another (Carpentier 2009; see Sonaike 2004) or that levels of participation by geography, gender, education etc. are equal (Bimber 1998; Groshek 2009; Davis 2009). Further, as Rheingold (2002) points out (though in relation to the democratising influences of technology use), it is not guaranteed that groups or individuals will not use the technologies in opportunistic ways – such as the formation of cartels or networks that seek to exploit the participatory nature of new media for community exclusive (as opposed to public) benefit.

Additional challenges also concern the level of participation – defined by Servaes as encompassing access, participation and self-management as in the case of community radio – permitted within the framework of the development project (1995).

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates examples where, and ways in which, ICTs can impact negatively on development, and also where they have had an enabling consequence. These are different to the theoretical potential for ICTS to make a difference. A nuanced analysis of new media's role in development brings into relief the mixed potential of new media and ICTs for overcoming the challenges of developing states. In relation to mobile technology specifically, Aker and Mbiti criticise development agencies and donors that “jump on the information technology bandwagon” without properly assessing its effects (2010:24).

The view that ICTs may (as opposed to will) help developing states leapfrog stages of development or accelerate development processes is not incorrect. However, these teleological claims are seldom qualified in terms of variable interpretations of digital divides, contradictions arising from ICT use, and opportunity costs such as speeding up capacity both for foreign direct investment and for capital outflows (Berger 2010b). Such concerns need to be weighed up against the possibility of increasing marginalisation if individuals, groups, classes and states do not learn to use technology on their own terms (Castells 2004).

The chapter highlights some research that pointed to new media's direct economic effects, as well as indirect effects through contributions to improving productive capacity and more efficient and effective distribution of resources and benefits – including by holding authorities to account. However, the potential of new media to foster development should not be emphasised at the expense of the participatory capacities of traditional mass media like community radio or mass media-plus (mass media with supplementary capacity for interaction through interactive channels like blogs or SMS) or vice versa. New media remains one cog in a larger media environment through which developmental objectives can be met.

Once again, the available data suggests caution against making general claims based on limited case studies that may not adequately account for the broad spectrum of factors why

particular new media and ICT for development projects fail (or succeed). Borrowing from the multiplicity approach, each case needs to be considered in situ, though duly informed by intelligence pertaining to historic antecedents and the potential for mixed effects of the new media (see Ojo 2004; Sonaike 1989; Castells 2004; Madon 2000). As Chapter four suggests, a nuanced approach to media development, particularly any involving new media, would acknowledge the fundamental assumptions of the often unspoken issues and theories underpinning this practice and its objects within a matrix for media development for democracy and development. This points to the need for collaborative and shared research and intelligence on media development, as well as ongoing theorisation of media assistance, media development and its outcomes that are argued in the final chapter.

The final chapter (findings) summarises these and other key lessons from the preceding chapters of this thesis to aggregate a critical and considered view of the role and contribution of new media to media assistance for democracy and development.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined the complexity of new media's role in media assistance and development by subjecting the objective of these practices and their media related assumptions to critical scrutiny. The study adapted theory, research studies and examples from fields of communication science, cultural and media studies, politics, sociology and information science, among others, as tools to analyse and explicate assumptions pertaining to new media (and traditional mass media's) relation to democracy building and development. The work has highlighted three paradigms of democracy and another three that deal with development and media performance has been analysed in terms of these diverse approaches. This background informs the holistic perspective in this chapter, and the theoretical strands explored in this study that include:

- normative theories of the media's role in democracy (Siebert et al 1956; McQuail 1994; Christians et al 2009);
- media and communication for development (Lerner 1958; Schramm 1964; Rogers 1962; Servaes 1991, 1995, 2002);
- media assistance as political power (Thompson 1995; Price 2002);
- the social shaping and socially shaped nature of technology (as reflected in Stöber 2004; Lister et al 2003; Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002);
- the digital divide (as reflected in Sonaike 2004; Alzouma 2005);
- Habermas's public sphere (as reflected in Bimber 1998; Poster 1995; Berger 1998 and others);
- the cultural production thesis (Marshall 2004)

This study is divided into eight chapters each of which deal with components of the media development, democracy, development and new media matrix.

- Chapter two focused mainly on the conceptual problematisation of media development and media assistance, its history and changing context. It concluded that media assistance involves relations of power and that the field of media development is strongly subject to international geo-politics.
- The normative construction of the democracy concept, its inflections and the variable interpretation of the media's role in relation to democracy was discussed in Chapter three. The chapter showed that no specific matrix of media development for democracy could solve the problems of democratisation by itself.
- Chapter four dealt with the concept and problem of development and the developmental role of media within the modernisation, dependency and multiplicity paradigms. Modernisation remained the most common approach to development (despite its shortcomings). However, critically informed media development should exhibit knowledge of the abstract distinctions and interrelations between development approaches to foster holistic development centred on expansion of productive growth.
- In Chapter five, the concept of 'new media' and its properties were explored relative to mass media. New media was noted as a significant addition to the media support mix. The technological determinism of modernist new media development was critiqued and the socially constructed nature of new media was highlighted.
- Using a combination of theory and outcomes from research in multiple disciplines, Chapter six critiqued some of the claims made in relation to new media and its role in the creation of an enhanced public sphere, democratic reform, facilitating more active citizenship and democratising the media itself. Particular attention was paid to the concept of the digital divide as an impediment to new media development. The potential for new media's enabling of democratic outcomes was shown to be complicated and less clear than some would suggest.
- Similarly, in Chapter seven, development paradigms and case studies were applied to help assess claims pertaining to new media's potential to enhance holistic development (as described in Chapter five). The chapter concluded that while the claim that new media and ICTs will help 'leapfrog' development is not necessarily incorrect, such claims need further qualification in the face of digital divides, and

contradictions and opportunity costs arising from ICT use – especially in developing contexts.

This study concludes with an overview of five lessons from the preceding chapters that inform strategic recommendations for media support involving new media.

8.2.1 Lesson: The complexity of media development and its objects

Freedom of expression and media freedom as a related human right are correctly regarded as fundamental requirements for democratisation and democratic development. Democracy and development are two (though not the only) objects of media assistance and media. Media development, which generally involves the transformation of foreign media space through support for free, diverse, competent, independent and sustainable local media, and for other factors within this environment (e.g. skills, access to equipment and capital), involves complex relations of power (Price 2001). The mainly modernist practice of media assistance conducted by developed states in developing contexts may reflect or reproduce historical relationships of colonialism, the Cold War and global geo-politics or economics. There are however, differing views regarding the nature and degree of this influence and interrelations between developers and beneficiaries which vary from context to context (Kasoma 1999; Berger 2009). The use of media assistance for media development– such as financial aid, capacity building, technical assistance and legal reform – is underpinned by a framework of understandings and assumptions. These include the view that assistance is needed to support the developing and strengthening of media environments to facilitate the production of journalism (mainly liberal journalism) as a valuable social practice and contributor to good governance and productive growth. Other assumptions pertain to the primacy of democracy or development objectives, interrelationships between the same and normative assumptions relating to media's role in those processes (Price 2001).

Complicating all the above, the field of media development is in ferment, not least as a result of changes in the mass media environment as well as public diplomacy and donor funding sectors. Some of these changes include the increased blurring of the lines between the initially discrete objects of media development for democracy and media's contribution to

wider development.⁸³ Another change is in how Western governments like France have been increasingly providing domestic media support to help ensure the sustainability of the struggling newspaper industry (Nelson 2009). Further, media convergence has influenced traditional media development's emphasis on single media platforms and approaches, as well as the relationship between fields of media development, media for development and ICT for development (Boutros Ghali 2002; Kalathil 2008; Nelson 2009; Myers 2009).

Against this complex and transforming background, media development bodies deploy distinct communication priorities, strategies and targets to achieve their objects because they adhere to different mandates, objectives and methods. Particular communication approaches and strategies may be identified within organisations working in different contexts, even though these are not often identified explicitly in literature or project reports (Servaes 2007). For example, media development that embraces a liberal democratic view of the media's role tends to support commercial media orientations (historically print); institutions supporting a social democratic articulation tend to engage public media (mainly broadcasting); while participatory democracy advocates pay attention to community radio and so on. In a similar way, advocates of modernist development support free and independent media; dependency approaches emphasise development journalism and local content production, and multiplicity supporters embrace the kind of participatory development fostered by citizen media, and so on. As discussed in Chapters three and four, theories of media-related approaches to democracy and development provide a necessary though different emphasis on media role and effects, each with distinct merits and weaknesses. Though donors may favour particular approaches for ideological or practical reasons – more appropriate ranges of interventions by diverse media development groups are more likely to achieve broader goals of democracy building if practitioners understand not only the project itself but how distinct media approaches can complement each other in theory and thence in practice (Price 2000; Berger 2005).

8.2.2 Recommendation

Critical media assistance and media development requires theorisation of these fields, as well as ongoing research by the variety of institutions involved in this sector at geographic and

⁸³ However, while development and democracy as processes can also be mutually supportive, their connection is not inevitable and can also be delinked (see Chapter three). The study focused on a view of development as the expansion of productive growth as it occupies a central role in providing the material basis for other forms of development (Berger 1992; Midgley 1995).

thematic levels to address issues of commonality and divergence. Given the complexity of media assistance and media development as well as their objectives, context and use, greater professionalisation of this sector should be encouraged in the form of further training and qualification. Further, no one organisation can achieve the broad goals of media development on its own. Whereas media developers partnered with mass media organisations in the past, they may increasingly also need to partner with telecommunication providers, software and mobile companies for intelligence, data and access to technologies, tools and training. Critical and collaborative media development may better contribute to democracy and development objectives by distinguishing approaches and considering the related range of efforts that may strengthen the media environment by using a certain media mix at a particular level, space and time (Price 2000). Consequently, coordinated and transparent support could buttress the use of various media forms for democracy and development at the appropriate levels of media ecologies (Berger 2005). New media, which has added to the complexity, nevertheless does provide channels to network international media assistance in the interests of promoting collaborative goals, sharing research and capacity, and avoiding wasteful duplication or redundant strategies, among other things (Servaes 2007). Media assistance and development organisations must make more efficient use of ICTs for monitoring, evaluation and sharing intelligence relating to regulation, political and economic operating environments (Nelson 2009), as well as for their own inner operations, strategies, motivations and assumptions.

8.3.1 Lesson: New media expands the landscape for media development

Rapid changes and trends in the media environment have limited the ability of even experienced media assistance professionals to fully comprehend the utility and impact of new media after they are introduced (van der Werff 2008). New media is one factor – though an increasingly influential one – in rapidly evolving media environments that may contribute to democracy and development (Alzouma 2005; Berger 1992). That said, because ‘new media’ as a concept exists in many different forms, there is no single way to assess its general contribution to goals and processes of media development. In other words, one would need to qualify what one really means by ‘new media’. Each mass medium (radio, print, magazines, television) has ‘new media’ trajectories as old media forms are reshaped through convergence and use. For example, the traditional magazine has been remediated in the form of webzines for the Internet and electronic magazines consumed on tablet apps or through mobile phones.

Radio has been remediated in the form of podcasts, streaming audio and audio scrobbling.⁸⁴ The media environment has become mixed system of traditional mass media, networked and interpersonal digital communication channels. Each new medium has variable permutations of properties (interactivity, hypertextuality, networking, customisation etc.) whose application allows for some to be more potent tools for certain outcomes in some contexts. For example, in most developing states, radio still provides the most effective channel for basic information provision, while mobile SMS offers a better outlet and conduit for creating and sharing interpersonal information, remote collecting of data and so on. Media effects are not dependent on the features of any new medium but on how those features or properties are adapted and used in situ (and often in tandem with mass media).

New media consumption and use further challenges mass media by disrupting revenue streams, audience-media roles relationships, patterns of media use, news workflow processes, and so on. These changes have led some to argue that new media is in the process of displacing traditional print and broadcast mass media. However, Gurevitch et al argue that the changes should rather be “interpreted as evidence of an ecological reconfiguration, recasting roles and relationships within an evolving media landscape” (2009:167). In a multimedia society, new media operate side by side with traditional print newspapers and broadcast radio and television to inform different audiences and polities.

Given the evolving patterns of media distribution and use, media development practitioners should consider integrating new communication strategies involving technologies like the Internet and mobile with existing media such as radio, newspapers and television. Users often incorporate more than one media source into their news diet and patterns of media consumption and usage often varies from place to place resulting in different opportunities and consequences. For example, while decentralised social media like Twitter and YouTube played an important role in transmitting messages about the insurgency from the local population to the Iranian diaspora during the Iran post-election uprising in 2009, it was the international news networks like Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN (who were banned from the country) that aggregated, curated and filtered content and brought the news from the new media platform to the attention of a global ‘mass’ audience (CIMA 2009).

⁸⁴ ‘Scrobbling’ refers to functionality that permits online software to build a profile of a listener’s music tastes and recommend songs that a user may like based on the music it detects on their computer, synched devices like an MP3 player, the online radio stations a user listens to, or the tastes of the person’s friends. Scrobbling permits users to create their own online radio station and playlists on sites like Last.fm. This facility does necessitate broadband connectivity, however – something that is scarce in developing states.

8.3.2 Recommendation

The lesson is that mass media should not be seen in isolation from new media channels, and studies of patterns of use, adoption, domestication and institutionalisation within states and between constituents is advisable (Servaes 2007). The choice is not new media *or* traditional media development – it is both together or initiatives facing the limitations of operating in silos. The broader scope of the media ecology means that media development must ensure the appropriate integration of new media into the media support mix. Given the expanding and diverse nature of media environments, media assistance should provide critical support for mixed media systems that deepen access, participation and symmetry of communication flows while accounting for local peculiarities of traditional and new media use (Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2007). Media developers will therefore need to understand how media users and networks use media types for different purposes in different contexts. It follows that integration between ICT and traditional media is called for rather than a battle between the two. Berger (2005) consequently calls for complementarity and synthesis between the parts of the whole which may permit new media to become a catalyst for new interpretations of media production, distribution and use and alternative journalism paradigms.

The broadening of the media sphere suggests that media developers will also need to understand how regulations impacting on ICTs and digital content influence the viability of and development mass media markets and citizens' rights to media freedom and freedom of expression. This implies that modern media assistance and media development may need to develop greater emphasis on the policy space of media, telecommunications and Internet. One example would be the transformation of public broadcasting to multiple platform public interest communication agencies, and there are also the cases of digital migration, electronic communication law), capacity building of traditional journalists and so on, which can profitably forge closer ties with the field of ICT4D (Berger 2009).

8.4.1 Lesson: Mixed consequences of new media

Regardless of claims of new media's powers, increasing ICT density and access does not automatically foster an informed nation or improve productive growth or democratisation contrary to suggestions of McLuhan, Toffler and others (Gurevitch et al 2009). Moreover, new media as a component of political communication and culture (though an increasingly

influential one in some communities) “do not miraculously change this constellation of power and resistance” (Marshall 2004). The theory of social constructivism explains how the extent to which technology can have transformative effects often relates to pre-existing patterns of wealth and power and how technologies are mainstreamed, used and adapted from place to place (Lister et al 2003).

New media may offer more quantifiable ways to determine and monitor the influence of media use and allow for diffusion of content in new and esoteric genres, forms and spectrums of opinion and interaction and exchanges between individuals, networks, traditional sources and the media than previously possible. However, rapid turnaround of information and near instant availability of media narratives and opinion have not necessarily improved horizontal communication that in turn extends democratic accountability, nor have they deepened deliberative democracy for the majority (Marthoz 1999).⁸⁵ Instead, platforms such as blogs, social networks and social media often replicate mainstream commercial media agendas or themes and may be employed (at least at first) by social elites to consolidate their own power and class dominance (Gurevitch et al 2009; Goudge 2003).

The influences of new media on sociability, work and economics are not always necessarily positive either, with effects that include cyber-terrorism, social anomie, information overload and exacerbation of inequalities, among others. While there is some proof of progressive influence of new media on democracy, the economy, etc., most evidence from case studies is still inconclusive and cannot be generalised by time, space or community (Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2007). Although the observation is slightly dated, there is still salience in the remark by Fallows (2000) cited by Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002:97):

... most of the predicted impacts of the Internet on politics have not (yet) appeared; bypassing mass media and other gatekeeping intermediaries, circumventing centralised authority, freeing politicians from constantly having to raise money, facilitating new and diverse candidates, fostering virtual issues constituencies and reducing the influence of particular states or political blocs.

⁸⁵ It has however facilitated greater communication capacity and access for smaller parties and representatives to find themselves on a national and global stage (Davis 2009).

Attempts to generate a positive environment for foreign policy or human rights using a peer-to-peer model also has mixed consequences – from smart mobs that mobilise action for political reform and human rights with varied measures of success in states like Egypt and Iran (Rheingold 2002), to disruption of public diplomacy efforts through global activist campaigns or disclosing and publishing sensitive public information through sites like Wikileaks (or alternatively planting of false information), to the use of the selfsame tools for surveillance and repression as in the case of North Korea and China (Morozov 2009).

8.4.2 Recommendation

At best, the use of new media can be argued to generate mixed consequences or effects that vary from context to context. This suggests that axiomatic claims that presume teleological effects of new media need to be carefully qualified in media assistance literature. Media developers should therefore avoid making general statements or claims regarding the influence and role of new media to democracy and development. It is also significant that media assistance providers consider the socially shaped and shaping nature of technology and the critical contexts of local media (including new media) production and use. This requires that research and reports qualify findings involving the effects of new media (and media development in general) in situ. There is a need for a theoretically informed and contextual approach to help further media development goals at the appropriate levels. Finally, as challenges raised by normative media models for democracy and development cannot be addressed by any specific theory or single matrix for media development (Berger 2000; Miller 2002), media development should be transparent about its envisioned goals, account for the contradictions and problems of the concepts involved in these interventions, and consider the limitations of narrow ideological or theoretical foci (Karpinnen 2006).

8.5.1 Lesson: Addressing the digital divide(s)

Addressing issues of power and inequality should be central to media development's objective. Developing states, including many in sub-Saharan Africa often need financial, technical or educational assistance to help foster an enabling environment for media while simultaneously addressing other development priorities necessary like clean water, sewage, electricity, basic health care, roads, transport systems (Sonaike 2004).

Dependency theory suggests that before media is employed, the context of media and information inequality that media development hopes to address must be understood. The possibilities of more symmetrical political and development communication through the employ of new media are subject to cleavages created by inequalities in ICT density, access and use between states as well as within states and communities. These inequalities are influenced by class, language, geography, age and gender, among others. Digital divides, a concept around which there are several definitions (including connectivity gaps, knowledge divides and asymmetries in ICT access and quality), majorly influence whose interests are reflected in media development initiatives, particularly those involving new media. The multiplicity approach would suggest that given the importance of the values of local culture and participation to processes of development and democracy, media developers need to understand who is talking to whom to avoid replicating elite discourses or solely serving the bourgeois classes when engaging new media strategies.

8.5.2 Recommendations

Media development must play a role in encouraging critical involvement by the vast majority of those who remain excluded from the media environment by addressing issues of access and new media literacy, and part of this means supporting media that enhance the creation of 'publicness' (Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2007). The creation of a more egalitarian media environment cannot be achieved without focusing on growing local knowledge, content and capacity as well as attending to infrastructural needs in developing states and empowering local capacity to intervene in policy (Alzouma 2005; Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2007). This view is similar to dependency and multiplicity theorists who argue that ICTs should be used to process and transmit locally produced content in their own cultures, through their own languages. As Madon observes, strengthening the capability of the poor and vulnerable to receive and use knowledge "will require special effort and knowledge that comes from outside will need to be adapted to fit local contexts and needs" (2000:86).

Bridging the information divide can be influenced by transforming public broadcasters to public media and developing alternatives to state controlled media and media monopolies through community journalism or citizen media initiatives, among other things (Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2007; Berger 2009). Relevant communications technologies, along with appropriate training opportunities, should be accessible by marginalised groups, thus furthering their ability to interact with, and play an active role in, communication and

development processes affecting themselves and their communities (Servaes 2007).

8.6.1 Lesson: Challenges to journalism practice and sustainability

An emphasis on journalism and its values makes media development a significant practice to some democracy and development assistance. Derived from assumptions that liberal journalism emphasises values of independence, factual accuracy, balance and truth telling, journalism practice is seen as opening space for democratic discourses, serving as a watchdog against authoritarianism, corruption and misrule, and contributing to ongoing democratisation (Miller 2003). Mainly modernist media assistance supports liberal media models by creating an enabling environment where commercially free newspapers and broadcasters can operate relatively unfettered alongside public and community media.

However, increasingly new forms of personalised, interactive and participatory media in the form of blogs, social networking, mobile technologies and satellite TV are variably influencing contemporary patterns of communication and behaviour. The cultural production capacity exercised by (some) citizens allows spaces where counter-hegemonic and resistance discourses can circulate to challenge the dominance of authoritarian regimes, although it may offer competing discourses in emerging and established democracies as well. ‘Cultural production’ has contributed to the ascendance of citizen media and a ‘Fifth Estate’ that can monitor the performance of the judiciary, legislature, executive, business and the media itself through networked communication. Citizen journalism denotes several approaches to foster participatory, interpretative and more open news production generally though not exclusively by amateur citizens. Unlike professional journalism in institutional mass media, this kind of networked and interactive citizen media may be constructed to provide more opportunities for open engagement around a much broader taxonomy of news. Further issues pertain to questions of media credibility. Real-time news and 24/7 production cycles have also helped to make media organisations increasingly dependent on single sources, public relations and research and fact-checking through search engines like Google. While mass media still generates awareness of new possibilities and practices, interpersonal and customised media is likely to be more influential when it comes to people making decisions (Servaes 1995). These and other phenomena have also destabilised journalism’s traditional role of mediator between source and public. In addition, journalism’s public service role is also struggling to survive in the face of declining sustainability of institutional media (with resulting influence on quality

and diversity of journalism itself) (Gurevitch et al 2009). Even in the developing nations, many established media organisations are facing grave financial problems from audience and advertiser migration, among other things. The survival of a broad informed public sphere (as opposed to numerous decentralised public spaces) is therefore dependent on the ever-shrinking journalistic coverage by traditional media. The digital revolution in broadband and mobile phones offers great possibilities for growth, but demands major new investments and bold new business models. These and other changes suggest the need for specific media assistance interventions related to capacity building, financial and technical assistance for media convergence.

In sum, the rise of interpersonal and do-it-yourself mass communication, multimedia content search, filtering and customised distribution – much as it merits support – does not mean an end to the function and roles of institutional journalism. Journalism attempts to reflect public concerns and speak to audiences as a general public rather than as fragmented and segregated market. Berger therefore argues that societies will always need a specialised social practice like journalism for gathering and analysing information that is generally not available to the public or that may be difficult or impossible to aggregate, curate or analyse on their own even with the use of computers or automated algorithms (2009). The role of the professional journalist is therefore still paramount to provide authoritative (read institutionally-credible) news and interpretation, using practices that attempt to ensure content is free from obvious distortions and that a broad and balanced account of events and ideas are presented (Gurevitch 2009). In other words journalism still performs a valuable public service and this distinctive practice needs to be kept sight of amidst the proliferation of communications whatever the sphere (institutional or non-institutional).

8.6.2 Recommendations

Three recommendations for media development flow from the context described above:

Firstly, In ICT-dense contexts, information surplus highlights the need for media support for upskilling and training of specialised knowledge workers including journalists, citizen journalists, educators and policy makers who need to scan, curate, filter and convert data into relevant and appropriate information and knowledge for audiences (individuals, communities and networks) in any modality and platform. Quality, breadth and sustainability of modern

journalism practice needs to be transformed through a focus on education, training and entrepreneurial support across all levels of media – public, citizen, commercial and community.

Secondly, media assistance needs to ensure the viability of media that support journalism practice and contribute to the goals of media development. Media developers should define how they support media as a particular kind of institution and journalism as a particular kind of social practice (though the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive). Berger proposes a distinct focus on journalism development and density – as opposed to merely media development (2010). Indeed, if what is valuable is the sustainability of a particular value driven practice (journalism), one may need to separate (at least conceptually) the practice of journalism from institutions that support them while simultaneously accounting for the impact of ICT use on the media environment (Berger 2009). To this end, support is needed for the informed and critical modernising of institutional journalism competence (including business skills) and infrastructure. Economic support may also be given to support kinds of journalism at international, national or local level that are imperilled but necessary for development and democracy such as investigative reporting, economic reporting, environmental journalism and so on. A broader view of media development needs to be considered. In a world of shrinking and pressured newsrooms, citizen media and its many forms and formats may supplement or complement some of the normatively prescribed objectives (according to various paradigms) of professional journalism such as public interest communication, monitorial surveillance, deliberative democracy and participatory development. Citizen media may complement the political role of mass media and should be considered part of media development strategies in developed and developing, democratic and democratising states. Broadening the focus of media development to alternative journalisms and other communications is a necessary step for international media assistance. It may also challenge traditions in that there are few guarantees that citizen and social media producers may necessarily endorse or support foreign policy goals or that messages produced by citizens may undermine donor messages and values. Wikileaks is one such example.

Finally, awareness of the potential for authoritarian regimes to use new media for repression, surveillance and censorship suggests a need for new emphasis on monitoring, publicising and reforming national ICT (as well as media) policies, and for capacity building that prioritises online security for media professionals and influential citizen journalists.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the analysis of new media's role and contribution to media development and some of its objectives. Challenges in the field of media development demand cooperation and understanding between these sectors and a critical multidisciplinary approach in media assistance both in terms of potential overlaps between democracy and development programmes, as with media and ICT for development programmes (Kalathil 2008). This study reviews the key areas and debates involved in media assistance, historicised media development and problematised its practice as well as its fundamental goals in relation to the role and contribution of the media. New media as a transformative phenomenon is analysed and its assumed effects of its 'new' properties critiqued. Mainly modernist assumptions pertaining to the influence of new media upon democratisation and productive growth have been scrutinised. Finally, the study made five recommendations for the fields of media assistance and development informed by the preceding theoretical and contextual analysis. These are that:

- Claims and descriptive accounts of mass media and new media's contribution to objects of media development need to be carefully qualified and the outcomes of media development subject to critical monitoring and evaluation;
- Modern media assistance must be based on critically informed and holistic approaches to the changing media environment as well as the multiple roles that media development can play to advance the complex objects of democracy and development, or media development in its own right;
- Collaborative approaches to media development should provide critical support for mixed media systems that deepen democratic participation at various levels – on traditional and new media platforms;
- Media assistance must address the complex challenge of digital divide(s) by creating an enabling environment for 'new' media development and use, particularly by disadvantaged communities;
- Media development needs to prioritise support for journalism practice broadly, not excluding institutions that produce and sustain journalism within the broader distributed environment of journalisms.

This research provides the platform for further analysis of the discursive outputs of media assistance organisations to understand the nature and degree to which they reflect some of the core assumptions of media developers and their influence on local contexts. As much of the research in the field of development deals more closely with media for development or ICT4D, additional study is also required to show how the use of new media for journalism (as a distinct form of communication) could serve to advance this object. Given the emerging trend of convergence in the fields of ICT4D, media for development and media development, research into institutional implementations and outcomes of this practice is warranted. In this way a corpus of knowledge could be developed around the strategies employed and their influence within the media development sector more broadly. Further study is also needed to qualify contextual success factors in maximising level and depth of citizen access, participation and involvement in media and democracy and media and development projects as this remains an impediment to broadening local content and widening debate. Finally, research could profitably assess the practical value of a holistic, analytical and critical approach to media development as has been proffered in this thesis.

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