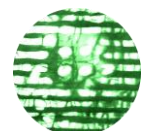


Abstract

The relationship between media and democracy in Africa has attracted vast scholarly attention since the so-called third wave of ‘democratisation’ hit Sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s. Much of this scholarly work is premised on Euro-American centric theories. To the extent that these theories are held to be universal, they hinder critical theorisation of the role of bilateral/multilateral donors and Western policy think tanks that have materially and ideologically supported media policy reforms and the democratisation agenda in the region. I argue that this donors support is not neutral, but is tied to certain material and ideological interests. This reality therefore provides a backdrop from which to interrogate and problematise the role of these global actors in major media policy debates in SSA. To do this, I move away from dominant Western models and theories and rely on decolonial theories which are broadly committed to theorising the problematic of colonisation, (post)coloniality and decolonisation. Decolonial perspectives have intimate links with strands of postcolonial thought, subaltern theory, dependency, World System analysis and African political thought. I use these theories to critique the material and ideological legacies of the colonial encounter that continue to shape and influence the politics and practices of media reform and practices in Africa.

Key Words: Media, Democracy, Decoloniality, Coloniality, Donors

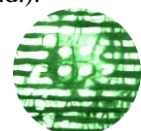


Introduction

In the developing world, most importantly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the ‘second wave’ of democratisation in the 1990s saw the introduction of economic and political reforms in the form of multi-party democracies and adoption of economic structural adjustments programmes promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Underpinning these reforms were pervasive discourses of democracy, human rights and good governance and the media were seen as tools for achieving these ideals. The international community thus urged African governments to reform print, broadcast and telecoms media. Non-governmental organisations, with funding from Western bilateral donors pushed the media reform agenda. In Southern Africa, this was most prominent with the establishment of organisations such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa in 1992 following the passing of the *Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic Press*¹ the previous year, which stated that an independent press is “essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation and for economic development”. This Declaration was one of the key impetuses behind the emergence of the privately owned press mainly in Southern Africa.

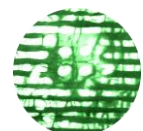
Over the last two decades, a large archive of scholarly research on African media has been established. Earlier academic work argued that a free and democratic society is impossible without free and independent media and an active civil society. These studies broadly saw the media and democracy as symbiotically related (e.g. Ronning 1999, Berger 1998, Tettey 2001, Hyden, Lesley & Ogundimu 2002). Although these studies noted the contradictions of the so-called ‘independent’ media, they were not overly critical of the modernist aspirations of the democratisation agenda. Later studies brought in more focused critiques of liberal democracy, commercialisation of media spaces and the negative impact of global media on African sense of belonging and identity (e.g. Nyamnjoh 2005, Moyo and Chuma, 2010). Existing academic accounts of media and democracy in SSA have predominantly derived their analyses from two dominant approaches. The first one, liberal-pluralism primarily focuses on political-legal issues such as freedom of expression and questions of state-media relations (e.g. Hyden et al 2002, Kupe 2003). In this approach, the media are seen as the Fourth Estate, defenders of the public interest and guardians of democracy. The second approach is rooted in Marxism and political economy arguments which view the media as integrated into the existing economic and political elites and therefore reflecting their interests. In the analysis of African media, scholars using these Marxist perspectives have provided robust critiques to processes of deregulation, liberalisation, privatisation and commercialisation that have accompanied media reforms in

¹ *The Windhoek Declaration* was formulated and adopted at a seminar on promoting an independent and pluralistic African press, held in Windhoek, Namibia (29 April – 3 May 1991). The seminar also paved the way for the UN General Assembly Decision on 20 December 1993 to establish 3 May as World Press Freedom Day. Windhoek was the first of five major regional seminars on the same theme organized by UNESCO and the United Nations Department of Public Information with the active collaboration of a number of press freedom organizations between 1991 and 1997 all over the world - Alma Alta Declaration (Kazakhstan), Santiago Declaration (Chile), Sana’a Declaration (Yemen) and Sofia Declaration (Bulgaria) (Boafo, 2001, n.d.).



Southern (e.g. Ronning 1994, Tomaselli and Dunn 2001, Heuva, Tomaselli, K and Tomaselli, R 2004, Nyamnjoh 2005, Banda 2006, Moyo 2006, Moyo and Chuma, 2010).

As useful as these two dominant approaches have been in scholarly conversations, they have made little or no effort to problematize the role of actors, ideas and interests in shaping the media and democratic agenda. In addition, the questions concerning power in media and democracy processes have not been addressed adequately. Although media reform policies in Southern Africa have mainly been championed by human rights-based advocacy NGOs, their fostering has been done by bilateral and multilateral donors, Western think tanks and private business interests. The support of media reforms by these actors is not neutral, but is tied to certain material interests. The ‘democratisation’ agenda, under which the media reforms project falls, has been central in promoting the West’s foreign policy interests (e.g. see Scott 1999, McFaul 2004, Scott and Steel 2011). It is this reality that I argue provides a backdrop from which to interrogate and problematise the role of these global actors in major media policy debates in Southern Africa. In his seminal work on African political thought as an alternative epistemic framework for analysing African media, Banda (2008) opens up opportunities to rethink and question the dominant theoretical models used in examining media reforms on the continent. He suggests that African political thought, which is part of postcolonial theorising, can be applied to analyse the role of the media in nationalist resistance and struggle and post-independent construction of African statehood. In addition, African political thought enables us to ponder how contemporary media and cultural production are caught up in the structures and processes of globalisation (Banda 2008). In these endeavours to rethink Western theories, a number of African scholars have introduced in their study of African media elements of critical theory as post-colonialism and Afrocentricism (e.g. Fourie 2008, Wasserman 2008, Sesanti 2010) and Afriethics (Kasoma 1996). These scholars critique Western notions of journalism ethics which they argue are constitutive of the capitalist world-system and propose a media normative framework embedded in *Ubuntu*, which puts emphasis on community and collectively – it moves away from the Western preoccupation with ‘self’ (Fourie 2008). According to Fourie (2007:10), *Ubuntu* is therefore “a moral philosophy, a collective African consciousness, a way of being, and a code of ethics and behaviour deeply embedded in African culture”. This move to use non-Western paradigms to analyse Africa media, feeds into a larger movement by primarily US and Europe-based scholars to ‘internationalise’, ‘de-westernise’ or ‘decolonise’ the field of media and cultural studies (Curran and Park 2000; Abbas and Erni 2004; McMillin 2007). In line with this alternative ways of thinking and theorising the media-society nexus in Africa, I draw on a decolonial critical theoretical frame to unsettle and critique the dominant understandings and practices of democracy, human rights and media. Decoloniality is an epistemic and political project that seeks to liberate knowledge, power and being and entails an undertaking of ‘producing a radical and alternative knowledge’ (Grosfoguel 2007: 211) outside the bounds of Eurocentrism. According to Walsh (2007: 226), ‘Western thinking must be confronted and a different thought constructed and positioned from “other” histories and subjectivities’.



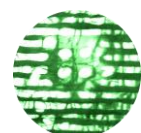
In this paper, I make three key arguments. First, I argue that the democracy, human rights and the normative media frameworks are modernity projects. Following Suarez-Krabbe (2011, 2013), I contend that these two concepts need to be understood in the historical materialization of European modernity which itself “emerged through a relationship of exploitation, violence and control that Southern Europe practiced against its African and American others” (Suarez-Krabbe 2013: 83, emphasis original). The second argument I am advancing is that the media and democracy agenda that emerged in SSA in the early 1990s is a form of coloniality. I state that disciplinary neo-liberalism has been used by the West to impose the democracy project and neo-liberal media reforms on Third World countries. Democracy promotion derived and financed by dominant Western actors, has been essentially an imperial project designed to serve Western interests. The third argument is that the narratives and ideas framings media and democracy debates essentially emerge from Euro-American epistemic sites and this leads to some form of epistemic coloniality.

This paper is divided into three major parts. The first section locates democracy and freedom of expression in debates on modernity. The next section demonstrates how the media and democracy (Western) agenda as manifested in Southern Africa is a form a coloniality. The third section discusses issues of epistemic coloniality and explores how NGOs and policy elites in Southern Africa (re)appropriate and circulate dominant media policy reform discourses produced in Western knowledge centres. The paper ends with an argument for an epistemic rupture and unthinking of the media, democracy and human rights discourse.

Theoretical Foundations

Decolonial theories are rapidly gaining ground in critical social theory. These theories originated in Latin America and generated by liberation and world systems scholars who have articulated this theory as a response to the historical crises resulting from the project of Western modernity in the global South. Decolonial perspectives are theories “arising from the projects for decolonization of knowledge and being that will lead to the imagining of economy and politics *otherwise*” (Mignolo 2005: xx). It is noteworthy to note that although decolonial critical theories are associated with experiences from Latin America, their genealogy can be traced to a group of thinkers of liberation like Aime Cesaire, W.E.B Dubois, Amilcar Cabral, Franz Fanon, Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah, Walrer Rodney, Thomas Sankara, Steve Biko, to name but a few who confronted coloniality and its principal apparatus. In addition, decolonial theories invoke some of the key arguments in the postcolonial and pan-Africanism projects. Walter Mignolo (2011) states that decoloniality has its historical grounding in the Bandung Conference of 1955 which brought together countries from Africa and Asia, thus the political and epistemic foundations of decoloniality have been in place for over five decades. Nelson Maldonado-Torres states the following:

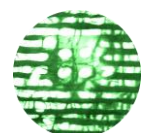
The decolonial turn does not refer to a single theoretical school, but rather points to a family of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as the fundamental problem



in the modern (as well as postmodern and information age), and decolonization or decoloniality as a necessary task that remains unfinished (Maldonado-Torres 2011: 2)

Using the term ‘coloniality’, decolonial theories attempt to understand the ‘continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administration’ (Grosfoguel 2007: 219). With decolonisation, we moved “from a period of ‘global colonialism’ to the current period of ‘global coloniality’ (Grosfoguel 2007:219). Coloniality is “the invisible and constitutive side of ‘modernity’” (Mignolo 2007). Thus the rhetoric of modernity goes hand in hand with the logic of coloniality; there is no modernity without coloniality (Mignolo 2007:476). Crowley (2013: 5) states that “at the same time that Europe was developing the ideological paradigm that established a certain local concept of reason as the universal criterion of humanity and civilization, European colonizers were enacting a continuous campaign of brutal violence and dehumanization against Amerindians and black African people transported as slaves to the Americas”. Therefore violence that accompanies modernity constitutes what Walter Mignolo (2011) calls the “darker side of western modernity.” While in the West this modernity is credited with producing “renaissance” and “enlightenment” and “industrialization”, in the global South slavery, colonialism and coloniality constitute its ‘darker’ projects.

Coloniality exists in the realm of power, knowledge and being. Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2007) coined the term *coloniality of power* which is “a global hegemonic model of power... that articulates race and labor, space and peoples, according to the needs of capital...” (Escobar 2007: 185). This concept helps us understand how social and political power is distributed, and how this distribution (access to power) is connected to a history of colonization and forms a dynamic part of global imperial designs Quijano, 2007). I argue in this paper that this coloniality of power is implicated in global processes that direct and fund media and democracy projects. The democratisation agenda, under which the media reforms project falls, has been central in promoting the West’s foreign policy interests. As Saltman (2006) and Reifer and Mercer (2005) have argued, democracy promoting initiatives are not benign, but are usually strongly tied to the donor countries’ geo-strategic priorities. *Coloniality of knowledge* refers to the manner in which Eurocentric knowledge systems are privileged over other knowledges and epistemes (Mignolo 2007). Quijano (2007:169) states that “African modes of knowing of producing knowledge, and of producing perspectives became subordinated to Euro-American epistemology that assumed universal proportions and universal truth”. Hegemonic narratives are thus projected as absolute and other knowledges outside the bounds of Western modernity are ignored, marginalised or repressed. More critically however, coloniality speaks to the issues of location and the locus of enunciation. Grosfoguel (2007) articulates that knowledge is situated and in terms of the locus of enunciation, the location of the enunciator is geopolitically and historically important. For instance, one can be geographically located in Africa, but articulate issues affecting African from the loci of the empire. For instance, as I argue, NGOs and policy elites in Southern

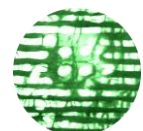


Africa articulate and frame debates on media policy reforms from the empire's locus of enunciation. For the purpose of this paper therefore, coloniality of power and knowledge will be most useful to problematize neo-liberalism which has underpinned the media and democratic project and to analyse processes of knowledge-production and policy-making and transfer of ideas/policy discourse.

Locating freedom of expression and democracy in Modernity

Dominant scholarly narratives of modernity trace its origin to the 17th century. For instance Giddens (1990:1) notes that modernity refers to modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the 17th century onwards, and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence. This view suggests that modernity can be explained by factors that are generally internal to Europe (Escobar, 2007: 181). This chapter teases out ideas of Latin American philosopher, Enrique Dussel (e.g. 1993, 2000) who puts forward a theory of two stages of modernity. Dussel (2000) locates the origins of modernity with the Spanish conquest of the Atlantic in 1492 rather than in the dominant and commonly accepted processes of Enlightenment in the 18th century. Dussel dismisses as partial and provincial the understanding of modernity as essential or exclusive European phenomenon (Dussel 1993:65). He calls this the 'myth of modernity' as it denies and conceals its negation of the other and hides its underside and its suppression and disqualification of subaltern knowledges and cultural practices (Escobar 2004). The understanding of modernity as essential or exclusive European phenomenon is thus partial and provincial (Dussel 1993:65). Interpreting modernity as an intra-European phenomenon hides its underside and suppression and disqualification of subaltern knowledges and cultural practices (Escobar 2004). Rather than the Eurocentric version of modernity, Dussel argues for a world perspective view of modernity that sees 1492 as the date of the birth of modernity during the conquest and colonisation of America "when Europe was in a position to pose itself against another, when, in other words, Europe could constitute itself as a unified ego, exploring, conquering, colonising an alterity that have back its image of itself" (Dussel 1993: 66). This period also marked the origin of the capitalist world system. According to Dussel's central thesis, this conquering was not only for economic reasons, but demonstrates a modernity "that is constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European phenomenon, but one constituted in a dialectical relation in a non-European alterity that is the ultimate content." (Dussel 1993:65).

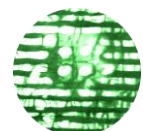
The 'second modernity' (1645-1945) took shape through the processes of Reformation, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, colonisation of Africa and the spread of Europe's hegemony over the Atlantic and these events must be seen as the result and consequence of the 'first modernity' rather than a starting point (Dussel 2000). Thus "the second stage of modernity... expanded and broadened the horizon started in the fifteenth century" (Dussel 2000:470). The European dominance over Africa took place in this second phase of modernity and can be generally separated in two historical moments.



The first moment began in the early 17th century with the establishment of exploitative slave trade along the West African coast. The second moment came in the 19th century just as the slave trade was abolished by Britain and United States. This second historical moment saw the actual colonisation of the continent commenced soon after the Berlin Congress of 1885 (Chowdhury 1997: 37).

The capitalist world-system expanded to cover the whole planet during the second phase of modernity (Wallerstein, 1979) in tandem with Euro-American processes of nation-building, citizenship rights and democracy. Therefore, the genesis of narratives on freedom of expression and human rights in the 17th centuries, linked to European philosophers such as Milton, Locke and Stuart Mill, need to be understood within this ‘second phase’ of modernity. Grosfoguel (2002:2012) states that while categories of modernity such as citizenship, democracy, human rights and nation building were “acknowledged for the dominant northwestern Europeans, the colonial others were submitted to coerced forms of labour and authoritarian political regimes in the periphery and semi-periphery”. While Europe has been preaching democracy in Africa, what it has created through the colonial encounter, is “an intensely antidemocratic, violent, deeply racist, hierarchical, and exclusionary form of leadership (Soyinka-Airewele 2010:120).

Although the idea of human rights as conceived by European liberal thinkers consists of the premise or claim that every human being is sacred, at its conception did not include black people, Jews, Muslims and women. The idea that the African was a lesser human being pervaded the Enlightenment period. Today, even as human rights have been made universal as demonstrated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), cultural relativists argue that human rights remain “a product of the dominant Western parts of the world, framed in their language, reflecting their needs and aspirations” (Brems 1997:142). As Mutua (2010:339) reminds us, Africa was not present at the drafting table of the UDHR and the Latin American men who were invited were ‘decidedly Eurocentric’. Mutua goes to on to argue that although the UDHR is framed as an ideologically neutral project “that orbits in space, not anchored in historical, cultural and ideological choices” (2010: 340) and its drafters present the human rights idea as universal, ahistorical and nonideological, in reality the drafting of these document was informed by Western liberal pluralist thinking and practice (Mutua 2010:338). In other words, it can be argued that the concepts of democracy and human rights are a product of Western liberalism and are still centred on Western-centric epistemologies and world views. This is manifested in dualist thinking that has framed the West’s democracy and human rights project in the Global South. Democracy and human rights discourses remain the core part of a hegemonic world order that reinforce pre-existing imperial tendencies. Rajagopal (2006:769) cautions against viewing the human rights discourse as post-imperial discourse, “unsullied by the ugly colonial politics of pre- 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) initiated the modern human rights movement”.

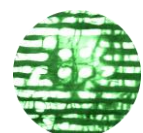


Democracy and Dualist thinking

Although democracy is seen to have ‘arrived’ in the Global South in the 1980s and 1990s, I argue that it should be seen as the continuation of the post-WWII development agenda which was premised on ‘modernising’ the non-Western man. Dussel reminds us that the development agenda is not a product of post-WWII, but is rooted in modernity and Eurocentrism discussed in the last section, that are implicit in the “fallacy of developmentalism” which “consists in thinking that the path of Europe's modern development must be followed unilaterally by every other culture [...] development is taken here as an ontological, and not simply a sociological or economic, category” (Dussel 1993: 67-68). The idea of development comes from a belief in a single modernity centred in Europe and imposed as a global design on the rest of the world that has subalternised other local histories and designs. Development is thus part of the rhetoric of modernity. As stated earlier, the darker side of modernity did not only involve the conquering of other people, as stated earlier, but also the alteritisation of the ‘other’. As Dussel (1993:66) argues, modernity was born “when Europe was in a position to pose itself against an ‘other’, when, in other words, Europe could constitute itself as a unified ego exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity that gave back its image of itself.” Therefore this thinking has developed into a form of dualism that sees the world in a rigid binary, e.g. capital-precapital, Europe–non-Europe, primitive-civilized, traditional-modern (Quijano 2000: 552) and believes in a non-linear and unidirectional evolution from a primitive state to a modern European existence. This Manichean world of tradition vs. modern is based on the foundational myths of modernity that considers all non-European as “displaced on a certain historical chain from the primitive to the civilized, from the rational to the irrational, from the traditional to the modern, from the magic-mythic to the scientific” (Quijano 2000:556). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007:45) terms this duality of thinking as ‘abyssal thinking’ consisted of “visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones”. Abyssal thinking was at the centres of the making of colonial zones as “the other side of the lines” and metropolitan zones as “this side of the line”. The developmental agenda that emerged in the 1950s in the wake of the end of the World War II and Third World decolonisation was based upon this form of dualism and abyssal thinking. For instance, US President Harry Truman, in his inaugural speech in 1949 stated:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery . . . Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people (cited in McPhail 2009: 4-5)

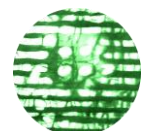
The West thus took it upon itself to embark on a ‘civilising mission’ to move developing countries from ‘primitive’ to ‘modern’. The post-World War II modernisation paradigm saw the media as one of the tools to engender development. The mass media, particularly radio,



were viewed as being central to improving the economic and social lot of the poor in the southern hemisphere. In recent years, new media technologies (ICTs) have replaced the mass media in the perpetuation of the same thinking. The ‘ICT for Development’ supported by a host of multinational institutions and bi-lateral donors, posits that ICTs contribute to economic growth and sustainable development and uncritically projects the appropriation of ICTs as being equivalent to progress and modernisation (Chiumbu 2008). This thinking is best encapsulated in the oft-quoted opening lines of the World Bank World Development Report (1999): “knowledge is like light. Weightless and intangible, it can easily travel the world, enlightening the lives of people everywhere. Yet billions of people still live in the darkness of poverty” (p. 1, cited in Chiumbu 2008). Drawing on post-colonial theory, post-development scholars, such as Escobar (1995); Crush (1995) and Rahnema and Bawtree (1997) have offered a critique of the modernist ideology underpinning the development paradigm. They argue that the development project represents the ‘Third World’ as backward, problematic and in need of Western intervention. Although the development project faced many crises and critiques from dependency and Third World scholars, it remained entrenched as a Western policy towards the Global South. But in the 1990s, it was apparent that development, as an idea, had run its course. In its place, the discourse of democracy emerged. The paradigm of modernisation was reinvented as democracy as illustrated by Abrahamsen:

The disciplinary aspects of development can be illustrated through the sudden Inscription of democracy as a necessary condition for development assistance in the early 1990s. The good governance agenda spearheaded by the World Bank and adopted by most bilateral donors, was heralded at the time of its emergence as a radical break with a development tradition tainted by its frequent support for the strong or authoritarian state, due both to a pervasive Cold War logic and to a conviction that democracy was suited only to industrialised countries...on closer inspection however, the good governance agenda, appears to be less of a radical break with the past, in that it reproduces the hierarchies of previous development where the Third World is still to be reformed and delivered from its current stage of underdevelopment by the West (Abrahamsen 2003:202-203).

Democracy has been mainstreamed into development strategies of multilateral institutions and Western states. Dualist thinking framing the development agenda is apparent in discourses of democracy wherein African Third World societies are positioned as the deviant Other to those of Western Europe and North America (Koelble and Lipuma 2008). Robins et al (2008) argue that exporting of liberal democracy to Africa by Western donors, NGOs and governments, can be seen as part of ‘new civilising mission’ that seeks to modernise and democratise the Third World (cited in Chiumbu 2013: 68-69).



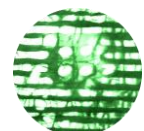
Democracy, Western interests and Global Coloniality

As discussed at the beginning of this paper, the early 1990s witnessed the promotion of democracy by Western countries in many countries in SSA. Democracy was tied in with discourses of human rights and good governance. The form of democracy that flourished in the 1990s and continues to do so has mainly been of the liberal version. While this form of democracy has been heavily critiqued as stated at the beginning of this chapter, very few scholars have questioned its Eurocentric and modernist framings. It would not be wrong to say that attacking democracy is considered sacrilegious. Democracy has become an international norm that is beyond critique. But using the lens of coloniality, it becomes clear that the Western understanding of democracy and its attendant practices towards the Global South reveal the workings of coloniality of power. Because it operates in a hidden form, coloniality of power is able to provide a ‘human face’ ideas and practices that promote Western interests and are detrimental to Africa and its subjects.

In the early 1990s, the promotion of democracy was seen as a priority focus of the post-Cold War foreign policies of Western governments and some multilateral organisations. Western states and institutions began to increasingly link their development assistance/aid to democratization. In this vein, many countries in SSA were coerced to adopt economic structural programmes which were accompanied by several conditionalities, such as realigning policy frameworks with those of the West as a precondition for participating in the global economic system (Mengisteab 1996). Thus, in the course of the 1990s, the promotion of liberal democracy, good governance and human rights became progressively both an objective and a condition for aid by Western donors. These aid conditionalities opened avenues for the transfer of Western policy ideas, instruments and frameworks, under the mantle of promoting democracy and good governance. In relation to the governance agenda of the early 1990s, Ihonvbere argues:

In the majority of African states, development planning, financial matters and public policy were already being determined, influenced, or severely constrained by the policies, interests, and power of these bodies [World Bank, IMF] and bilateral donors. Political conditionality therefore, would create a platform to using the disbursement of foreign assistance to condition, influence, and determine the content and context of politics, the political agenda, and the overall ideological content of politics (Ihonvbere, 1994)

Countries that did not conform to the dictates of liberal democracy were disciplined through withdrawal of aid. In subsequent years, US strategies for democracy promotion abroad have ranged from diplomacy and assistance, to sanctions and coercive force (McGlinchy 2011). In the years following the terrorist attacks in the USA in September 2001, democracy has also been used to justify the US and its NATO allies war in countries such as Afghanistan and



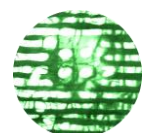
Iraq. In relation to this form of coercive democratisation through economic sanctions and military intervention, Grosfoguel states the following:

The liberal form of democracy is the only one accepted and legitimated. Forms of democratic alterity are rejected. If the non-European population does not accept Euro-American terms of liberal democracy then it is imposed by force in the name of civilization and progress (Grosfoguel 2006: 180)

As noted in the above citation, coloniality of power thus operates under myriad forms of structural violence, a form of violence which is indirect and non-physical. The radical anthropologist Paul Farmer states that structural violence is subtle, often invisible and embedded in the political and economic organisation of our social world. Structural violence can also be related to what Žižek (2009) calls ‘objective’ violence which falls into two further forms. The first is ‘symbolic’ violence “embodied in language and its habitual speech forms [...] the second type is ‘systematic’ violence located within economic and political systems.” (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012: 421). It is this systematic violence that is hidden within structures of global coloniality. A form of structural violence that is implicated in the democratisation agenda is disciplinary neo-liberalism (Haardstad 2012) which is “an imposition of neo-liberal policies and market structures on nation-states by multilateral institutions (Chiumbu 2013: 69). As Giroux (2008:1) argues, neo-liberalism as the dominant discourse of our time is “reproduced daily through a regime of commonsense and a narrow notion of political rationality”. This ‘regime of commonsense’ has made capitalism as the only economic system of organising life, to the detriment of many people who have suffered under this system. Processes of deregulation, privatisation and economic openness have led to increased inequality, exclusion and suffering for many people in the region. Freedom of expression and human rights NGOs in Southern Africa are in a way implicated in reproducing coloniality and act as ‘translating’ centres that help consolidate a form of democracy which is subtly underpinned by the hegemony of neoliberalism.

Epistemic Coloniality

Global policy institutions, the trans-atlantic power bloc, and multinational corporations have set the agenda and terms of the democracy debate, problematizing issues and providing solutions. So we see that in Southern Africa, debates on media, democracy and human rights are highly conditioned by hegemonic perspectives and ideas drawn from Western knowledge systems. In the early 1990s, a particularly strong policy narrative on media reforms, centred on discourses such as ‘liberalisation’, ‘privatisation’, ‘deregulation’ ‘media pluralism’ and diversity’ emerged. These policy discourses were shaped at high-level conferences and meetings that took place in several Western discursive spaces. These spaces wield tremendous influence in policy formulation and also assist in consensus formation. I therefore argue that these hegemonic discourses are unproblematically captured in media declarations documents such as the *Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic Press*

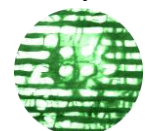


(1991); *African Charter on Broadcasting* (2000) and *Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression* (2002).

These declarations, espousing a neo-liberal media ideology, are considered ‘home drawn’ and ‘African-driven’, and indeed to some extent they are, but I argue that the participation by domestic NGOs in global conferences and epistemic communities entail a process where the NGOs and other domestic elites inadvertently move their viewpoints to match the views and class interests of Western dominant actors. It is not being suggested that NGOs in the South are unthinking and have no agency, but the creation of consensus around hegemonic discourses is conducted through ‘soft’ forms of power that mask power dynamics. So NGOs such as MISA, “through a mixture of policy learning and ‘soft forms’ of coercion, act as facilitators of policy transfer, articulating and repackaging hegemonic ideas on media reforms (Chiumbu 2013:72). The construction of consent means that certain ideas and discourses around media reforms and democracy have become common sense. This creation of common sense point to coloniality of knowledge or what Florescano (1994) calls ‘epistemic coloniality’ – “the process by which the institutionalisation of knowledge as scientific knowledge permit the integration of domestic elites into the dominant Western ideology of modernity” (cited in Ibarra-Colado 2006, 464). Therefore NGOs and policy elites in Southern Africa reproduce and circulate dominant ideas on media and democracy in campaigns, declarations, position papers and training programmes. Foucault rightly argues that belief systems gain momentum (and therefore power) as more people come to accept the particular views associated with that belief system as common knowledge. This subtle form of power operates covertly. Foucault’s notion of governmentality draws attention to the ways in which a multiplicity of authorities and agencies seek to shape people’s behaviour by working through their desires, aspirations and interests (Abrahamsen 2003). Pursuing Foucault’s insights into the operations of power, I argue that there is close relationship between power and knowledge production.

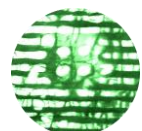
Concluding Remarks: Unthinking Media and Democracy

There is need for an epistemic rupture and unthinking of the media, democracy and human rights agenda beyond the narrow definitions imposed by European modernity through what Walter Mignolo (2000) calls ‘critical border thinking’ the epistemic response of the subaltern to the Eurocentric project of modernity or ‘pluritopic hermeneutics’ referring to the possibility of “thinking from different spaces, which finally breaks away from Eurocentrism as sole epistemological perspective” (Escobar 2004: 219). Mignolo states that border thinking is not an anti-modern fundamentalism; it is a decolonial transmodern response of the subaltern to Eurocentric modernity. As Ibarra-Colado (2006: 479) states, it is important “that we move towards a different modernity: one that does not rely on totalitarian models or a single ideology”. In concert with this line of thinking, Chinweizu et al (1980) emphasise the importance of working from the standpoint of Africa and not from some abstract universalism. The philosophy of Africinity privileges Africa as a starting point of subjectivity, what Mafeje calls “endogeneity — a scholarship grounded in and driven by the



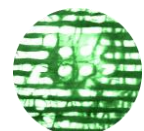
affirmation of African experiences and ... an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in the African conditions; a centring of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one's intellectual work (Adesina 2008: 134-135).

This unthinking or epistemic rupture comes at a time when two centuries of Euro-American domination due to the rise of countries like China and Brazil, have given way to some form of a multicentric structure and this calls for a review of theories that solely rely on the Euro-American experience (Rehbein 2010:1). The current political and economic moment that the world finds itself in provides opportunities to counter the dominant conceptualisation of neo-liberal democracy that has been dominant since the 1980s. Recent developments and events such as the global financial crisis that folded from 2008 onwards, Occupy Movements and the Arab Revolutions in 2011 indicate that we may be entering a period of 'non-hegemony' and an era of significant transformation in the organization and structure of world order. In addition, as Six (2009, 1118) asserts, the rise of new state donors such as China or India questions not only the established modes of development co-operation but also the development paradigm as a whole and the consequence is that "the Western dominance which for decades determined the external and internal relations of many developing countries, is in decline". As Cox states, "We are living in a time of gradual disintegration of a historical structure, which not so long ago seemed to be approaching what Francis Fukuyama once called 'the end of history'" (Cox, cited in Schouten, 2009:1).



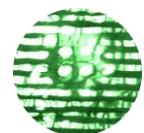
Bibliography

- Abbas, A and Erni, J.N (2004) *Internationalizing Cultural Studies: An Anthology*. Wiley-Blackwell
- Abrahamsen, R (2003) African Studies and the Postcolonial Challenge. *African Affairs*, 102: 189-210
- Adesina, J (2008) Archie Mafeje and the Pursuit of Endogeny: Against Alterity and Extroversion. *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, 2008, pp. 133–152
- Banda, F (2008) African political thought as an epistemic framework for understanding African media. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* 29(1): 79–99
- Banda, F (2006) Negotiating distant influences – globalization and broadcasting policy reforms in Zambia and South Africa. *Canadian Journal of Communication*. 31 (2):459–467.
- Berger, G (1998)
- Brems, E (1997) Enemies or Allies? Feminism and Cultural Relativism as Dissident Voices in Human Rights Discourse. *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Feb., 1997), pp. 136-164
- Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa, J. and Ihechucku, M. (1980). *Toward the decolonization of African literature: Africa fiction and poetry and their critics*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing.
- Chiumbu, S (2008) *Understanding the Role and Influence of External Actors and Ideas in Policy Formulation and Implementation: The African Information Society Initiative*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oslo, Norway.
- Chiumbu, S (2013) Knowledge and Ideas in a Context of Power: Rethinking Media Policy and Reform in Southern Africa. *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies*, Vol 43 No 2, 64-77
- Chowdhury, K (1997) Afrocentric Voices: Constructing Identities, [Dis]placing Difference. *College Literature*. 24(2): 35-56
- Crawley, P (2013) *Mobilising Insurgent Past(s) Toward Decolonial Futures*. Unpublished MA thesis. University of Western Ontario, Ontario, Canada
- Crush, J. (Ed.) (1995) *Power of Development*. London: Routledge
- Curran, J and Park, M (2000) *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. Routledge
- Dussel, E (1993) Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures). *boundary 2*, Vol. 20, No. 3, The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America, pp. 65-76



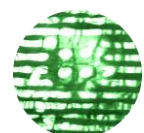


- Dussel, E (2000) Europe, modernity and eurocentrism. *Nepantla: View from the South*, 1(3), 465-478.
- Dussel, E (2002) "World System and 'Transmodernity':" *Nepantla* 3, no. 2 : 221-44
- Escobar, A (2004) Beyond the Third World: imperial globality, global coloniality and anti-globalisation social movements. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 25, No. 1, pp 207-230
- Escobr, A (2005) *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press
- Escobar, A (2007) Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise. *Cultural Studies*. 21:2-3, 179-210
- Fischer, F (2003) *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*. OUP Oxford
- Fourie, P (2008) Ubuntuism as a framework for South Africa media practice and performance: Can it work? *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*. Volume 34(1): 53-79
- Fourie, P, J. 2007. Moral philosophy as the Foundation of Normative Media Theory: The case Of African Ubuntuism. *Communications*, 32: 1-29
- Giddens, A (1991) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Polity Press
- Giroux, H. (2008) *Against the terror of neoliberalism: Politics beyond the Age of Greed*. Paradigm Publishers.
- Grosfoguel, R. (2007) The epistemic decolonial turn: beyond political-economy paradigms'. *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2 – 3): 211-223.
- Grosfoguel, R (2006) World System Analysis in the context of Transmodernity, Border Thinking and Global Colonaility. *Review*. 24(2): 167-187
- Haarstad, H. (2012) The Architecture of Investment Climate Surveillance and the Space for Non-Orthodox Policy. *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies*, Issue 5 'Imperialism, Finance, #Occupy'. pp 79-103
- Heuva, W. E., Teer-Tomaselli, R. E., and Tomaselli, K. G. (2004). The Political Economy of Media in Southern Africa, 1990-2001. In N. T. Pradip and N. Zaharom (eds.). *Who Owns the Media: Global Trends and Local Resistances*: London: ZED/Southbound/WACC.
- Hyden, G., Leslie, M. and Ogundimu, F.F. (eds). 2003. *Media and Democracy in Africa*. London: Transaction Books
- Ibarra-Coloado, E (2006) Organisation Studies and Epistemic Coloniality in Latin America: Thinking Otherness from the Margins. *Organisations* 13(4) 463-488



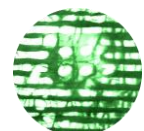


- Ihonvbere, J (1994) “Governance, Economics and Interdependence: Constraints and Possibilities in Sub-Saharan Africa” Paper presented at the Summer Institute “Governance, Equity, and the Global Poor: A Curriculum Development Institute, June 9-12, 1994. Retrieved at <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/30/032.html>, accessed 28 August 2014
- Kasoma, F. P (1996) The Foundations of African Ethics. (Afriethics) and the Professional. Practice of Journalism: The Case for Society-Centred Media Morality. *Africa Media Review*, 10(3): 93-116
- Koelble, T and Lipuma, E. (2008) Democratising Democracy: a Postcolonial Critique of Conventional Approaches to the ‘Measurement of Democracy’. *Democratisation*, Vol 15. No 1, pp 1-28
- Kupe, T (2003) (ed.) *Broadcasting Policy and Practice in Africa*. Johannesburg: Article 19
- McFaul, M (2004) Democracy promotion as a world value. *The Washington Quarterly*. 28(1): 147-163
- McGlinchy, A (2011) Analysis of Western Democracy Promotion Strategies. *Working Paper No 2/2011*. Centre for Studies in Democratisation Department of Politics and International Studies University of Warwick
- McMillin, D.C (2007) *International Media Studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell
- McPhail, T (2009) Introduction to Development Communication. In Thomas McPhail (ed.) *Development Communication: Reframing the Role of the Media*. Wiley-Blackwell
- Maldonado-Torres. N (2011) Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique—An Introduction. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic* 1 (2), 1-15
- Mengisteab, K (1996) *Globalisation and Autocentricity in Africa’s Development in the 21st Century*. New Jersey: Africa World Press
- Mignolo, W (2011) Epistemic disobedience and the decolonial option: a manifesto *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic* 1 (2): 44-66.
- Mignolo, W (2009) ‘Epistemic disobedience, independent thought and de-colonial freedom’. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 26 (7 - 8): 1 – 23.
- Mignolo, W (2007) Delinking. *Cultural Studies*, 21:2 , 449-514
- Mignolo, W (2005) *The Idea of Latin America*. Blackwell Publishing
- Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.





- Moyo, D. 2006. *Broadcasting Policy Reform and Democratization in Zambia and Zimbabwe, 1990–2005: Global Pressures, National Responses*. PhD Dissertation, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo.
- Moyo, D & Chuma, W (2010) *Media Policy in a Changing World*. Pretoria: Unisa Press
- Mutua, M (2010) Human Rights in Africa: The Limited Promise of Liberalism. In Peyi Soyinka Airewele, Rita Kiki Endozie (eds.) *Reframing Contemporary Africa: Politics, Economics, and Culture in the Global Era*. CQ Press, pp 334-350
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J (2012) Fiftieth Anniversary of Decolonisation in Africa: a moment of celebration or critical reflection?, *Third World Quarterly*, 33:1, 71-89
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2005). *Africa's Media: Democracy & the Politics of Belonging*. London: Zed Books.
- Quijano, A (2007) Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2/3), 168-178
- Quijano, A (2000) Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3, pp. 533-580
- Rahnema, M., and Bawtree, V. (1997) *The Post-Development Reader*. London: Zed Books
- Rajagopal, B (2006) Counter-hegemonic International Law: rethinking human rights and development as a Third World strategy. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp 767 – 783, 2006
- Rieffer, B and Mercer, K (2005) 'US democracy promotion: the Clinton and Bush administrations', *Global Society*, 19, 385-408
- Rehbein, B (2010) Critical Theory after the Rise of the Global South. *Transscience Journal*, 1(2): 1-17
- Robins, S, Cornwall, A and Von Liers, B (2008) Rethinking 'Citizenship' in the postcolony. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 29, NO. 6: 1069-1086
- Rønning, H. 1994. Media and Democracy: Theories and Principles with Reference to an African Context: Seminar Paper Series No. 8. Harare: SAPES Books.
- Saltman, K.J. (2006) Creative Associates International: corporate education and "democracy promotion" in Iraq. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 28, 25-65
- Santos, B. S. 2007. 'Beyond abyssal thinking: from global lines to ecology of knowledges'. *Review* 30 (1): 1-33.
- Sesanti, S (2010) The concept of 'respect' in African culture in the context of journalism practice: An Afrocentric intervention. *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*. Volume 36(3) pp 343-358



Six, C (2009) The Rise of Postcolonial States as Donors: a challenge to the development paradigm?. *Third World Quarterly*, 30(6): 1103-1121

Schouten, P. (2009) 'Theory Talk #37: Robert Cox on World Orders, Historical Change, and the Purpose of Theory in International Relations', Theory Talks, <http://www.theorytalks.org/2010/03/theory-talk-37.html> (12-03-2010)

Scott, J (1999) Transnationalising Democracy Promotion: The Role of Western Political Foundations and Think Tanks. *Democratisation*, 6(3): 146-170

Scott, J and Steele, C (2011) Sponsoring Democracy: The United States and Democracy Aid to the Developing World, 1988–2001. *International Studies Quarterly*. 55 (1): 47–69

Soyinka-Airewele, P (2010) Colonial Legacies: Ghosts, Gulags and Silenced Traumas of Empire. In Peyi Soyinka Airewele, Rita Kiki Endozie (eds.) *Reframing Contemporary Africa: Politics, Economics, and Culture in the Global Era*. CQ Press, pp 100-130

Suarez-Krabbe, J (2013) Race, Social Struggles, and 'Human' Rights : Contributions from the Global South. *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies*, No. 6, 2013, p. 78-102.

Tomaselli, K.G. and Dunn, H. (eds.) (2001). *Media, Democracy and Renewal in Southern Africa: Critical Studies on African Media and Culture*. Colorado Springs: International Academic Publishers

Wallerstein, I (1979) *The Capitalist World-Economy*. Cambridge University Press

Walsh, C. 2007. Shifting the Geopolitics of Critical Knowledge. *Cultural Studies*, 21:2-3, 224-239

Wasserman, H (2008) Media Ethics and Human Dignity in the Postcolony. In Stephen Ward and Herman Wasserman (eds.) *Media Ethics Beyond Borders: A Global Perspective*. New York and London: Routledge

