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Racism, Ethnicity and the Media in Africa: Reflections Inspired by Studies of Xeno-phobia in Cameroon and South Africa

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Abstract: This paper demonstrates the extent to which the media and be-longing in Africa are torn between competing and often conflicting claims of bounded and flexible ideas of culture and identity. It draws on studies of xenophobia in Cameroon and South Africa, inspired by the resilience of the politicization of culture and identity, to discuss the hierarchies and inequali-ties that underpin political, economic and social citizenship in Africa and the world over, and the role of the media in the production, enforcement and contestation of these hierarchies and inequalities. In any country with liberal democratic aspirations or pretensions, the media are expected to promote national citizenship and its emphasis on large-scale, assimilationist and ter-ritorially bounded belonging, while turning a blind eye to those who fall through the cracks as a result of racism and/or ethnicity. Little wonder that such an exclusionary articulation of citizenship is facing formidable chal-lenges from its inherent contradictions and closures, and from an upsurge in the politics of recognition and representation by small-scale communities claiming autochthony at a historical juncture where the rhetoric espouses flexible mobility, postmodern flux and discontinuity.

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A conference on racism, ethnicity and the media in Africa presupposes that racism and ethnicity are sensitive issues in Africa, and that how the media relate to these issues is critical. This raises some questions: In what ways are racism and ethnicity sensitive issues in Africa? How do the media in Africa relate to racism and ethnicity as sensitive issues?

Racism and ethnicity become issues of concern for media when tracing belonging and identity through exclusion becomes *obsessive* and *problematic*— forcing upon others exclusion when they expect inclusion, and seeking to justify such exclusion with porous arguments, stereotypes, stigmatisation and scapegoating. Xenophobia (whether racially or ethnically inspired) is indicative of such problematic and obsessive tendencies to define and confine belonging and identity in terms of cultural differences, with little regard to the reality of interconnections and ongoing relationships forged across communities by individuals as navigators and negotiators of various identity margins. Racism and ethnicity in obsession link culture and place in very essentialist and politicised terms. This makes it difficult to account for cultural differences and similarities within individuals and communities in a world where particular cultures are mapped onto or confined to particular spaces, places and races. Belonging and identity based on the logic of exclusion are informed by the erroneous assumption that there is such a thing as the ultimate insider, found through a process of selective elimination and ever-diminishing circles of inclusion. The politics of nativity, authenticity, autochthony, indigeneity or citizenship, premised narrowly around cultural difference and the centrality of culture, are pursued with this illusion of the ultimate insider in mind.

Yet, even the most cursory of looks into the lives of Africans and the daily relationships they forge with difference would suggest that such frozen representations of cultures and identities are in no way a reflection of real life. Is there anything in real terms to the frozen claims of authenticity, autochthony, indigeneity or citizenship on which cultural difference is predicated? To define indigenous peoples simply as those who "were there first and are still there, and so have rights to their lands" (Maybury-Lewis 2005), or even as those "particular groups who have been left on the margins of development", "are perceived negatively by dominating mainstream development paradigms", "whose cultures and ways of life are subject to discrimination and contempt", and "whose very existence is under threat of

extinction", a definition adopted by the African Commission's Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities (ACHPR and IWGIA 2005: 87–97), is to incite inquiry about the reality of internal and external migration and the political, cultural, economic and historical factors that have configured competing articulations of being indigenous.

Although such strategic essentialism may be understandable and indeed useful in the pursuit of common ambitions of dominance, or in redressing injustices collectively experienced as a colonised or subjected people, it hardly provides for theorising pre- and postcolonial identities as complex, negotiated, relational and dynamic experiences that respond to and feed from local and global interconnected hierarchies. Qualifying to be considered "authentic", "autochthonous", "indigenous" or "bona fide" is a function of the way race, geography, culture, class, gender and generation define and prescribe, include and exclude. These hierarchies of humanity assume different forms depending on encounters, power relations, and prevalent notions of personhood, agency, and community. Africa offers fascinating examples of how the terms *indigenous* and *native* were employed in the service of colonising forces, of how colonially created or deformed ethnicities have had recourse to indigeneity in their struggles against colonialism, and of how groups vying for resources and power among themselves have deployed competing claims to indigeneity in relation to one another (Vail 1989; Nnoli 1998; Salih and Markakis 1998).

In Africa, the meaning of "indigenous" has varied tremendously. Communities large and small have both accepted and contested arbitrary colonial and postcolonial administrative boundaries and the dynamics of dispossession. Failing to achieve the idealised "nation-state", relatively weak *vis-à-vis* global forces, governments and cultural communities have often sought to capitalise on the contradictory and complementary dimensions of civic, ethnic, and cultural citizenships. In this context, being indigenous socio-anthropologically is much more than merely claiming to be or being regarded as the first. Colonial and apartheid regimes of divide-and-rule created and imposed a proliferation of "native identities" circumscribed by arbitrary physical and cultural geographies. They made distinctions between colonised "natives" and colonising Europeans but also between "native citizens" and "native settlers" among ethnic communities within the same colony. In this context, to be called "indigenous" meant to be *primitive*, which became a perfect justification for the colonial *mission civilisatrice* and for dispossession and confinement to officially designated tribal territories, homelands or Bantustans, usually with callous disregard for the histories of relationships and interconnections forged with excluded others, and the differences and tensions even among the included. In all, being indigenous

was for the majority colonised "native" population to be shunted to the margins in socio-economic and juridico-political terms.

These dynamics of classification and rule conceived of the "natives" through frozen ideas of culture and imagined traditions applied under "decentralised despotisms" in rural areas, while the town and city were reserved for the minority colonial settler population and their purportedly "modernising", "cultured" and "detribalised" African servants and support staff (Mamdani 1996, 1998). Even then, the colonial and apartheid authorities made it extremely difficult for their African servants and support staff to feel at home away from home, thus driving even the most enthusiastic of them to look back to their home villages for solidarity and sustenance, when they would have preferred permanent integration as bona fide townsmen and townswomen (Mayer 1971). This meant that effective assimilation or integration into the so-called universal "modern" culture or civilisation was impossible for the modernising native, however hard he tried, and whatever the rhetoric encompassed in various variants of modernisation theory. African townsmen and townswomen were thus compelled in reality to bond with the place where their umbilical cords were supposedly buried, and to celebrate primordial solidarities with their imposed ethnic kin, while dramatising differences with purported ethnic strangers. This effectively discouraged or disciplined mobility among Africans, as it confined them to homelands of labour reserves for the colonial economy.

If this negative history still shapes the highly critical stance of African intellectuals and nationalists toward nebulous claims of autochthony today (Mbembe 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009), it has also, quite paradoxically, tended to render invisible the everyday reality of postcolonial Africans (including those same intellectuals and nationalists) as straddlers of civic, ethnic and cultural citizenships and of multiple global and local cosmopolitan identities. Yet terms such as "multiculturalism", "racial minorities", "ethnic minorities", "subcultures", "multiple identities", "hybridity", and "cosmopolitanism" are explicit or tacit admissions that cultures and individuals as embodiments of cultural influences do defy their mappings or spaces and that spatial purity in cultural terms is more assumed than real (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 14), just as, in some cases, multiculturalism is also more assumed than real. It is thus a dangerous illusion to seek to naturalise obviously socially constructed (racial, ethnic, national) cultural identities (Jenkins 1996: 819).

In the light of the global obsession with exclusionary ideas and practices of belonging, this paper uses the examples of Cameroon and South Africa to argue that xenophobia arises from the failure by politicians, policymakers, media, intellectuals and other key social actors in public life to

problematise both taken-for-granted assumptions of similarity (belonging together) and difference (not belonging together) and preconceptions of peoples and cultures as tied to particular places and spaces. Local and global hierarchies in Africa, just like similar hierarchies in Europe, North America and elsewhere, are, often with the assistance of global consumer media, actively producing inequalities based on bounded notions of race, place, culture, nationality, citizenship, class, gender and age, and the prejudices that derive from this process in turn produce xenophobia, especially in a world of rapidly globalising uncertainties and insecurities (Nyamnjoh 2005a, 2006, 2007a, 2007b).

The obsessive investment in exclusionary claims to cultural belonging and identity in Africa is part of an intensifying global trend (Geschiere 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). In Europe, the political right has—especially since the late 1970s and early 1980s and since accelerated mobility became possible for people from the underdeveloped worlds of former colonies, facilitated by information and communications technologies (ICTs)—developed a political rhetoric of exclusion through cultural fundamentalism in which cultural difference is seen and treated as a threat to the assumed congruence between polity and culture in the "host" countries with the power to define and confine belonging (Stolcke 1995; Wright 1998; Geschiere 2009). As Jean and John Comaroff observe, although anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists have largely moved away from "primordialism, pure and simple", "ethno-nationalists around the world continue to kill for it" (2009: 39). Similarly, while modernisation theory and its teleological assumptions of progress and development are largely *passé* in serious scholarly circles, "some organic intellectuals persist in protecting 'ancestral customs' from historical deconstruction" (2009: 39). It is for these reasons that any primordial or exclusionary claims of cultural difference based on assumed purity of racial or ethnic belonging are inherently problematic, even when understandable. As Verena Stolcke argues, "making sense of cultural diversity without losing sight of shared humanity" is fraught with "formidable difficulties" (1995: 1), which the media might collude with, contest or mediate. For a closer look at the relationship between problematic articulations of belonging and identity in Africa, I have chosen studies of Cameroon and South Africa as cases in point.

On Media and the Politics of Belonging in Africa

Cameroon as a Case Study

In 2005 I published *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging.* One of the main findings of that study was that the media have assumed a partisan, highly politicised, militant role in Africa. They have done so by dividing citizens into the righteous and the wicked, depending on their political party, ideological, regional, cultural or ethnic belonging. By considering the Cameroonian experience, the book sought to understand how scapegoatism, partisanship, and regional and ethnic tendencies in the media have affected their liberal democratic responsibility to act as honest, fair and neutral mediators—accessible to all and sundry. The study did this by looking at polarisation in the press and at how the media have shaped and been shaped by the politics of belonging. Characterised by the politicisation of culture and ethnicity, this politics of belonging privileges an obsession with differentiating nationals into "ethnic/regional citizens" and "ethnic/regional strangers"—likened to "cam-no-gos", a stubborn skin rash that itches terribly—and feeds on and into stereotypes, stigma and xenophobia. Neither the state, nor intellectuals, nor the media, nor even religious institutions seem in a hurry to challenge these exclusionary articulations that make it possible for Cameroonians to be simultaneously insiders and outsiders in their national territory (Nyamnjoh 2005a).

The following excerpt from *Married But Available* (Nyamnjoh 2009: 53–54), gives an idea of the sort of struggles over belonging that go on even at a university purportedly modelled on an overarching "Anglo-Saxon" colonial cultural heritage. The Vice Chancellor and Registrar—daughter and son of the native soil where the university is located—would go to all lengths, including mobilising ethnic kin and kith outside of the university, to fight off perceived ambitions by ethnic others to take over the leadership of *their* university:

> The elephant men reassured the VC and the Reg that what they had buried "will numb every student and member of staff who thinks evil of you." Before leaving the scene, the elephant men promised to intensify their magical powers to ensure that "our daughter and our son, and all those who mean them well, are protected by our native soil from all cam-no-gos."
>
> "What are cam-no-gos?" Lilly Loveless asked.
>
> "These are a skin rash that itches like mad," Bobinga Iroko laughed. "You scratch and scratch and scratch, but the itches go nowhere."

"So the VC and Reg have been attacked by this skin rash?" Lilly Loveless was baffled.

"Yes, and it disturbs them like hell," he continued to laugh.

"Really?" Now Lilly Loveless knew that Bobinga Iroko was in his joking mode.

"Yes, and embarrassing too. At parties and official functions the cam-no-gos do not allow the VC and Reg to do their jobs. They attack, and the VC and Reg would scratch and scratch to no avail. They can't even take their fingers from their skins to take a drink or something to eat. It is terrible, because the cam-no-gos make them feel like going naked, and grating themselves against a rough surface till they find satisfaction."

Lilly Loveless finally understood the metaphor. "So people have borrowed from this skin rash to refer to others they don't like?" she asked.

"That's right. Cam-no-gos are people whom the sons and daughters of the native soil consider a pain in the arse."

"You mean ethnic-others?"

"Yes, ethnic-, regional-, and whatever others… Anyone not perceived to belong really."

"Isn't that rather parochial and dangerous?"

"That is the way those who run this country have fought to ensure that we remain forever divided. They're out to mar, not to make."

"It's like racing where angels fear to tread."

Belonging in Cameroon goes beyond protecting control of university spaces from invading cam-no-gos. Almost everywhere in Cameroon, citizens expect the urban elite—including journalists and media proprietors—to make inroads into the modern centres of accumulation. The state, a major source of patronage and resources, together with other economic institutions, must be manipulated to divert the flow of finance, jobs and so forth to the home regions from which the heterogeneous urban originally derive. Elites are under pressure to act as facilitators and manipulators with respect to the state. Through elite development associations, they lobby foreign agencies and NGOs to provide their home villages or regions with new sources of wealth and livelihood. In return, they may be rewarded with neo-traditional titles in their home villages. These honours confer on them symbolic or cultural capital, not expressed in material wealth but sustained by what Fisiy

and Goheen (1998: 388) have termed "the conspicuous display of decorum and accompanied by public respect", that in turn can always be exploited for political ends at regional and national levels where elites are expected to serve as vote banks for a regime that has little legitimacy in liberal-democratic terms. In certain cases, investing in the village is a way of consolidating success in the city, especially in the politics of ethno-regionalism (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998; Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003).

Modern big men and women thus live with one foot in the city and the other in the village. They take advantage of the economic and political opportunities of the city while redistributing wealth back to the home village. They play an active role in the cultural affairs, government and development of their home areas, which they define, confine and seek to represent in often essentialist and instrumentalist terms. Their survival within the politics of belonging of the failing modern state often depends on doing just that. At the same time, their rural ties lead them to consider customary law and local opinion when making national decisions. They thus become, in the words of Mitzi Goheen (1992), mediators between local and national arenas, interpreters as well as architects of the intersections between national law and customary law, which they often treat as unproblematic and consensual. For this project, the elite recruit journalists and the media (preferably from their home areas) for communication and public relations within and between communities and also with the state and the outside world. In Cameroon, almost every appointment and promotion into high office is the prerogative of the head of state, and most appointed ministers and director generals of state corporations return to their home villages to celebrate with kin and kith and express gratitude to the president. This would seem to suggest that they are appointed primarily to cater to the interests of their home villages or regions and are only marginally at the service of all and sundry (Nyamnjoh 1999). The stereotyping and xenophobic violence they encourage or condone towards ethnic or cultural others in their home villages and regions is indicative of how far they are ready to carry their politicisation of belonging in the name of democracy (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000).

The practice of patriotism to the home village does not escape media professionals. The study of Cameroon reveals a tension between dominant normative media theories that demand of media practitioners professional independence and detachment from conflicting loyalties to cultural and ethnic communities. The country case study points to the interconnectedness and interpenetration between citizenship and subjection, the cosmopolitan and the local, the individual and the collective, the insider and the outsider, tolerance and xenophobia. These tensions make understanding democracy in Africa far more complex than simplistic liberal notions would

suggest. In discussions of the media, democracy and rights, a heightened sense of cultural identity cannot simply be dismissed as "tribalism" or "politicisation of ethnicity" and consigned to the past or to the primitive mindsets of its advocates. The Cameroonian experience offers interesting empirical material to inform discussions of how to marry liberal democracy with African historical, cultural, and indigenous political and economic realities, however contested.

While the study clearly highlights the shortcomings of ethnicised and politicised media in liberal democratic terms, it also shows the limitations of liberal democracy in a context where people are obliged or ready and willing to be *both* citizens and subjects, *both* inclusive and exclusive. They identify with their ethnic group or cultural community on the one hand (*ethnic* or *cultural citizenship*) and with the nation-state on the other (*civic citizenship*). The argument for democracy both as an individual and as a community or cultural right cannot simply be dismissed when there are individuals who, for multiple reasons, straddle realms of individual rights (liberal democracy) and of group rights.

As the book maintains, major characteristics of Africa's second liberation struggles since the 1980s have been a growing obsession with belonging and the questioning of traditional assumptions about nationality and citizenship. Identity politics are central to the political process. Exclusionary conceptions of nationality and citizenship have increased. Group claims for greater cultural recognition are countered by efforts to maintain the status quo of an inherited colonial hierarchy of racial and ethnic groupings. As ethnic groups, either local majorities or minorities, clamour for status, they are countered by an often aggressive reaffirmation of age-old exclusions informed by colonial registers of inequalities among the subjected. This development is paralleled by an increased distinction between "locals" and "foreigners" and between "indigenes" and "settlers" within and between countries, with the emphasis on opportunities and economic entitlements. It is the latter preoccupation with distinction that is the subject matter of my second case study, South Africa.

South Africa as a Case Study

My second case study, South Africa, was part of a study that resulted in my 2006 book *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa*. In pockets of economic prosperity in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, where hierarchies of humanity informed by race, place and culture (among other things) are at play, xenophobia is rife against migrants from other African countries. Referred to derogatorily as *Makwerekwere* (meaning those incapable of articulating local languages that epitomise economic success and power)*,* some of these migrants come from countries that were instrumental in the struggle against apartheid. The rhetoric of government

authorities, immigration officials, the media, and the general public suggests that black migrants and immigrants are collectively unwelcome. The construction of the *Makwerekwere* and of boundaries between South Africans as "deserving citizens" and *Makwerekwere* as "undeserving outsiders" has been skilfully recounted by Phaswane Mpe (2001) in a novel titled *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

The novel is written in two voices. The first celebrates official rhetoric internalised by ordinary black South Africans of having graduated into citizenship, only for this to be endangered by the influx of *Makwerekwere* with little but trouble to offer. The second voice is more measured and tries to mitigate the tendency to scapegoat and stereotype *Makwerekwere*, who most of the time are not as guilty as painted. This well informed novel is more subtle and nuanced than some of the surveys which have sought to capture the relationship between South Africans and *Makwerekwere*. We gather from it that negative attitudes are not towards foreigners as a homogenous entity but rather towards black African migrants in general and those from certain countries in particular. The hierarchy of humanity inherited from apartheid South Africa is replayed, with white South Africans at the helm as superiors, black South Africans in the middle as superior inferiors, and *Makwerekwere* as the inferior scum of humanity. Coloureds and Indians are not part of the picture in a big way. There is a clash between those who have learnt to stutter no more (blacks) and those still embedded in stuttering (Coloureds and Indians), and the stutterers are a challenge to blacks' ability to harness modernity.

Black South Africans come across as having basically two attitudes towards foreigners: they either look up to them as articulate and accomplished or look down on them as stuttering and depleting. The articulate and accomplished white migrants are presumed to bring opportunities; the stuttering and depleting *Makwerekwere* compound the insecurities and uncertainties in South African lives. There are black South Africans who feel strongly that *Makwerekwere* "should remain in their own countries and try to sort out the problems of these respective countries, rather than fleeing them", because South Africa has "too many problems of its own", and in any case "cannot be expected to solve all the problems of Africa". Others would agree but argue that this is "no excuse for ostracising the innocent". Negative views about African migrants are particularly dangerous when held by the police. In the novel we see how policemen arrest *Makwerekwere* and "[d]rive them around Hillbrow for infinite periods of time", saying: "See it for the last time, bastards". As we learn from the novel, it is outright dishonest to blame the woes of post-apartheid South Africa on *Makwerekwere*.

Novelists like Phaswane Mpe and social scientists alike find South Africa's public culture has become increasingly xenophobic (Landau 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Mattes et al. 1999; Morris and Bouillon 2001; Sharp 2008; Sichone 2008a, 2008b; Hadland 2008). Politicians often make unsubstantiated and inflammatory statements that the "deluge" of *Makwerekwere* is responsible for the current crime wave, rising unemployment, or even the spread of diseases (Crush 1997; Morris 2001b). Seen as hailing from "an impoverished and unhealthy wasteland where health measures have ceased to be operative", *Makwerekwere* are considered a threat to the physical and moral health of the nation and "should therefore be kept out of South Africa" (Peberdy 2002: 24).

As the unfounded perception that migrants are responsible for a variety of social ills grows, *Makwerekwere* have increasingly become the target of abuse by South African citizens, the police, the army, the Department of Home Affairs and even the media. Dark-skinned refugees and asylum-seekers with distinctive features from "far away" countries are especially targeted for abuse (Bouillon 2001a, 2001b; Landau 2004b; Morris 2001b; Sichone 2001). According to Sichone (2001: 1), migrants are subject to more state regulation and open to victimisation by "owners of the means of violence". Xenophobia is not just an attitude of dislike but, as in May 1998, is often accompanied by violence and is racist and ethnic in its application. Victims are predominantly black and are targeted for their very blackness by a society where skin colour has always served as an excuse for whole catalogues of discriminatory policies and practices. You are repeatedly made to "mind your colour" (February 1991) until you are entirely minded by colour. Individuals are often assumed to be *Makwerekwere* on the basis that they "look foreign" or are "too dark" to be entitled to South Africa, and "[p]olice are supposedly able to identify foreign Africans by their accents, hairstyles or dressing styles, or, in the case of Mozambicans, vaccination scars on the left front arm" (Bouillon 2001a: 38). In the frenzy to root out foreigners, they also victimise and arrest their own citizens.

Since the beginnings of the Portuguese, Dutch and English transatlantic slave trade in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, blackness has been a curse (Bernal 1995: 999). In *Heart of Darkness*, the darker character is less qualified for citizenship (Mamdani 1996; Elbourne 2003). This tendency continues. "[T]he best qualified black" is seen "as worse than the worst white", thereby justifying black dehumanisation and inhumane treatment (Bernal 1995: 999–1000). Even in post-apartheid South Africa, salvation for blacks seems linked to how successfully they "try for white", "play white", or "pass for white", in the manner of the coloureds under apartheid. Lightening one's darkness with chemicals and philosophical enrichment might

help in aspirations for "honorary whiteness" (Fanon 1967a: 166–199, 1967b; Fonlon 1967: 20), but it cannot guarantee against mistakes by fussy policemen and authorities with a nose for appearances. Black South African citizens are sometimes mistaken for the dark invading barbarians or stutterers who must be confined to the fringes.

To the police and authorities, South African modernity, like its identities, is all about appearances. Being unable to belong as an "insider" makes *Makwerekwere* all too vulnerable to "excessive criminalisation" and "primitivisation". They cannot vote or benefit from social services, and *Makwerekwere* are especially vulnerable to mistreatment by the police, who know that non-citizens "are less likely to lay a complaint and, if they do, they are not likely to be given a fair hearing" (Landau 2004a: 10–13; Morris 2001b: 86), especially if they are black. Black *Makwerekwere* are largely seen as deportable criminals even by the Minister of Home Affairs and the forces of law and order (Landau 2004a: 13–14).

South African Media and the Narrow Focus on *Makwerekwere*

In South Africa, the conventional media were until the end of apartheid in the early 1990s in the service of white racism aimed at black disempowerment and dehumanisation. The media were preponderantly white-controlled businesses and, although the end of apartheid has led to some degree of black ownership and partnership, this has not necessarily "made the newspapers more representative of South African society" (Van Kessel 1998: 4–10; see also Tomaselli 2002). There continue to be claims and counterclaims of "racism in the media" and the "racialized and stereotypical portrayal of blacks" (Berger 2001; Glaser 2000; Pityana 2000; Neocosmos 2006, 2008), which is indicative of how much bridge-building remains to be done. The rise of mass-circulating tabloids such as the *Daily Sun* and the *Daily Voice* and their popularity with the poor and working-class, black majority, for most of whom broadsheets are irrelevant, elusive and oppressive, is indicative of a post-apartheid South Africa determined to renegotiate skewed professional assumptions and practices in the interest of an ethic of effective inclusion and of common humanity in journalism (Wasserman 2010).

Typically, however, the logic of bounded citizenship means that even as they make a case for inclusion of the poor and the sidestepped working-class South African black majority of the townships, the tabloids are all too ready to caricature and misrepresent *Makwerekwere* as the greatest obstacle to the fulfilment of their dreams of material abundance and comfort. It is hardly surprising therefore, that following the May 2008 violent uprisings

against *Makwerekwere*, the *Daily Sun*, one of the leading tabloids and the most widely circulated in areas affected, not only failed to condemn the violence forthrightly but was also found guilty of employing inappropriate and discriminatory terminology to describe black Africans immigrants.[1] There is still little real investment in geographical and cultural knowledge of Africa, despite much political rhetoric to the contrary, and in spite of the aggressive expansion of South African businesses into Africa north of the Limpopo (Miller 2006; Adebajo 2007).[2] Much has changed within an extremely short space of time in South African media and society, while much seems to have stayed the same. The rhetoric of transformation does not match realities and expectations, as the media continue to "talk left, act right" (Duncan 2000).

Whites in South Africa may not be a unified bloc, but the edification of biological and cultural racism under apartheid made it possible for their collective interests to be privileged, regardless of class, gender, status or the resistance of some against the structures in place (Steyn 2008; Posel 2010). This makes it extremely difficult for non-white South Africans not to equate whiteness with power and privilege, as they seek to situate themselves in the racialised hierarchy of humanity imposed upon them since the days of the Cape "Hottentots" in the 1640s (Johnson 2007). That the media in post-apartheid South Africa are still dominated by white interests in ownership, control and content is a good case in point that talking or scripting change is different from living change. If the media in general and the print media in particular still mainly serve elite white interests and the economy is largely still under elite white control, it means that how the media cover immigration and migration is likely to be indicative of dominant elite white views and interests on these issues. And if in the face of negative coverage, black South Africans were to reinforce their hostility towards *Makwerekwere*, they would be acting in tune with dominant elite white interests, even as they may claim to be defending their own interests as emerging citizens. The media thus play a critical role in the production, circulation and reproduction of prevalent attitudes and perceptions of foreigners by South Africans, who are reified as a homogeneous entity with common interests to be collectively defended against undeserving "others". In other words, the media are part of a national obsession with the production of a fixed, essential, stable, unified and exclusive South Africa where the subjected of the apart-

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1   The Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) submitted a complaint against the *Daily Sun*'s reporting on the xenophobic attacks to the Press Ombudsman and the South African Human Rights Commission (see <http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?art_id =nw20080529190816434C483974&set_id=1&click_id=13&sf=#more>).
2   See Louise Haigh's "What Fuels the Hatred", Cape Argus, 19 May 2008.

heid era are included only to the extent they are able to uncritically internal-
ise, reproduce and aggressively defend the apartheid rhetoric of biological
and cultural purity.

The media offer a platform for the South African public to comment
on "foreigners" through letters to the editor, talk shows and television de-
bates. While *Makwerekwere* are very absent in public discussions about them
and their purported ills, Indians were very present in the debate around
Mbongeni Ngema's controversial song *Ama-Ndiya*, accusing South African
Indians of exploitation and resisting change. *Makwerekwere* are an absent
presence, to be acted upon but not expected to act or react. Perceived es-
sentially as a negation to civilisation, they can be talked at, talked about and
sometimes talked to or for, but rarely talked with. As a collective menace to
citizenship and opportunity, *Makwerekwere* are denied the legitimacy of a
voice by the media as the voice of civilisation and legitimacy. In this way, the
media do not simply carry information to the public as a neutral vehicle
reflecting the workings of society. They reproduce certain ideologies and
discourses that support specific relations of power in accordance with hier-
archies of race, nationality, culture, class, and gender (Nyamnjoh 2006).
Racism—both in its biological and cultural forms (Mac an Ghaill 1999: 61–
80; Stolcke 1995; Wright 1998)—is constantly produced and reproduced in
South African print media (Glaser 2000; Pityana 2000), thereby making what
is reported and how it is reported essential for a fair appreciation of the
place of the media in creating or reinforcing perceptions of *Makwerekwere* as
the constructed "Other" (Danso and McDonald 2001; Harris 2001; Fine and
Bird 2006; Sichone 2008a, 2008b).

Representations of *Makwerekwere* by the print media in South Africa are
largely negative and "extremely unanalytical in nature", as the majority of the
press has tended to reproduce "problematic research and anti-immigrant
terminology uncritically" (Danso and McDonald 2001: 115–117; Fine and
Bird 2006: 18–62). The mainly white-controlled media have thus been in-
strumental in the creation, reproduction and circulation of the frozen im-
agery of black immigrants as a threat to an equally frozen or homogeneous
South African society. In both cases, the media have failed to accommodate
the overwhelming diversity of cultural identities, social experiences, and
subjective realities of individuals and communities, preferring instead to
caricature. *Makwerekwere* are regularly connected with crime, poverty, unem-
ployment, disease and significant social costs in the media and by authorities
whose declarations the media reproduce uncritically (Danso and McDonald
2001; Harris 2001; Landau 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Morris 2001b: 77–78; Shin-
dondola 2002). *Makwerekwere* are uncritically portrayed by the bulk of the
print media as constituting a social problem and a threat to the locals, first

through their coming to the country and then through their illegalities (Danso and McDonald 2001; Fine and Bird 2006; Neocosmos 2006, 2008).

Such "harsh treatment" has in turn pushed *Makwerekwere* to view South Africans and their obsession with autochthony and rootedness negatively (Landau 2005, 2006). Nigerians and Congolese, for example, perceive black South African men as "extremely violent", "brutal", "lazy", "adulterous and not nurturing of their partners", "shackled by colonial attitudes and ... feelings of inferiority [to whites]" and South Africans in general as "poorly educated and ignorant", "narrow-minded", "hostile", "indifferent", "unpredictable" and "unenterprising and wasteful" (Bouillon 2001b: 122–140; Morris 2001b: 78–80). But these counter perceptions and stereotypes by *Makwerekwere* seldom make their way into the dominant media, or into the conventional research sponsored by and conducted in the interest of the status quo. By replying with stereotypes of their own, *Makwerekwere* only attract further hatred from black South African men in particular, who are incensed by their perceived popularity with local women (Morris 2001b: 74–80), and by their success in the informal sector (Morris 2001b; Simone 2001, 2004). The media, in conjunction with other institutions of social control, succeed (with or without conspiring) in diverting the attention of blacks seeking meaningful integration into the South African economy. The ANC black majority authorities, by opting for neo-liberalism without justice or restitution, are thus co-opted by a white-dominated economic system that can then conveniently deny accusations of racism, while the racial outcome of its policies and practices persists (Glaser 2000; Hendricks 2004; Pityana 2000; Fine and Bird 2006; Crush 2008; Sichone 2008a, 2008b; Sharp 2008; Steyn 2008; Posel 2010).

For over two decades following independence in 1980, Zimbabwe experienced serious outflows of its white and black populations to South Africa and Botswana, among other destinations (Tevera and Crush 2003). While black Zimbabweans are castigated and stereotyped for transgressing South African borders (Mate 2005), curiously, white Zimbabweans fleeing into South Africa because of Mugabe's land redistribution policies are uncritically welcome. Any noise by the local media is rather to criticise the ANC government for its "quiet diplomacy" towards Mugabe's "diabolical" land redistribution policies while whites suffered the loss of "legitimately" acquired land.

The coverage of crimes by black migrants from African countries is common, even as criminal activities by other nationalities are rarely reported. Little is said about Thai, Romanian and Bulgarian women involved in prostitution, or Taiwanese and Chinese "illegals" responsible for the smuggling of poached contraband. There is also almost a complete blackout

of "references to crime and illegality on the part of Western Europeans and North Americans in South Africa, despite the fact that nationals from these regions also commit crimes and many are in the country 'illegally'". The hierarchy of races and cultures dictates a sense of newsworthiness, which is ill informed by the real impact of different categories of immigrants on the South African economy (Danso and McDonald 2000: 127; see also Fine and Bird 2006). Babacar, a francophone *Makwerekwere* and street vendor, cannot understand the double standards:

> Why don't they talk about the Chinese or the Yugoslavs? There are so many foreigners, other nationalities in South Africa. The Chinese are here. They sell in the streets! I know Yugoslavs. They sell. But they are not mentioned. They use South Africans to sell in the streets. There are other nationalities which sell here, but they don't have black skins like us (Bouillon 2001b: 132).

Crime has been racialised, and the print media have also tended to nationalise crime attributed to *Makwerekwere*. Criminal syndicates, smuggling and drug trafficking are usually associated with particular groups of foreign nationals, with black *Makwerekwere* being portrayed either as perpetual criminals or more prone to commit serious crime than non-black immigrants from Africa or elsewhere. Nigerians are associated with controlling the drug trade (cocaine) and, as depicted in the film *District 9*, represented as dangerous extraterrestrial refugees to be watched at close range. The Congolese are identified with passport racketeering and diamond smuggling; Lesotho nationals with the smuggling of gold dust and copper wire; and Mozambican and Zimbabwean women as indulging in prostitution (Danso and McDonald 2001: 126–127; Mate 2005). The media have also sensationalised immigration with screaming and alarmist headlines such as: "Illegals in SA add to decay of cities", "6 million migrants headed our way", "Africa floods into Cape Town", and "Francophone invasion". Aquatic or mob metaphors such as "hordes", "floods", "flocking", and "streaming" are quite common. Also frequent are derogatory and unsubstantiated references to the rest of Africa (e.g. "Strife-torn Central Africa", "Africa's flood of misery") and comments that portray persons from those areas essentially as real or potential economic refugees (e.g. "as long as South Africa remains the wealthiest and strongest country on a continent littered with economically unstable and dysfunctional nations, it will continue to attract large numbers [of migrants]"). The tendency is to report on black *Makwerekwere* in South African cities as turning the clock of civilisation back to the primitive realities of their home cities (e.g. "Johannesburg's inner city is now assuming the appearance of a typical sub-Saharan African city"), which predicts doom for South African urbanites if not contained. The presumed primitivity of *Ma-*

kwerekwere is meant to presuppose an inability to articulate life in a modern "world class city" like Johannesburg (Gotz and Landau 2004; Landau 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006), where only whites or those for long directly subjected by settler whites can cope (Steyn 2008; Posel 2010). This criminalisation of migration by black Africans is "just as true of black-oriented newspapers as it is of white" (Danso and McDonald 2001: 127–129; Fine and Bird 2006). In view of such sensational and uncritical reporting, hostile attitudes towards black *Makwerekwere* could be described as partly driven not by experience but by mass-mediated stereotypes and myths of the dangerous, depleting and encroaching "Other" from the "Heart of Darkness" north of South Africa (Crush 2001: 28; Morris and Bouillon 2001; Sichone 2008a, 2008b).

The South African media and nationals thus give the impression that black African migration is *The Problem*, not migration as a whole (Landau 2004a: 6). Flexible mobility is for those at the top of the hierarchy of humanity (determined by race, place, class, gender, age, etc.), not those at the bottom. Thus, whites from everywhere are free to come and go, and are hardly represented as a burden to the economy or society. Negative attitudes and hostility towards black *Makwerekwere* are actively promoted and sustained by the draconian immigration policy of detection, detention and deportation (Landau 2004a, 2004b). As Morris (1998) argues, "even though progressive legislation and positive reporting can alter perceptions over time", "there has been little endeavour by the authorities or the media to construct narratives that would counter xenophobia" targeted at black African immigrants. It is hardly surprising that public opinion towards *Makwerekwere* "is shaped by the attitude of the media and the authorities" (Morris 1998: 1126), and that in turn, the media and authorities are influenced by the interests of the elite whites and blacks who, in partnership with multinationals, control the South African economy. It is neither in the interest of the elite whites who constitute the dominant interest in the free market economy (Steyn 2008; Posel 2010) nor in the interest of the crystallising, young and old, upwardly mobile, black elite in power and business to encourage balanced media reporting (Fine and Bird 2006), when stereotyping and scapegoating black African migrants can serve a useful diversionary purpose in the face of the rising expectations of ordinary black and white citizenship. In South Africa we see how race, culture, class and citizenship intersect in the interest of global consumer capitalism, to the detriment of those with the wrong race, the wrong culture, the wrong class, the wrong gender, the wrong nationality or the wrong citizenship.

Reconciling Professionalism and Cultural Belonging in Africa's Media

In view of these tensions and conflicts between professionalism and cultural belonging in African journalism, I would like, in this paper, to critically examine conventional journalism in Africa, discuss its shortcomings, and point to the creative processes underway in the lives of ordinary Africans as the way forward for meaningful journalism on and about Africa. The paper also explores the role of innovations in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to mitigate victimhood and promote more democratic journalism from the standpoint of how ordinary Africans, as individuals and communities, appropriate ICTs.

Behind every newspaper, radio or television, behind every journalism, African or otherwise, is the journalist as a socially produced being desperately seeking professionalism in a context of competing and conflicting demands on his or her talents and calling. I have often wished I were a journalist, but when I watch African journalists at work, when I scrutinise the challenges they face daily and fathom the compromises they have to make, I thank God I am only an aspiring journalist.

Practicing Journalism in Africa is Like Swimming Upstream

Media freedom advocacy groups, journalists, and media scholars, myself included, have catalogued the daily economic, political, institutional and professional constraints confronting African journalists. Among these is the tendency of African governments towards excessive centralisation, bureaucratisation and politicisation of state-owned media institutions, making it difficult for state-employed journalists to reconcile government's desires with their professional beliefs and public expectations. Also stifling are the legal frameworks regulating the press in many an African country. The craving by most states to control leads lawmakers to see journalists as potential troublemakers who must be policed. In some countries, (even after certain draconian aspects of the press laws of the one-party era were replaced with new provisions that are relatively more tolerant of opposition views and of criticisms), the selective application of the laws, together with the use of extra-legal measures, have often been detrimental to the critical private press and made it difficult for this press to have the professional independence it needs.

Other factors adversely affecting African journalism include widespread job insecurity, poor salaries and poor working conditions of most journal-

ists. Financial difficulties, lack of personnel and inadequate specialisation or professionalisation, ignorance of the market, and the uncertainties of life in the age of flexible mobility and its paradoxes have only compounded the predicament. Even when NGOs and other organisations intervene to assist the media, financially and otherwise, they often resort to abstract and rigid notions of freedom that make them appear more like religious fundamentalists—what Harri Englund (2006) has termed "human rights fundamentalists" in his study of rights activists in Malawi and their deafness to alternative perspectives and the lived experiences of those they seek to convert. These, however, are not the challenges that concern me in this paper.

Of concern here are the basic assumptions that underpin African journalism in definition and practice, and their consequences on journalists as socially and politically shaped beings who are part and parcel of the cultural (be these premised on race and/or ethnicity) communities in which they pursue their profession. To what extent does journalism, as defined and practiced in Africa, adapt to the lived realities and ideas of personhood of the various (racial and ethnic) individuals and communities that claim Africanity? Or, that live in the geographical space known as "Africa", while claiming not to be of Africa? Or that selectively claim to be or not to be African?

Africanity Caught in the Web of Bounded Identities

If belonging is a process, then the idea of the social construction and dynamic nature of Africa has to be taken seriously, both by the media and by those studying racism and ethnicity in Africa. What does it mean to be African? Who qualifies to claim Africa? Is being African or claiming Africa an attribute of race and skin colour (black, white, yellow), birth (umbilical cord, birth certificates, identity cards, passports), geography (physical spaces, home village), history (encounters), culture (prescriptive specificities), economics (availability and affordability, wealth and deprivation), sociology (social configurations and action, inclusion and exclusion), psychology (mindsets), philosophy (worldviews), politics (power relations), collective memory (shared experiences and aspirations) or a category through which a world that is not rigidly geographical, racial or cultural is constructed, to name just a few of the many possibilities? These questions inform debates on citizenship and identity and the definition of rights, entitlement, duties and responsibilities. The questions are of course not uniquely African. Similar questions have been and are being debated with considerable passion in other parts of the world, and contestations around them have also often been played out in violent communal confrontations, civil wars, and interstate conflicts. While they may seem straightforward to answer, the ques-

tions have been rendered more complex by the dynamic interplay of race, ethnicity, age, gender and religion in the structuring and exercise of power and opportunity. Precisely for this reason, they are not questions that can be addressed in the abstract.

How one answers the questions generated by any attempt at grappling with Africanity is not only situationally determined but is also a function of how selective one is with regard to the various indicators available. Some individuals and communities on the continent and elsewhere might claim Africanity or have it imposed upon them for various personal, collective, historical and political reasons. But it is not always straightforward to say which of these claims may be legitimate and why, especially as identity is not only how one sees oneself but also how one is seen and categorised by others and especially by state bureaucracies and regimes of control, particularly where the absorption of new populations is involved. This is all the more complex as identities are themselves always in mutation, shaped as they are by changing historical contexts and circumstances, such as internal and international migrations and shifts in social power relations.

It is safe to say, however, that to most ordinary people in the geographical location known as "Africa", Africanity is more than just a birth certificate, an identity card or a passport—documents that many of them do not have, even as others coming from elsewhere and waving the flag of Africanity may have all these documents and more. For the ordinary person, to be African is not simply to be labelled or merely defined as such. It is to be a social actor or actress enmeshed in a particular context that has been and continues to be shaped by a history of connections and disconnections informed by interconnecting local and global hierarchies. That history is marked by great social movements and achievements as well as by unequal encounters and misrepresentations. For the masses of Africans, Africa is above all a lived reality, constantly shaped and reshaped (*socially produced*) through toil, sweat and struggle to live in dignity and transform society progressively. The fact of their Africanity is neither *in* question nor *a* question. And the least they would expect from the media is to refrain from adding to their burdens via socially and culturally disembedded and ahistorical journalism which trivialises their collective experiences and memories, as evidenced in the Cameroonian and South African case studies, where uncritical and simplistic assumptions about culture, identity and belonging have only compounded their predicament.

Problematic Assumptions about Culture and Belonging in Africa's Media

The basic assumptions underpinning African journalism in definition and practice are not informed by the fact that ordinary Africans are busy Africanising their modernity and modernising their Africanity in complex ways. The current precepts of journalism in Africa are largely at variance with dominant ideas of personhood and agency (and by extension society, culture and democracy) shared by communities across the continent. They assume there is a One-Best-Way of being and doing to which Africans must aspire and be converted in the name of modernity and civilisation—and this despite the fact that the very modernity and civilisation they are called to embrace actively produces and reproduces them as "different", "inferior", and belonging to the "margins" of the forces shaping global processes (Ferguson 2006; Zeleza 2003).

This divergence is at the heart of some of the professional and ethical dilemmas that haunt journalism in and on Africa, a journalism which tends to debase and caricature African humanity, creativity and realities. Constrained by a One-Best-Way approach, African journalism becomes one of bandwagonism, where mimicry is the order of the day as emphasis is less on thinking than on doing, less on leading than on being led, less on defining than on being defined. African journalism lacks both the power of self-definition and the power to shape the universals that are deaf and dumb to the particularities of journalism in and on Africa. Because journalism has tended to be treated as an attribute of so-called "modern" societies or of those "superior" others, it is only proper, so the reasoning goes, that African journalism and the societies it serves be taught the principles and professional practices by those who "know" what it means to be civilised and to be relevant to civilisation in a global hierarchy of humanity and cultures.

Aspiring journalists in Africa must, like containers, be dewatered of the mud and dirt of culture as tradition and custom and be filled afresh with tested sparkles of culture as modernity and civilisation. African journalists are thus called upon to operate in a world predefined by others, where they are given the tools and meant to implement and execute and hardly ever to think or rethink. What is expected of them is respect for canons, not questioning why or how canons are forged or the extent to which canons are inclusive and reflective of the creative diversity and complexity of Africa and the relations it forges and evolves in the universe that is purportedly of interest to the journalism of the One-Best-Way. And that is not all, because African journalists are defined *a priori* as inferior and marginal to the forces that shape global journalism; their best journalism is at best second-rate (Wasserman 2009).

Providing for African Humanity, Creativity and Conviviality in Africa's Media

The relevance of journalism to Africa and Africans depends on the value it brings to African humanity and creativity. If it privileges a hierarchy of humanity and human creativity and sees African humanity and creativity at the abyss of that interconnected global hierarchy, such journalism is bound to be prescriptive, condescending, contrived, caricatured and hardly in tune with the quest by Africans for equality of humanity and for expression, recognition and representation. If African journalists were to, wittingly or unwittingly, buy into that hierarchy, they would in effect be working against the interests of the very African communities they claim to serve with their journalism. If one convinces oneself that one is at the abyss, that one is a veritable heart of darkness, one doesn't need much convincing to buy into prescriptions on how to fish oneself out of the abyss or the heart of darkness, especially if such prescriptions come from those one has been schooled to recognise and represent as superior, and especially if the latter are in a position of power—if they have the yam and the knife, as Chinua Achebe would put it.

A closer look at democracy in Africa is a good indicator of how journalism has tended to articulate and appreciate African realities through the prescriptive lenses of those who believe their ideas of humanity and creativity to be sufficiently rich and practiced for uncritical adoption by "emerging" others. In Europe and North America, *liberal democracy* is said to guarantee journalism the best environment it needs to foster freedom and progress. Liberal democracy's colossal investments in the making of the "independent individual" are projected as the model to be promoted and defended by journalism in and on Africa. Yet the more Africa strives to implant liberal democracy, fewer are the successes to be reported and greater is the need to critically examine the prescription and how it contradicts the colonial and postcolonial histories of unequal relations between Africa and the prescribing West.

Even the most optimistic of African journalists would hesitate to term liberal democracy and Africa good bedfellows. If African journalists were to scrutinise the democratisation projects with which they have been involved since the early 1990s for example, they would agree that implementing liberal democracy in Africa has been like trying to force onto the body of a full figured person, rich in all the cultural indicators of health with which Africans are familiar, a dress made to fit the slim, de-fleshed, Hollywood consumer model body of a Barbie doll-type entertainment icon. They would also agree that instead of blaming the tiny dress or its designer, the tradition among journalists has been to fault the popular body or the popular ideal of

beauty, for emphasising too much bulk, for parading the wrong sizes, for just not being the right thing.

Not often have African journalists questioned the experience and expertise of the liberal democracy designer or dressmaker, nor his/her audacity to assume that the parochial cultural palates that inform his/her peculiar sense of beauty should play God in the lives of Africa and African cultures.

The difficulties of implementing liberal democracy and One-Best-Way journalism attest to a clash of values and the fact that African cultural realities might well enrich and domesticate liberal democracy towards greater relevance. By overstressing individual rights and underplaying the rights of communities (cultural, religious and otherwise), African journalism and the liberal democracy it has uncritically endorsed have tended to be more liabilities than assets. Given that Africans (journalists included) in their daily lives continue to emphasise relationships and solidarities over the illusion of autonomy, it is difficult to imagine the future direction of democracy outside a marriage between individual aspirations and community interests, especially in a context where whole groups were, under colonialism and apartheid, dispossessed not as individuals, but as racial, ethnic and cultural groups, imagined or real.

For democracy and journalism to succeed in the present postcolonial context of the twenty-first century, their proponents must recognise that most Africans (and indeed everyone else) are primarily patriotic to their home village (region, province, ethnic or cultural community, etc.), to which state and country in the postcolonial sense are only secondary. It is in acknowledging and providing for the reality of individuals who, like Barack Obama, negotiate and navigate different forms of identity and belonging and are willing or forced to be both "citizens" and "subjects" that democracy stands its greatest chance in Africa and the world, and that journalism can best be relevant to all and sundry in Africa and beyond.

Navigation of Citizenship and Subjection in Africa

Despite the distinction Mahmood Mamdani (1996) and others in scholarly circles make between "citizens" and "subjects", in Africa (and indeed most everywhere else at a closer look) we find individuals who are both citizens and subjects, who straddle "cultural" and "civic" citizenships, and who would not accept sacrificing either permanently. Sometimes they are more one than the other and sometimes more the other than the one, but are certainly not reducible to either. They appropriate both in creative and fascinating ways. A democracy or journalism that focuses too narrowly on the individual and is insensitive to the centrality of group and community interests is likely to impair and frustrate the very recognition and representation

it celebrates. It pays to go beyond prescriptions to describe the lives of actual individuals seeking to make sense of the competing and often conflicting demands on them as social beings.

Regardless of the status of those involved in "rights talk" and "culture talk", they are all convinced of one thing: "Cultural citizenship" is as integral to democracy as political and economic citizenship, irrespective of how they came by their cultural identities. If African (or marginal) philosophies of personhood and agency stress interdependence between the individual and the community and between communities, and if journalists identify with any of the many cultural communities, all seeking recognition and representation at local, national and global levels, they are bound to be torn between serving their cultural communities and serving the "imagined" rights-bearing, autonomous individual "citizen" of the liberal democratic civic model. A democracy that stresses independence in a narrow, abstract and disembedded sense, in a situation where both the worldview and the material realities emphasise interdependence and conviviality, is bound to result only in violent dependence.

The liberal democratic rhetoric of rights dominated by a narrow neo-liberal focus on *the individual* does not reflect the whole reality of personhood and agency in Africa (imagined and related to as marginal), which is a lot more complex than provided for in prescriptions of rights and empowerment. Instead of working for a creative mix with indigenous forms of politics and government, liberal democracy has sought to replace these, posing as the One-Best-Way of modern, democratic political organisation. This may be a new right way of conducting modern power politics while, wittingly or unwittingly, failing to de-marginalise Africa enough to fulfil its purported prescriptions. The same may be said for the journalism it inspires, which stays narrow and asphyxiates alternative outlooks and practices of sharing news and information, and of entertaining and educating.

In the use of language alone, few African journalists have dared to write the way Chinua Achebe suggests is a popular mode of communication among Igbo, where proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten. Fewer still have dared to contemplate using English, French, Portuguese or Spanish in the creative ways that the ordinary Africans they purportedly target with their journalism do. While journalists mark time with linguistic orthodoxy, African communities have been busy creolising inherited European languages by promoting intercourse with African languages, and in turn enriching local languages through borrowing. The spoken word continues to perfect its intermarriage with the unspoken through body language and other nonverbal forms of communication. With the introduction of the cell phone and of Short Messaging Service (SMS), or text messaging, youth

are adding to such creativity with their innovative use of language codes to communicate with one another.

When African journalists begin to reflect such popular creativity among Africans, without a sense of guilt that they are violating journalistic taboos, they will help make democracy and journalism in and on Africa relevant to Africa. When they begin to cover the border- (national-, cultural-, ethnic-, "Other-") straddling that goes on and deepens daily, they may begin to help mend the continent. When they begin to understand straddling urban and rural realities not as a problem but as an important socio-cultural and economic phenomenon, they may begin to reflect the realities of modern life in Africa. African journalism must recognise and provide for the fact that the home village in Africa has retained its appeal both for those who have been disappointed by the town, as well as for those who have found success in the town. It takes going beyond prescriptiveness to capture the lives of urbanites and villagers, to see the relationships and practices that link them, making of them navigators and negotiators of multiple spaces and identity margins.

Cosmopolitan Africa Shaped by Local and Global Encounters

Recognising indigenous African forms of sociality, conviviality and interdependence should not be mistaken for throwing the baby of adaptability out with the bathwater. African popular musicians for example have evolved (and relate in musical idioms) ongoing processes of how Africans modernise their cultures and traditionalise their modernities. African ideas of personhood and agency simply refuse to be confined to the logic of dichotomies, essentialisms, markets and profitability, as the personal account of one of Africa's leading contemporary musicians, Manu Dibango, demonstrates. He has lived the best part of his professional life in Paris, and his music has been enriched by various encounters. Manu Dibango describes himself as "Négropolitain", "a man between two cultures, two environments", whose music cannot simply be reduced to either, without losing part of his creative self (Dibango 1994: 88–130).

Dibango's idea of being African and cosmopolitan simultaneously has been embraced by scholars such as Achille Mbembe (2006: 4). Using the more politically correct term of "Afropolitan", Mbembe stresses the need for South Africa "to recapture the ideal of non-racialism and attend to all South African citizens, black and white, in a resolute attempt to build … a truly modern and cosmopolitan society". He envisions "a new political mainstream committed to a liberal constitution, to an explicitly social de-

mocratic agenda and to an Afropolitan cultural project" that provides for "Africanity" and being "African" beyond the confines of race and ethnicity. Journalists, like academics, can learn from Africa's artists like Manu Dibango, whose art navigates and negotiates myriad identity margins.

It appears that no one in Africa is too cosmopolitan to be local as well. This is manifest in a multitude of ways. Take for example how Africans have harnessed the cell phone to interlink town and home village (De Bruijn et al. 2009). Faced with the temporality or transience of personal success in the context of African modernities, even the most achieving and cosmopolitan individuals hesitate to sever their rural connections entirely. The city and the "world out there" brought closer by accelerated mobility and interconnections are perceived as hunting grounds; the home village is the place to return to at the end of the day. Investing in one's home village is generally seen as the best insurance policy and a sign of ultimate success, for it guarantees survival even when one has lost everything in the city and abroad, and secures and makes manifest a realisation of success through satisfying obligations and fulfilling requests (Mercer et al. 2009).

Although successful urbanites or migrants may not permanently return or retire as such to rural areas, most remain in constant interaction with their home village in all sorts of ways. Some leave express instructions with kin to be buried or reburied in their home village (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000), while others send their children back home to be raised by parents or the extended family they have left behind (Nyamnjoh 2005b). Prescriptive journalism that denounces this reality instead of understanding, adapting and relating to it is bound to be a liability for Africans and their ways of life. The narrow insistence on disembedded individual rights and freedoms has impaired understanding of the interconnectedness of peoples, cultures and societies, and facilitated the production of Africans as the scum of humanity, deserving to be defined and confined by others, and expected to mimic, but not to think or create.

Discussing racism, ethnicity and the media in Africa thus calls for scrutiny of the importance of cultural identities in the lives of individuals and groups, and how these identities are actively produced and articulated within particular historical contexts and power relations. This argument challenges reductionist, decontextualised and ahistorical views of democracy and the media. It acknowledges that democracy and media take different forms and that they are construed and constructed differently in different societies, as informed by history, dominant culture, economics and politics.

Negotiating Democracy and Democratising Journalism in and on Africa

The way forward is in recognising the creative ways in which Africans merge their traditions with exogenous influences to create realities that are not reducible to either but enriched by both. The implication of this argument is that how we understand the role of journalism in Africa depends on what democratic model we draw from.

Under liberal democracy where the individual is perceived and treated as an autonomous agent, and where primary solidarities and cultural identities are discouraged in favour of national citizenship and culture, journalism is expected to be disinterested, objective, balanced and fair in gathering, processing and disseminating news and information. The assumption is that because all individuals have equal rights as citizens, there can be no justification for bias among journalists. But within popular notions of democracy where emphasis is on interdependence and competing cultural solidarities are admitted, journalists and the media are under constant internal and external pressure to promote the interests of the various groups competing for recognition and representation.

The tensions and pressures are even greater in situations where states and governments purport to pursue liberal democracy, while in reality they continue to be highhanded and repressive to their populations. When this happens, journalists are at risk of employing double-standards as well, by claiming one thing and doing the opposite, or by straddling various identity margins, without always being honest about it, especially if their very survival depends on it.

To democratise means to question basic monolithic assumptions and conventional wisdom about democracy, journalism, government, power myths and accepted personality cults. It means to suggest and work for the de-mystification of the state, custom and society. To democratise African journalism is to provide the missing cultural links to current efforts, links informed by respect for African humanity and creativity, and by popular ideas of personhood and domesticated agency. It is to negotiate conviviality between competing ideas of how best to provide for the humanity and dignity of all and sundry. It is above all to observe and draw from the predicaments of ordinary Africans forced by culture, history and material realities to live their lives as "subjects" rather than as "citizens", even as liberal democratic rhetoric claims otherwise.

Calling for an exploration of alternatives to bounded identities in Africa could be perceived as a threat and a challenge. It would receive a hostile hearing in particular from those who have championed the cause of one-dimensionalism nationally and internationally—that is, those who benefit from the maintenance of the status quo and who stand to lose from changes

in African identities and media. They fear the stimulation and provocation that more flexible identities and genuinely democratic media promise—genuinely democratic meaning the effective, as opposed to token, celebration of difference and diversity. They want life to go on without disturbance or fundamental change, especially by or in favour of those at the margins. And they are well placed to ensure this, thanks to their power to define and regulate media, the power to accord or to deny a voice to individuals and communities.

It is easier said than done, but worth saying all the same: Only well articulated policies informed by public interest broadly defined to include individual and community expectations, and scrupulously respected, would guarantee against such abuse and misuse of office and privilege. The future of democracy and the relevance of journalism to Africans and their predicaments will depend very much on how well Africans are able to negotiate recognition and representation for their humanity and creativity beyond the tokenism of prevalent politically correct rhetoric on equality of humanity and opportunity.

Lessons from Popular Creativity for Africa's Media

Africa's media, to be relevant to social consolidation and renewal in Africa, must embrace professional and social responsiveness in tune with the collective aspirations of Africans. In a context where economic and political constraints have often hindered the fulfilment of this expectation, the advent and increasing adoption in Africa of ICTs offer fascinating new possibilities. The future for democracy and the relevance of the media therein have much to learn from the creative ways in which Africans are currently relating to innovations in ICTs.

The same popular creativity that has been largely ignored by conventional journalism is remarkable today all over Africa and among Africans in the diaspora. Africans seek daily to harness, within the limits of the structural constraints facing them, whatever possibilities are available to contest and seek inclusion. Blending conventional and citizen journalism through the myriad possibilities offered by ICTs is a way to harness both democracy and its nemesis. The current context of globalisation facilitated by ICTs offers exciting new prospects not only for citizens and journalists to compete with and complement one another, but also opportunities for new solidarities to challenge undemocratic forces, ideologies and practices that stand in the way of social progress.

There are lessons for African journalism in such creative appropriation processes. Comprehending the overall development, use and application of ICTs within African social spaces would take the fusion of keen observation

and complex analysis to capture structural, gendered, class, generational, racial and spatial dimensions of the phenomenon. A dialectical interrogation of the processes involved promises a more accurate grasp of the linkages than would impressionistic, linear and prescriptive narratives of technological determinism. If African journalism pays closer attention to the creative usages of ICTs by ordinary Africans, African journalists could begin to think less of professional journalism in the conventional sense and of how to blend the information and communication cultures of the general public with their conventional canon and practices, to give birth to a conventional-cum-citizen journalism that is of greater relevance to Africa and its predicaments.

I think "citizen journalism" brings a whole new dimension to mainstream journalism in Africa, of which I have been critical for being so neatly detached from what is really going on in the ordinary lives of people. It is because our journalists, by sticking too narrowly (and indeed hypocritically) to liberal, democratic normative canons of journalism, miss the point of how people gather news and make news and communicate and share communication with one another, when Africa has a rich landscape in this regard that can inform journalism. Before citizen journalism became popularised, you had citizen journalism all over Africa. Ordinary people used forms such as *radio trottoir*, social commentary, rumour and various other forms of political derision and art to obtain information, share it and create possibilities where normal channels were beyond their reach. Citizen journalism provides an opportunity to revisit an old problem, that of understanding popular forms of communication and how they blend with conventional media for the best of society.

Thanks to innovations in ICTs, the structure and content of the big media are being challenged and compelled to be more sensitive to cultural diversity. The flexibility and accessibility of ICTs make possible new media cultures and practices, and offer new possibilities to radical, alternative, small, independent, local and community media. Cultural communities hitherto marginalised are better catered for even within the framework of dominance by global cultural industries. Conventional journalism can learn lots from these new media practices and possibilities, as cultural communities the world over seek recognition and representation.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to demonstrate the extent to which the media and belonging in Africa are torn between competing and often conflicting claims of bounded and flexible ideas of culture and identity. I have drawn

on my study of xenophobia in Cameroon and South Africa, inspired by the resilience of the politicisation of culture and identity, to discuss the hierarchies and inequalities that underpin political, economic and social citizenship in Africa and the world over, and the role of the media in the production, enforcement and contestation of these hierarchies and inequalities. The media are expected to promote national citizenship and its emphasis on large-scale, assimilationist and territorially bounded belonging, while turning a blind eye to those who fall through the cracks as a result of racism and/or ethnicity. Little wonder that such an exclusionary articulation of citizenship is facing formidable challenge from its inherent contradictions and closures, and from an upsurge in the politics of recognition and representation by small-scale communities claiming autochthony at a historical juncture where the rhetoric espouses flexible mobility, postmodern flux and discontinuity.

In Cameroon and South Africa, as elsewhere in Africa and the world, accelerated mobility and increased uncertainty are generating mounting tensions fuelled by autonomy-seeking difference. Such ever-decreasing circles of inclusion demonstrate that no amount of questioning by immigrants immersed in the reality of flexible mobility seems adequate to de-essentialise the growing global fixation with an "authentic" place called home. Trapped in cosmopolitan spaces where states and their hierarchy of "privileged" citizens try to enforce the illusion of fixed and bounded locations, immigrants, diasporas, ethnic minorities and others who straddle borders are bound to feel like travellers in permanent transit. This calls for scholarship, politics and policies informed by historical immigration patterns and their benefits for recipient communities. Such scholarship and political attention should focus on the success stories of forging new relationships of understanding between citizens and subjects. Understanding these relationships will point to new, more flexible, negotiated, cosmopolitan and popular forms of citizenship, with the emphasis on inclusion, conviviality and the celebration of difference.

Flexible and negotiated belonging, while a popular reflection of how ordinary people live their lives, is clearly not compatible with the prevalent illusion that the nation-state is the only political unit permitted to confer citizenship in the modern world. Nor is it compatible with a regime of rights and entitlements narrowly focused on yet another illusion—"the autonomous individual" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). The price of perpetuating these illusions has been the proliferation of ultra-nationalism, chauvinism, racism and xenophobia that has consciously denied the fragmented, heterogeneous, and multinational cultural realities of most so-called "nation-states". The challenge for Africa's media, in a context of racism and ethnic-

ity, is to seek to capture and promote that flexibility in navigating and nego-
tiating democracy and articulating belonging.

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Rassismus, Ethnizität und die Medien in Afrika: Reflektionen angeregt durch Studien zu Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Kamerun und Südafrika

Zusammenfassung: Der vorliegende Beitrag zeigt auf, inwieweit die Medien und gesellschaftliche Bindungen in Afrika zwischen konfligierenden Ansprüchen abgegrenzter und sich wandelnder kultureller Identitäten zerrissen sind. Angeregt durch die Erfahrung der kontinuierlichen Politisierung kultureller und sozialer Identitäten zieht der Autor Studien zu Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Kamerun und Südafrika heran, um die Hierarchien und Ungleichheiten zu diskutieren, auf denen politische, wirtschaftliche und soziale Staatsbürgerschaft in Afrika und darüber hinaus basiert, sowie die Rolle der Medien bei der Entstehung, Verstärkung und im Wettstreit dieser Hierarchien und Ungleichheiten. In jedem liberal-demokratisch ausgerichteten Staat kann man davon ausgehen, dass die Medien die nationale Staatsangehörigkeit mit ihrer Betonung großräumiger, assimilierender und territorial begrenzter Staatszugehörigkeit fördern und Menschen ignorieren, die infolge rassischer und/oder ethnischer Zugehörigkeit durch das Raster fallen. Es verwundert nicht, dass eine solche exklusive Auffassung von Staatsangehörigkeit erheblichen Herausforderungen ausgesetzt ist aufgrund immanenter Widersprüche und Abgrenzungen, aber auch durch wachsende Ansprüche kleiner Gemeinschaften auf politische Anerkennung und Repräsentanz – in einer historischen Phase, in der Flexibilität und Mobilität, postmoderne Beliebigkeit und Diskontinuität im politischen Diskurs miteinander verbunden werden.

Schlagwörter: Kamerun, Südafrika, Afrika, Massenmedien, Fremdenfeindlichkeit, Ethnizität, Rassismus