

Wendy Willems Editorial

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Editorial

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Tabloid media in Africa are increasingly offering an alternative platform for the voices of the marginalized. In their case study of the Zambian private television station Muvi TV, Wasserman and Mbatha argue against the common perspective that tabloid news depoliticizes the public, hereby causing cynicism about the democratic process and lowering the standards of rational public discourse. Based on a mixed method comprising of a reception analysis of Lusaka television viewers and a textual analysis of news bulletins, they highlight instead the emancipatory potential of the tabloid genre in the specific Zambian context where news on the public broadcaster, Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), remains the preserve of socio-economic and political elites. As Wasserman and Mbatha point out, the evening news bulletins on Muvi TV help to expose the everyday struggles of ordinary people silenced by mainstream, elite media such as ZNBC.

In similar fashion, Kuhlmann recounts in her article how – not tabloid television – but the genre of political humour has come to function as an alternative platform that has enabled diasporic Zimbabwean journalists and civil society activists to critique and ridicule the authoritarian ZANU-PF government. As she demonstrates, while freedom of expression is heavily curtailed inside Zimbabwe, those Zimbabweans who have taken refuge in the diaspora have been able to take advantage of both the information-sharing capacities of the Internet and SMS, and the more liberal political climate in order to oppose, criticize, denounce and condemn the Mugabe government. However, as Kuhlmann argues, political jokes, cartoons and other forms of satire were not only a counterhegemonic tool of resistance against the ZANU-PF leadership but also helped diasporic Zimbabweans in a more positive way to raise awareness on the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe and to draw attention to the everyday struggles and hardships of ordinary Zimbabweans.

The year 2010 saw Africa's first hosting of a mega sporting event, the Soccer World Cup, in South Africa. Chuma's article focuses on the mediated public debate around the construction of the multi-billion Rand Greenpoint soccer stadium in Cape Town. Drawing on a framing analysis of reader SMS messages sent in 2007 to the *Cape Argus* newspaper, Chuma reveals the fragile nature of the post-apartheid South African nation. While celebratory accounts of the 2010 World Cup heralded the event as a true 'nation-builder', Chuma's analysis points to the way in which the debate surrounding the stadium made visible the deep contestations around race and class. His article hereby demonstrates not only the importance of media as a crucial entry point to understand broader processes of identity formation and contestation but also highlights how reader's feedback sent by SMS comes to function as a key mediated site of public discourse. Continuing the focus on audiences and users of media, Tomaselli reports on an international media studies conference held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 27–29 February 2012. The theme of the conference was 'Beyond Normative Approaches: Everyday Media Culture in

Africa' and the event was jointly organized by the Department of Media Studies, University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, the Department of Communication, University of Michigan in the United States, and the Communication and Media Research Institute, University of Westminster in the United Kingdom. A key theme emerging in debates at the conference was the tension between structure and culture, text and context, political economy and interpretivism. A significant number of papers addressed the way in which ordinary people make use of a wide range of different media in their everyday lives, including graffiti, music, tabloids, radio, cell phones, cameras and social media. The conference challenged the continuing appeal of Siebert's *Four Theories of the Press* (1956) in African media studies, hereby pointing to the urgent need for 'updated philosophies drawing on local ontologies beyond the *Four Theories*'.

Emphasizing the importance of structure, Mhiripiri provides a political economy analysis of the Zimbabwean music industry, comparing its management and policy aspects with those of its neighbour, South Africa. In order to improve the quality of life and professional conditions of musicians, the Zimbabwean government should take the music industry more seriously, Mhiripiri argues. A coordinated industry-wide strategy should be developed by government and other stakeholders in order to improve the competitiveness of Zimbabwean music in international markets. Her article also points to the limitations of conventional analyses of the music industry based on management studies, marketing and economics that, as she argues, should be complemented with insights drawn from critical political economy, sociology of creative labour industries and cultural studies.

The last two articles in the issue deal with media in Nigeria. Adesoji and Alimi's article examines the challenges of private newspaper ownership in Nigeria. They seek to explain the success of *Nigerian Tribune*, the oldest surviving privately owned newspaper in Nigeria. Among other factors, they identify a number of challenges that *Nigerian Tribune* has managed to overcome, including the political partisanship of newspaper owners, political meddling in the daily affairs of newspapers and the paucity of funds. According to Adesoji and Alimi, the resilience of *Nigerian Tribune* could to a large extent be attributed to the paper's willingness to adapt to changing political dispensations and the liberalized political environment. While Adesoji and Alimi concentrate on the case study of *Nigerian Tribune*, Alozieuwa offers a long-term, macro-perspective on relations between media and government in Nigeria that, he argues, have historically been conflictual. Focusing his analysis on the post-military period between 1999 and 2009, Alozieuwa contends that the end of military rule in Nigeria saw media losing their critical edge, no longer functioning as watchdogs of government but practising self-censorship instead. His article advocates for the importance of media-challenging government whenever it fails its remit and also highlights the need for Nigerian media to rise above parochial interests and to advance pan-Nigerian concerns instead.