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Provincializing hegemonic histories of media and communication studies: towards a genealogy of epistemic resistance in Africa

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Abstract
In the late 1990s and 2000s, a number of calls were made by scholars to 'internationalize' or 'de-westernize' the field of media and communication studies. I argue that these approaches have indirectly silenced a much longer disciplinary history outside 'the West' that has not only produced empirical knowledge but has also actively challenged Western epistemologies. The growing concern in 'the West' with the rising power of the global South may lead scholars in the North American and European academy to listen more attentively to the perspectives of their colleagues, and could offer scholars in the global South an opportunity to simultaneously 'provincialize' Northern perspectives while theorizing what the field looks like *from* the vantage point of the global South

Keywords: academic knowledge production; genealogy; Southern theory; decolonial epistemology; media and communication studies in Africa

Introduction
In the late 1990s and 2000s, a number of calls were made by primarily US and Europe-based scholars to 'internationalize' or 'de-westernize' the field of media and communication studies (Downing, 1996; Curran and Park, 2000; McMillin, 2006; Thussu, 2009b).[1] These calls were motivated by a number of reasons. For some, the call was a response to an increasingly globalized world which warranted a more diverse and inclusive study of media globally. For example, Thussu (2009a, pp. 162-164) justified the need for the internationalization of media studies as, on the one hand, arising from the necessity for a transnational and comparative approach with the advent of new global communication technologies such as the internet and, on the other hand, from demand by a growing international student population in the global North. Similarly, in their edited volume entitled *Dewesternizing Media Studies*, Curran and Park (2000) argued that "[g]lobalization, the end of the Cold War, the rise of the Asian economy, the emergence of alternative centres of media production to Hollywood, and the worldwide growth of media studies are just some of the things that seem to invite a different approach" (p. 3). They considered the main aim of their book as contributing "to a broadening of media theory and understanding in a way that takes account of the experience of countries outside the Anglo-American orbit" (Curran and Park, 2000, p. 11).

These calls to 'internationalize' and 'de-westernize' media and communication studies, however, appeared to be more about extending the coverage of academic inquiry on media and

communication to countries not ordinarily included in the Western canon than about questioning the centrality of Western theory. For instance, while Curran and Park's (2000) book critiques Siebert et al.'s classic *Four Theories of the Press*, it at the same time reproduces its ideological taxonomy of world political systems through its subdivision of chapters into five normative categories[2] that reiterate the superiority of Western political systems and the inferiority of non-Western systems. In this manner, the book perpetuates a kind of Eurocentrism which "rigs the historical balance-sheet; it sanitizes western history while patronizing and even demonizing the nonwest; it thinks of itself in terms of its noblest achievements but of the nonwest in terms of its deficiencies, real or imagined" (Shohat and Stam, 2003, p. 482). The historical involvement of 'the West' in the imposition of political systems on 'the non-West' through processes of colonization is largely left beyond consideration.

In the field of cultural studies, debates on the need for the internationalization of academic knowledge production already emerged in the 1990s through journals such as *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* and contributions, for example, in the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* (cf. Ang 1998; Wright 1998; McNeil 1998; Tomaselli 1998). These perspectives differed from — and have the potential to inform — debates in the field of media and communication studies in a number of ways. For instance, the debate in cultural studies on the internationalization of knowledge production was not primarily a response to the empirical phenomenon of globalization that provoked the need for case studies from elsewhere, but it was motivated by a much more radical concern with the skewed nature of global academic knowledge production. For example, Abbas and Erni's (2004) edited collection entitled *Internationalizing Cultural Studies* goes beyond Curran and Park's (2000) need for 'representativity' and the desire to include more empirical case studies from 'the non-West'. Instead, Abbas and Erni's (2004) volume is motivated by "two interrelated necessities: (a) the need to rediscover neglected voices and (b) the need to challenge the constructed singular origins of Cultural Studies" (p. 5). They show a wider concern with the "state of unevenness in the flow and impact of knowledge within Cultural Studies" and they aim "to clear a space for an introduction to, and pluralization of, Cultural Studies work from diverse locales and intellectual traditions" (p. 2). Their project is to make cultural studies "inclusive of a wide array of diverse speaking positions" (Abbas and Erni, 2004, p. 7) and to trace alternative genealogies of the field beyond simply the canonical history of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University often narrated in and reproduced by cultural studies textbooks and mainstream university curricula (cf. Wright, 1998).

Hence, while media and communication scholars such as Curran and Park (2000) and Thussu (2009b) merely highlight the need for more empirical work on the 'non-West' or 'global South' (which arguably also was a key aim of the Cold War project of 'area studies'), cultural studies scholars like Abbas and Erni (2004) and Shome (2009) consider the broader politics of knowledge production which has contributed to the active marginalization of knowledge produced outside the Anglo-American axis. The first approach does not radically contest the idea that theory largely emerges from the West which can then be universally applied to explain media and communication in the 'non-West'. In adopting a comparative approach that contrasts and ranks global political systems, Curran and Park (2000), whether unconsciously or not, could be seen as promoting a form of epistemological ethnocentrism, defined by Mudimbe (1988, p. 15) as "the belief that scientifically there is nothing to be learned from 'them' unless it is already 'ours' or comes from 'us' ". Furthermore, by representing the call for internationalizing or dewesternizing as a novel attempt, the first approach also actively silences decades of media and

2

communication scholarship carried out in different parts of the global South. The assumption is that scholars in the 'non-West' have somehow not previously engaged in critical knowledge production on media and communication. By presupposing that media and communication studies is a Western-rooted field, this approach has failed to both engage with alternative genealogies of the field, and to take cognizance of the broader politics of knowledge production that privileges certain voices and marginalizes others.

Against this background, the first aim of this article is to reinscribe the epistemological and historical foundations of media and communication studies in Africa which have so far largely remained marginalized in hegemonic histories of the field. In this regard, I need to acknowledge a number of studies that have already sought to offer such an overview which further reinforces my argument that the project of 'dewesternizing' or 'internationalizing' media and communication studies might be recent from the perspective of 'the centre' but in 'the periphery', scholars have for decades engaged both in producing knowledge on media and communication and in critically reflecting on its epistemological foundations. In fact, the field of African media and communication studies has been remarkably introspective. A large number of studies have offered overviews of the state of research in the area of media and communication studies, and the contribution of academic journals and professional associations to debates in the field. For example, accounts have focused on the general nature of debates on media and communication on the African continent (Okigbo, 1987; Uche, 1987; Boafo and George, 1992; Nwako and M'Bayo, 1989; Taylor, Nwosu and Mutua-Kombo, 2004; Ndlela, 2009; Tomaselli, 2009; Musa, 2009; Obonyo, 2011; M'Bayo, Sunday and Amobi, 2012), or have provided more regional accounts, focusing on the state of the field in West Africa (Ugboajah, 1985a; Edeani, 1988; Salawu, 2009) and South(ern) Africa (Beer and Tomaselli, 2000; Steenveld, 2000; Tomaselli and Shepperson, 2002; Tomaselli, 2005; Fourie, 2005, 2010a, 2010b; Salawu, 2013; Tomaselli, Mboti and Rønning, 2013). Others have highlighted the role of academic journals such as the *African Media Review* (Edeani, 1995), *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* (Tomaselli, Muller and Shepperson, 1996; Tomaselli, 2009) and *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies* (Wasserman, 2004), and the role of professional associations like the South African Communication Association (SACOMM) (Tomaselli, 2005; Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 2007). Many of these studies have critiqued the Eurocentric nature of existing research and have called for a need to ensure that research is rooted more clearly in African contexts.

These alternative genealogies of the field have frequently actively challenged the presumed universality of media and communication studies, thereby pointing to much longer histories of 'dewesternizing' or 'internationalizing' not driven by 'the centre' but propagated *from* 'the periphery'. While the above-mentioned reviews are useful and inform my own historical perspective on the field, my primary aim here is not merely to describe the prevailing debates on media and communication in Africa but instead to explain how these emerged, and to relate them to the broader set of power relations that characterizes global academic knowledge production, and knowledge production on the continent more specifically. I argue that the above-mentioned efforts to resist the Eurocentricity of the field should be situated within a range of political, economic and epistemological constraints that have increasingly limited and threatened academic knowledge production on media and communication on the continent. By framing the efforts of African media and communication scholars within the changing nature of knowledge production, shifting power relations between African nations, and the evolving role of African universities, I aim to demonstrate how knowledge production is frequently driven and

constrained by particular dominant social, political or economic interests. I therefore propose to examine scholarship on media and communication in Africa as a discursive formation, i.e. as a "historically contingent form of knowledge intimately connected to prevailing structures and relations of power at the time of its formation" (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 143; Foucault, 1980).

Of course, any attempt to reconstruct a debate or construct a canon involves imposing a 'discipline' on what has been said, a silencing of other voices and a selection and seemingly 'natural' classification of issues. As Tomlinson (2001) has argued (following from Foucault), "[t]his element of domination in representation is unavoidable: it is a function of academic discourse" (p. 28). In this regard, I should make explicit that I primarily draw from media and communication research in Anglophone Africa as my language skills hamper my ability to access academic research published in other languages on the continent, such as French and Portuguese. Furthermore, academic knowledge production on Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa continues to be carried out in largely separate networks and journals with little debate and comparative research happening across and between linguistic regions. This is obviously problematic but I am not able to address this within the space of this article. Hence, this article should not be read as a fully comprehensive overview of academic knowledge on media and communication in Africa but instead as an attempt to raise awareness on the complicity of global actors in the active marginalization and silencing of independent African research agendas.

Modernization, mass media and the Cold War
Early scholarship on media and communication in Africa was profoundly shaped by the idea of Africa as an 'underdeveloped' continent. In the broader political context of the Cold War, mass media became implicated in the project of development and modernization. US-based modernization scholars such as Daniel Lerner, Wilbur Schramm and Everett Rogers argued that mass media could play a major role in the breakdown of stubborn traditions in developing countries, the introduction of 'modern' lifestyles and, ultimately, in promoting development (Lerner, 1958; Pye, 1963; Schramm, 1964; Lerner and Schramm, 1967). Their work profoundly shaped emerging scholarship on media and communication in African universities. It was primarily through UNESCO that the work of modernization scholars was disseminated among scholars on the continent. The organization was instrumental in providing training courses to journalists as well as supporting the development of mass communication curricula at colleges and universities in Africa (UNESCO, 1962, 1965, 1968). Modernization scholars were often hired to assist in this regard. For example, Schramm was personally involved in providing training workshops in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Nigeria (Schramm & Sommerlad, 1964a; Schramm & Sommerlad, 1964b; Komoski, Green & Schramm, 1964). Rogers' Department of Communication at Michigan State University (MSU) provided support to the establishment of the Jackson College of Journalism at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1961 (Rogers, 2001). As a result of UNESCO support and the assistance of other organizations such as the Vienna-based International Press Institute (IPI) and the Prague-based International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), the 1960s saw the emergence of a range of journalism and mass communication training institutions in newly independent countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia, Tanzania, Senegal, Congo and Madagascar (UNESCO, 1965, p. 24; Edeani, 1988, p. 156).

These changes also provoked a growing interest in mass communication research, both on the continent and elsewhere. While only 45 were studies carried out in West Africa between

1945-1959, this increased to 183 studies in the period between 1960-69 (Edeani, 1988, p. 155). A number of European and American scholars also began writing on media in Africa, and particularly on Nigeria. Monographs focused on media and communication in general (Doob, 1961; Huth, 1961; Hachten, 1971; Wilcox, 1975), on the press (Kitchen, 1956; Gale, 1962; Gras, 1963; Ainslie, 1966; Barton, 1966, 1979; Coker, 1968; Omu, 1978) and on broadcasting (MacKay, 1964; Head, 1974; Ladole, Olufemi and Lasekun, 1979).

Euro-centrism, culture and the counter-modernist response
Nwako and M'bayo (1989, pp. 9-10) describe the work of well-known African communication scholars such as Frank Ugboajah, David Edeani and Charles Okigbo primarily as 'reactive scholarship' which partly critiqued but also to a large extent reproduced the ideas of modernization scholars. While the issue of development was central in their research on media and communication, African communication scholars queried the social relevance of work produced by Schramm and others in the African context and argued that their writing was Eurocentric, thereby also drawing upon the broader emerging discourse on cultural imperialism in the 1970s. For example, prominent Nigerian scholar Frank Ugboajah (1985a) expressed his concern about the type of knowledge that modernization scholars wished to disseminate through mass media such as radio:

> The most disturbing area of field research in the Third World in communication studies happens to be diffusion studies, which, owing to internal ideological problems, are associated with agricultural and health extension work and are therefore accompanied by a messianic/cultural invasion. There should be a de-emphasis on 'communication and national development' approaches of the Wilbur Schramm, Daniel Lerner and Everett Rogers types which were carried out with paramount academic qualifications but not necessarily with social relevance (p. 279).

According to Ugboajah, the spread of modern, scientific agricultural and health knowledge through Rogers' 'diffusion of innovation' theory had to be viewed with caution as it was not guaranteed that the knowledge would be relevant to the African context. As he argued, "[i]mported models should be put to the test first and carefully selected and adapted" and there was "a dire need for the parallel development of indigenous technology of communication" (Ugboajah 1985a, p. 280).

Ugboajah and others were not only concerned about the sort of information that scholars such as Schramm, Lerner and Rogers wished to convey in the name of modernization and development but were also critical about the type of medium that these scholars proposed as channels of information. Ugboajah and Ghanaian scholar Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh criticized the modernization scholars for their emphasis on 'modern mass media' as the only legitimate forms of communication. They argued that this led them to ignore 'indigenous communication systems'. Instead of 'modern' mass media such as television, radio and newspapers, which were also promoted by UNESCO in a range of projects, Ugboajah (1985b) and Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998, 2005) advocated for more attention to be devoted to 'traditional' African media, and argued that indigenous media would be more effective in bringing about development. Ugboajah (1985b) introduced the term 'oramedia' which he defined as folk media based on 'indigenous' culture produced and consumed by members of a certain group. For Ugboajah, 'oramedia' were the prime disseminators of culture in Africa. In his work, he attempted to describe why these media were more effective in development communication than modern mass media. Similarly, Ansu-Kyeremeh (2005, p. 2) has highlighted the superior effectiveness of '[d]rama, storytelling,

proverbs, poetry and other such indigenous forms of communication' as compared to modern mass media such as radio, television and newspapers. African communication scholars thus challenged modernization theorists on two grounds: the irrelevance of development communication content to the African context and the ineffectiveness of 'modern' mass media on the African continent. They proposed that in the selection of content and media appropriate for development communication, scholars should take into account indigenous African knowledge and forms of communication.

This lively and critical debate on the relevance of modernization theory in the African context reflects the general flourishing of the field of media and communication studies in the 1980s, and it represents early attempts to 'dewesternize' the field. Nigerian scholars in particular published a large number of books on media, communication and journalism during this period. A bibliography on African mass communication identified 32 books published in Nigeria during the 1980s (as compared to 3 in the 1960s, 6 in the 1970s and 14 in the 1990s).[3] Boafo and George (1992, pp. vi-vii) attribute the high levels of interest in media and communication research in the 1980s to a number of factors such as the emergence of a number of highly-trained researchers in the region. In the 1980s, an increasing number of African universities launched masters and doctoral degree programmes in mass communication in the region, such as the University of Lagos, the University of Nigeria at Nsukka and the University of Ghana at Legon (Edeani, 1988, p. 161). It seems therefore plausible to argue that the growing research capacity of African scholars resulted in a more critical and growing body of research that did not only produce knowledge on media and communication in Africa but also challenged the Eurocentric nature of the field.

Another crucial platform for these lively debates on African media and communication was the professional organization, the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE), which was established in 1976 and had its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya (Musa, 2008, p. 42). Through its publications and biennial conferences, ACCE constituted an important space for debate on media and communication on the continent. The organization also published research on media and communication in Africa and was responsible for the publication of at least 13 books in the period between 1986 and 1995, most of which were part of ACCE's Africa Media Monograph Series. Extensive debates also took place in ACCE's journal, the *Africa Media Review* which began publishing in 1986.[4] The organization also had strong links with UNESCO and worked together on several projects such as a project on rural press development in Africa (UNESCO & ACCE 1978, 1987), a textbook project in 1986/1987 which sought to contribute to the development of education material relevant to students on the continent (Nordenstreng and Boafo, 1988), and lastly, a project in 1996-2000 that aimed to review mass communication curricula across the continent (Boafo, 2002). While the UNESCO-supported projects in the 1960s were largely driven by the modernization agenda which was dominant at the time, the 1980s saw a growing critical reflection on the dangers of cultural imperialism within UNESCO. This also made possible a more radical critique of the previously presumed universal relevance of Western curricula of communication education, and the various textbook projects aimed to 'indigenize' and 'Africanize' communication education on the continent.

The debates within ACCE and publications such as the *Africa Media Review* were primarily dominated by West African scholars. Because 'early decolonizers' such as Nigeria and Ghana had established mass communication and journalism departments in the 1960s, scholars from these countries occupied a prominent position in the ACCE. In the 1980s, Nigerian universities set up masters and doctoral degree programmes which further encouraged academic

publications on media and communication. The University of Lagos, for example, launched a MSc programme in 1979 and a PhD programme in 1986 (Edeani, 1988, p. 161). Southern African scholars, on the other hand, were much less represented within the ACCE. Zimbabwe only obtained independence in 1980 and the first university programme in Media Studies was founded in 1993 at the University of Zimbabwe (Banda et al., 2007, pp. 167-168). South Africa, on the other hand, had a number of media and communication programmes at its universities since the mid-1960s. However, because of Apartheid, the country long held an isolated position on the African continent. South African media and communication scholars published mostly in their own journals and engaged little with other scholars on the continent. This changed somewhat after 1994 when a South African chapter of the ACCE was established which subsequently hosted the 1996 ACCE biennial conference in Cape Town. Furthermore, the post-Apartheid period saw a number of media and communication journals rebranding themselves as African journals such as for example *Ecquid Novi* which was previously known as *Ecquid Novi*: *South African Journal for Journalism Research* and was renamed to *Ecquid Novi*: *African Journalism Studies*, and *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* which had always posited itself as 'anti-Apartheid, Africanist and Third Worldist' but began to draw more on articles from Africa-wide scholars or about Africa-wide issues.

The end of Apartheid also saw growing debates in South Africa on the need for the 'Africanisation' of all virtually all spheres of society, e.g. politics, education, media and journalism, later also reinforced by President Thabo Mbeki's call for an 'African Renaissance' in the late 1990s. Related to this shift, media and communication scholars in South(ern) Africa began to debate whether the notion of *ubuntu*[5] could function as a useful principle that could inform a normative conception of journalism ethics in Africa (Blankenberg 1999; Kamwangamalu 1999; Christians 2004; Wasserman 2006; Fourie 2008; Skjerdal 2012). Provoked by his concern about the 'unethical' tendencies of the privately-owned press in Zambia, Kasoma (1994, 1996) advocated for a journalism ethics known as 'Afri-ethics' that is not driven by 'Western', individual values but instead by 'African', collective values. However, as Tomaselli (2003, 2009) has argued, the proposals to 'dewesternize' journalism ethics have often ended up essentializing a static and homogenous notion of 'African culture'.

Normative theory, liberal democracy and the privatization of research
While the 1980s and early 1990s saw a lively debate on the nature of communication research in Africa and the role of theory, primarily enabled by the biennial ACCE conferences and the *Africa Media Review*, critical reflection became a lot scarcer on the continent in the late 1990s and 2000s. Debates on media in Africa largely shifted from analyzing global power relations to a focus on power relations at the national level. This coincided with the so-called 'wave of democratization' which swept across many African countries in the same period. Gradually, governments under one-party rule disappeared and were replaced with multi-party administrations and many studies on African media began to focus on the role of the media in this transition process (Ansah 1988; Zaffiro, 1988, 1989, 2000, 2002; Faringer, 1991; Martin, 1992; Lardner, 1993; Eribo and Jong-Ebot, 1997; Ogbondah, 1997; Ogundimu, 1997; Pitts, 2000; Zaffiro, 2000; Tettey, 2001; Hydén, Leslie and Ogundimu, 2003; Ojo, 2003).

Much of this literature uncritically adopted the liberal-democratic perspective of media as normative ideal and debates about the relevance of Western theory in the African context somehow subsided (Willems, 2012a, 2012b). The liberal narrative considers media as crucial in strengthening the democratic process and making government more accountable to public

scrutiny. In this view, the media must act as watch-dogs, guarding against abuses of power by governments and fulfill their role as the 'fourth estate'. For example, Ogbondah (1997) described the role of media on the continent as follows:

> A free press is an indispensable institution of a democratic society. The press in Africa should be free in order to perform a watchdog function, making government transparent, answerable and accountable for its actions or lack of them. The press should be free to provide the necessary check on the branches of government, which no other democratic institution can, and thus be able to investigate and report the misconduct, corruption, illicit spoils, embezzlement, bribery, inefficiency and lack of accountability that have characterized post-independence African governments (p. 291).

A second role attributed to the media in liberal democratic theory is as provider of information that enables citizens to participate meaningfully in political life, e.g. provide fair and objective coverage on all major candidates in elections in order to enable citizens to make a well-informed choice. Finally, the media are also considered in this tradition as an arena for public debate, or 'public sphere' (cf. Habermas, 1989). This arena should represent the full range of political interests and viewpoints. Press freedom is seen as a vital guarantee to enable the media to play the above-mentioned roles. The role of the state is to create an open environment in which different media can flourish and compete. Private media are attributed the potential to advance democratic values and state monopoly is presented as inhibiting the liberal role of the media. State-owned media provide governments with the opportunity to manipulate the public, hamper diversity of viewpoints and merely serve the interests of those in power.

Within the context of Africa's transition to multi-party democracy, this liberal-democratic model of media-state relations became hegemonic in media scholarship on Africa in the 1990s although there were some critical voices (cf. Kasoma, 1995, 1997; Berger, 2002; Nyamnjoh, 2005). In many ways, the dominance of normative theorizing in the 1990s reflects more broadly the continuing influence of Siebert et al.'s 1956 book *Four theories of the press* on African media and communication scholarship. Ansah (1988) acknowledged that the aim of his approach was clearly normative, i.e. "to examine and reflect not on what role the press plays in African society but on what the press ought to do to put itself at the service of both democracy and development" (p. 15). The model of liberal democracy often served as a yardstick to measure Africa's performance, leading to ahistorical accounts in which Africa was often represented as Europe's negative imprint.

While the 'winds of change' on the continent to a certain extent changed the debate on media and communication in Africa, another key reason for the changing paradigm in scholarship comprised the increasing shift of media and communication research from universities to private research institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the 1990s and the demise of crucial academic platforms. For example, the year 1997 saw the temporary closure of *Africa Media Review*. Although the journal was re-launched in 2004 by the Dakar-based Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), recent editions have come out only erratically.[6] The continental version of the ACCE also largely collapsed in the 2000s albeit the Nigeria chapter has remained active, evidenced by its regular conferences.[7] This coincided with the imposition of structural adjustment programmes on many African countries in the 1990s which led to drastic cuts in budgets available for higher education, and resulted in a growth of private universities and an expansion of privatized education and research programmes in public universities (Zeleza and Olukoshi, 2004). Universities became increasingly dependent on donor funds, as did poorly paid lecturers who due to poor wages were

forced to take on research consultancies which, as Zeleza (2003) has pointed out, has led to "the transformation of African intellectuals into 'paid native informants' for foreign donors" (p. 157).

Hence, in the 1990s, research on African media and communication has increasingly been driven by donor funding themes rather than by locally-driven priorities. This has imposed severe constraints on the ability of African media and communication scholars to build their own independent research agendas and to engage in critical theory building, but has on many occasions forced scholars to gather data for Western-driven research projects instead for the sake of economic survival. Prominent Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani (2011) has recently argued that the market-driven model of African universities has resulted in a "pervasive consultancy culture" and a "NGO-ization of the university":

> The global market tends to relegate Africa to providing raw material ("data") to outside academics who process it and then re-export their theories back to Africa. Research proposals are increasingly descriptive accounts of data collection and the methods used to collate data, collaboration is reduced to assistance, and there is a general impoverishment of theory and debate. The expansion and entrenchment of intellectual paradigms that stress quantification above all has led to a peculiar intellectual dispensation in Africa today: the dominant trend is increasingly for research to be positivist and primarily quantitative, carried out to answer questions that have been formulated outside of the continent, not only in terms of location but also in terms of historical perspective. This trend either occurs directly, through the "consultancy" model, or indirectly, through research funding and other forms of intellectual disciplining.

The increase in externally-driven projects has resulted in a mushrooming of positivist, empiricist research projects in which outcomes are prewritten and data are merely collected to back up readymade theoretical arguments originating from other contexts. These constraints are particularly true for African scholars based outside South Africa, where universities continue to offer a relatively favorable research climate as a result of the monetary research incentives provided by the country's Department of Higher Education, the comparatively lower teaching loads and the range of funding opportunities provided by both universities themselves and the National Research Foundation (NRF). The demise of Apartheid in South Africa in 1994 brought an end to the isolation of South African scholars and saw a closer identification of South African scholars with the African continent as a whole. This has slowly resulted in increasing levels of networking between South African scholars and scholars from other parts of Africa, growing employment of African scholars in South African universities, and a rebranding of South African journals such as *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research* as African or global journals.[8] Hence, this has arguably given South African scholars a higher profile in global academic networks as compared to scholars from other parts of Africa. While West African scholarship was prominent in the 1980s and 1990s in networks such as the International Association of Mass Communication Research (IAMCR), the balance might have slightly shifted to South(ern) Africa in the 2000s, also evidenced by the organization of IAMCR's annual conference by the Center for Culture, Communication and Media Studies (CCMS), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Durban, South Africa in 2012.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that recent efforts aimed at 'dewesternizing' the field of media and communication studies have been largely Western-centric, meaning that these calls have predominantly been made *from* the centre, thereby masking a much longer history of media and

communication studies outside 'the West'. The alternative genealogy of the field of media and communication studies that I have provided here has been largely silenced in hegemonic accounts of what is considered to be the 'canon' of the field. By offering an overview of key academic debates on media and communication studies in Africa, I have reinscribed this body of knowledge into a broader disciplinary history. In accomplishing this, I have drawn on key arguments in the debate on internationalizing cultural studies (cf. Wright 2008; Abbas and Erni 2004; Shome 2009). I have highlighted the rise and fall of epistemic domination and resistance in the field of media and communication studies in Africa. The origins of the field were inextricably bound up with modernization theory but the 1980s and early 1990s saw African scholars increasingly challenging and resisting Western epistemologies, while proposing new concepts such as 'oramedia' and 'indigenous communication'; designing alternative research methodologies and formulating normative ethical frameworks based on the principle of *ubuntu*. However, as a result of a number of economic constraints that African intellectuals have increasingly experienced due to the changing academic landscape and a growing dependency on donor funding, we see a resurgence of epistemic domination in the 1990s through an often uncritical application of normative, liberal-democratic theory to media and communication in Africa. This has often resulted in studies which continue to highlight Africa as the negative inversion of 'the West' —described by Mamdani as 'history by analogy' — instead of producing accounts which seek to understand Africa on its own terms.

By highlighting how African media and communication scholars engaged with dominant research traditions in the field, I have argued that scholars in the 1980s and early 1990s were often reflexive and critical about the relevance of Western approaches to media and communication, while the mid-1990s and 2000s saw more of an accommodation and appropriation of Western theory, as evidenced by the shift towards the use of liberal democratic theory as dominant framework to explain the role of media and communication on the continent. I suggest that these changes over time can to a certain extent be linked to the broader political economy of knowledge production which saw a gradual shift from independent academic research conducted in African universities and published in the *Africa Media Review* and through the African Council of Communication Education (ACCE) monograph series to a growing proportion of research carried out in non-governmental research institutions or as part of donor-driven research projects. I argue that this shift has led to a less reflexive research tradition that has often taken the explanatory power of Western theoretical approaches for granted. This is not to argue that 'Western theory' is irrelevant in the African context, or its adoption in the African context somehow leads to inauthentic knowledge, but it is to propose that power relations in academic knowledge production do matter and have consequences for the type of knowledge produced.

Given that academic knowledge production on media and communication in Africa has largely been constrained by the symbolic and material hegemony of 'the West', the current global power shift in favor of the global South could potentially offer opportunities to renew the earlier moments of epistemic resistance. As Comaroff and Comaroff (2012) have argued, developments in the global South have the potential to shed light on the global North which, they argue, seems to be increasingly evolving 'southward' through widespread financial crises, casualization of labor, corruption, and privatization. The growing concern in 'the West' with the rising power of the global South, and the Brazil Russia India China South Africa (BRICS) nations in particular, could change the terms of global academic knowledge production in the future. It may lead scholars in the North American and European academy to be more attentive

to the perspectives of their colleagues in the global South, and could offer scholars in the global South an opportunity to 'provincialize' the approaches offered by their colleagues in the global North (cf. Chakrabarty 2000). As Grosfoguel (2007: 213) has argued, much of Western academic scholarship has "privileged the myth of a nonsituated 'Ego'" and has claimed universal relevance while marginalizing knowledge about places elsewhere as 'particular' and 'specific'. This tendency to mask the vantage point from which one is speaking is what I would like to call the recurrence of 'the collective We' in media and communication scholarship, a 'we' which assumes a collective, shared sense of subjectivity and fails to acknowledge the situatedness of all forms of knowledge.

Apart from an occasion to 'provincialize' both hegemonic histories of media and communication studies and scholarship on media and communication on 'the West' that continues to masks itself as 'global', the growing interest in the global South also opens up opportunities to theorize what media and communication studies looks like *from* the vantage point of the global South (cf. Connell, 2007; Larkin, 2008; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2012; Willems forthcoming). As Shome (2009: 700) has argued, "the vantage point from which the 'internationalizing' rupture [in debates in the field of cultural studies] seems to occur, and the point of departure into the international, for the most part, continues to be the West". Instead, she argues for the need to shift the vantage point of the 'internationalizing', which is reiterated by a number of (primarily Latin American) scholars who have also been concerned with the broader politics of knowledge production and have advocated for decolonial epistemic perspectives (Mignolo, 2000, 2012; Mignolo and Escobar, 2009; De Sousa Santos, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2007, 2011).[9] For Grosfoguel (2011), such a perspective "requires a broader canon of thought than simply the Western canon" and implies taking "seriously the epistemic perspective/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South thinking *from* and *with* subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies" (p. 3, italics added by author).

A number of recent initiatives signal that a new generation of African media and communication scholarship might be on its way. In 2008, two new journals — *African Communication Research* (published by St. Augustine University of Tanzania) and the *Journal of African Media Studies* (published by Intellect Publishers, I am one of the founding editors - WW) — were established. Furthermore, 2011 saw the foundation of the East African Communication Association (EACA) which subsequently also established its own journal in 2013, the *African Journal of Communication*. These platforms will be crucial in stimulating critical debate on media and communication on the continent. However, these of course do not solve the economic constraints within which African scholars operate and produce knowledge. For this to change, African universities need to be able to increase their faculty numbers so as to reduce teaching loads, to offer adequate remuneration to faculty members, and to access larger amounts of research funding with fewer externally imposed conditions. This requires a much more radical shift in global power relations than is associated with the current optimism around the so-called 'rise of the global South'. In the meantime, a higher degree of self-reflexivity among media and communication scholars in 'the West' about their own potential complicity in the marginalization of knowledges from elsewhere could be a start towards a more pluriversal and truly 'global' field of media and communication studies.

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[1] See also a 2005 special issue of *Global Media and Communication* 1(1), available from: http://gmc.sagepub.com/content/1/1.toc (last accessed: 9 April 2013).

[2] The five political systems referred to are: transitional and mixed societies, authoritarian neo-liberal societies, authoritarian regulated societies, democratic neo-liberal societies, and democratic regulated societies.

[3] Nnaemeka, Tony, n.d., Annotated bibliography of selected commonly used textbooks in Anglophone Africa, available from: http://www.uta.fi/textbooks/angboo.html (last accessed: 9 April 2013).

[4] See the following website to access archived editions of *Africa Media Review* published between 1986 and 1997: http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/html/browse.cfm?colid=8 (last accessed: 9 April 2013).

[5] The principle of 'ubuntu' has been invoked by a range of actors in different ways and for a variety of purposes. However, in general terms, it can be seen as part of a broader humanist philosophy that emphasizes the interconnectedness of human beings. It is often associated with the Zulu phrase, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ('I am a person through other persons').

[6] See: http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?rubrique61&lang=en (last accessed: 9 April 2013).

[7] At the end of 2006, there was an attempt to establish a new association, the Trans-African Council on Communication Education (TRACCE) but these efforts seem largely to have been unsuccessful.

[8] All these three journals were incorporated into the Taylor and Francis publishing group at some point in the 2000s, which has increased their global visibility and accessibility.

[9] See also a 2007 special issue of *Cultural Studies* 21(2/3) which includes the perspectives of a range of scholars identifying with work on 'decoloniality', available from: http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcus20/21/2-3 (last accessed: 9 April 2013).