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Mapping structural conditions of journalism in South Africa

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Mapping structural conditions of journalism in South Africa

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Executive Summary

Using a multi-dimensional scheme as a conceptual framework, this working paper maps the structural conditions relevant to journalism and conflict communication in South Africa. The report makes use of a broad range of country-specific academic literature, as well as reports compiled by various non-academic organisations active in the media sector.

- 'Structural conditions' are understood as the totality of (formal and informal) orders and structures that characterise media and journalism in a certain space, usually a country.
- Eleven interrelated and interdependent dimensions of structural conditions relevant to media and journalism have been extracted and adapted from existing literature, guiding structured and comprehensive analysis within specific (country) contexts: (1) historical development, (2) political system, (3) political culture, (4) media freedom, (5) level of state control and regulation of media by the state, (6) media ownership and financing, (7) structure of media markets and patterns of information distribution, (8) orientation of media, (9) political/societal activity and parallelism of media, (10) journalism culture, and (11) journalistic professionalism.
- Against the backdrop of the country's authoritarian political history of racial segregation and a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse society, journalism scholarship in South Africa revolves around debates on the role and responsibility of the media in facilitating the ongoing consolidation of democracy; specifically, whether media's emphasis should be placed on acting in the 'public interest' or the much contested 'national interest', and emerging definitions of the most appropriate ethical frameworks.
- Media freedom has strengthened substantially since the first democratic elections in 1994 and is governed by a variety of media laws and institutions. It is protected by civil society organisations that continue to challenge proposals by political bodies to transform the current self-regulated media system into one governed by statutory regulation. Civil society organisations also oppose proposed journalism legislation which has been labelled unconstitutional.

- Despite continued calls for external and internal transformation of the media (ownership and newsrooms) to better reflect South Africa's racial and gender diversity, the process has been slow and ownership and top management are still largely occupied by whites. Urban-based newsrooms have experienced greater, albeit still insufficient, racial and gender diversification, with more persistent imbalances noted in rural media outlets.
- The country's public broadcaster, South Africa Broadcasting Corporation has struggled to balance the conflicting demands of its public service mandate and commercialism. The organisation's credibility has been called into question and it has faced criticism for displaying bias towards the ruling party, financial mismanagement, irregular appointments of senior staff and self-censorship.
- There has been a decline in investigative reporting which is deemed as costly
 and time-consuming, and juniorisation of newsrooms due in part to cost-cutting
 affecting more senior and expensive journalists. There are high unemployment
 rates among junior journalists and graduates.

Introduction

This working paper aims to systematically and comprehensively map the structural conditions relevant to journalism and conflict communication in South Africa.

In specific situations such as democratisation conflicts and in certain countries, as well as in general terms journalistic performance and journalism culture are informed by various interrelated constituents: journalistic work practices, role perceptions, ethical orientations, and, last but not least, the *structural conditions of journalism* (Neverla et al. 2015).

Based on Kleinsteuber (2005, p.275), by *structural conditions*, we understand the totality of (formal and informal) orders and structures that characterise media and journalism in a certain space, most commonly, a country.

These structural conditions are established on four levels: (1) the respective society in general, (2) the media system, (3) the professional field of journalism and (4) the particular media organisation.

Several dimensions can be extracted and adapted from existing research on structural conditions of media and journalism, which is largely based in comparative studies on media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 2012; Blum 2014). These dimensions are listed and described in the table below.¹

¹ For a more in-depth description of dimensions please refer to Lohner, Banjac and Neverla (2016).

Table 1: Structural conditions of journalism: dimensions

Dimension	Description
Historical development: Political stability of country	Changes of political systems / regimes over time and impact on the media system
Political system / form of Government	Formal and informal rules regarding: Freedom of people to vote Degrees of division of power (system of checks and balances among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government) Institutionalisation of the rule of law and civil liberties
Political culture	 Concepts, ideas and structures ruling both the functioning of institutions (media) and agency of political and societal actors as well as citizens: Centrality of the state in aspects of society (low state intervention of liberal system vs. high involvement in welfare system) Distribution of political power (majoritarian vs. consensus politics) Relationship between political institutions and the public (individualised vs. organised pluralism) Level of cleavage of political parties and ideologies (polarised vs. moderate vs. fragmented vs. hegemonic pluralism) Adherence to formal rules, procedures and political institutions (rational-legal authority vs. clientelism) Political culture of citizens: how people see the role of the state, treat different ethnicities, religions, linguistic groups, participate in community/political life (voter turnout), the kind of political debates/historical traditions they support
Media freedom	 Level of media freedom in legal framework (constitution, media laws and regulation on censorship, information access and control, legal protection of journalistic actors, legal autonomy of regulation bodies) Policies and actions by state actors or legal bodies
State control / regulation of media	 Intention of state control (Political control through organisational, personnel and content-oriented intervention vs. apolitical regulation via distributing frequencies, limiting advertising) Media types that are being controlled/regulated, addressees of media control Procedures regarding licensing of media outlets, accreditation of journalists Character of regulation bodies (state or independent public institutions) Nature of prosecution of journalists by state actor

Media ownership and financing Structure of media markets and patterns of information distribution	 Whether media are owned by private companies and/or the public or state Market driven media, mixed-source financing, and state financing Audience and market share of different media types Size of media market / Level of internationalisation (De-)centralisation of media market / system Pluralism / concentration of ownership
Orientation of media	 Patterns of media distribution and circulation of information Primary social focus that guides news production: commerce/market oriented, divergent, society oriented
Political / societal activity and parallelism of media	 Tendency of media to intervene in political debate/engage in advocacy/influence political events Alignment between media outlets/individual journalists and political parties and societal actors (religious institutions, trade unions, business) Polarisation of the public/audiences according to the political orientation of media which they consume
Journalism Culture	Overall status of journalism and role perception of journalists in relation to other social systems: investigative/critical, ambivalent, or rather concordant to those in power
Journalistic Professionalism	Internal rules and norms of the professional field and media institutions:

It is important to keep in mind that, while structures are often referred to as something static or 'given', they are established by different *actors* and always subject to *change* (Hallin and Mancini 2012b, pp.302-303). Obviously, this particularly applies to countries in transition. Thus, agency and the procedural dimension are also an important focus of analysis when the structural dimensions of journalism are being investigated.

We will provide a systematic and critical analysis of the structural conditions of media and journalism in South Africa based on the scheme of dimensions. This report builds on country-specific literature that touches on subjects raised within each of the dimensions, aiming at a comprehensive overview of the structural conditions of media and journalism in the country.

In addition, using country-specific literature should enable us to identify additional structural conditions specific to the South African context.

Limitations in existing research and the availability of current facts and figures have resulted in varying amounts of information on certain dimensions. Due to the focus of existing literature, this paper will focus on the structural conditions concerning (1) the respective society in general, (2) the media system, and (3) the professional field of journalism. Structural conditions at level 4 (particular media organisation) will be treated in detail in the MeCoDEM interviews with journalists reporting on democratisation conflicts.

In addition, it should be noted that the editorial deadline for this working paper was April 2015 and therefore subsequent publications relating to structural conditions of journalism in South Africa are not reflected here.

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Country report: Current structural conditions of journalism in South Africa²

Dutch settlers first arrived in South Africa in 1652. In 1800 the first newspaper was established, and 20 years later freedom of the press was introduced (adapted from the British Great Charter). The Union of South Africa, made up of Cape, Natal, Free State and Transvaal was founded in 1910. In 1913, the Black Land Act was legislated, marking the beginning of segregation for all people of colour, a process that was "formally legalized into apartheid" (an authoritarian regime) in 1948 when the National Party came into power (Wasserman and de Beer 2005, p.196). In 1960, sixtynine people were killed in police clashes during the Sharpeville demonstration against pass laws³ after which the anti-apartheid movement shifted from non-violent resistance to armed struggle, leading to the imprisonment of African National Congress (ANC) leader, Nelson Mandela in 1963. The ongoing liberation movement was marked by another historically significant protest on 16 June 1976, known as the Soweto uprising, during which thousands of high school students marched peacefully against the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction at school, but were met with armed police. The brutality of the event, which received international exposure, "signalled the beginning of the end of apartheid" – a two-decade-long process which culminated in 1994 with the first democratic elections and the election of Nelson Mandela as president (Wasserman and de Beer 2005, p.196). In 1996, a democratic constitution was adopted, guaranteeing freedom of expression.

South Africa's democratic transition from apartheid to democracy began almost simultaneously alongside the democratisation processes in post-communist Eastern Europe shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, bringing with it "political pluralism, free market economics and media liberalization" and making the country an interesting case for comparative analysis with other emerging democracies (Wasserman 2010, p.568). Bond (2004) highlights some of the events and decisions that in many ways determined the nature and direction of South Africa's transition and subsequently saw

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² We thank our colleagues Herman Wasserman, Tanja Bosch and Wallace Chuma for their valuable contribution to this report.

³ An internal passport system which limited the movement of black South Africans

the country go from racial apartheid to one defined by class. The transition, characterised by the adoption of neoliberal policies, failed to address the fundamental and structural wealth gap between the black majority and white minority (which was allowed to retain ownership of the mines, large portions of the best land, and financial institutions). Bond (2004) explains that one of the first decisions that led to socioeconomic inequality was the decision by the then interim government to accept a loan from the International Monetary Fund which came with a set of conditions, including cuts to public sector wages. The second decision involved South Africa's implementation of an economic strategy built on a World Bank econometric model, with a promise to create 400,000 jobs every year. The strategy did not benefit anyone other than private businesses, and the country has since experienced "systemic underdevelopment and segregation of the oppressed majority through structured economic, political, legal, and cultural practices" (Bond 2004, p.67). Instead of job creation, the economic model saw unemployment rise in the decade that followed, primarily affecting the black population, while white people continued to thrive economically due to the post-apartheid transition deal affording them continued ownership of economic institutions. Poverty increased, as well as the cost of water, electricity and telecommunications. These basic amenities were disconnected from many homes, or residents were evicted. Public health services have declined due to healthcare privatisation, while male unemployment and the feminisation of poverty has led to an increase in violence against women (ibid.). Another proposal (made by the World Bank) rejected the development of public housing (because of a reliance on commercial instead of state development) – an initiative that would have enabled the socially and economically disadvantaged to reside across various parts of the city but has instead forced the poor to live on the peripheries of urban and rural areas, resulting in a form of residential/class apartheid (ibid.). Duncan (2000) observes a contradiction between the government's quest for nation-building while pursuing a neoliberal approach to transformation, and argues that South Africa's development needs to be informed by an "economic justice" perspective which would address the cause of racial and gender inequality, and would shift away from the argument and conviction that the only way for the country to transform is to continue to be part of the "competitiveness race" (Duncan 2000, p.59).

It is within these historical developments and the consequent social and economic reality that the media in South Africa negotiate their democratic role and responsibility. During apartheid, media freedom was restricted through censorship and threat of imprisonment, and journalists were forbidden from quoting or using pictures of anti-apartheid leaders. The outcome of these measures was an "essentially White public sphere, polarized along ethnic lines with an English press tied to capital putting forward a liberal critique in terms of human rights (rather than structural inequalities) and a largely subservient Afrikaner nationalist press supportive of the apartheid state" (Wasserman and de Beer 2005, p.196). Even though the media contributed to a peaceful first election, it was biased in its representation of political choices to South African voters, which could be attributed to the fact that media content remained largely characterised by white values (Duncan 2000). Top editorial and sub-editorial positions and newsrooms continued to be largely occupied by white, male journalists (Berger 1999), and the media was politically polarised, with English and Afrikaans press being the most dominant and supportive of their respective political parties; only the Mail & Guardian and Sowetan backed the ANC (Wasserman and de Beer 2005). The transformation of editorial appointments along racial and gender lines was slower for print than for broadcasting but eventually black journalists (men and women) took up these positions (Wasserman 2010) and print content began to feature images and voices of black citizens (Berger 1999). Since the collapse of apartheid, in response to data showing that 50 per cent of Cape Town-based newsrooms were white, with Johannesburg the exception where more than 50 per cent were black, and Durban where 51 per cent of reporters were women, the ANC has been calling for the transformation of race and gender representation in the media industry (Daniels 2013, p.23). A 2013 study looking at the gender and race breakdown across newsrooms of major, largely Johannesburg-based media houses (CNBC Africa, Eyewitness News, City Press, Mail & Guardian, Sunday Times, Beeld, SABC, The Witness and the Sowetan), found that 61 per cent of journalists were black (African, Coloured, Indian), and 49 per cent were women, while 55 per cent of editors were black and 55 per cent were male (Daniels 2013, p.22). Looking at the racial and gender diversity of editors across the country showed further imbalances, where out of 49 editors, 23 were white

and 29 were male (Daniels 2013, p.22). (For a detailed breakdown of employment equity policies and gender/race distributions per media house see Daniels 2013).⁴

Relying on political discourses, Berger (1999) suggests four different perspectives from which to analyse the role of media in South Africa post-1994, against its role under apartheid, bearing in mind that "(...) the media does not, and cannot, stand outside of the social relations within which it operates," and that any analysis of South Africa's media post-apartheid therefore needs to "focus on the expected, indeed inexorable, alignment of media to the changed power structure" including racial make-up of media ownership and professionals - journalists and editors (Berger 1999, p.83). Using the first perspective, Berger (1999) argues that the media was "a factor in the production and reproduction of a racist authoritarian system" (*ibid.*, p.82) and in this sense, an essential part of the political and legal system, which was reflected in the media's "ownership and control, revenue streams, staffing, content and audiences" (ibid., p.82). In contrast, evaluating the media's role in post-apartheid South Africa requires examination of the nature of the media's relationship with the new system by evaluating whether it is genuinely part of a democratic transformation, or merely "servicing a new ruling class alliance" (ibid., p.83). A possible conclusion here is that the media has not made enough of a shift and contribution to the new South Africa in terms of building up democracy (*ibid.* 1999).

The second perspective considers the media during apartheid as having played the *role of "resisting and/or reforming that system"* (Berger 1999, p.82). Relying on this perspective would inform post-apartheid analysis differently: the media is seen as having acted as the fourth estate, characterised by autonomy and professional journalistic values. Therefore, in evaluating the post-apartheid media, one would have to ask whether the media continued to exercise the same liberal values or succumbed to the "illiberal pressures of a new government" (*ibid.*, p.84). Here two assertions emerge: that media aligned with the new system and failed to play a democratising role; and that it exposed flaws in the new government (*ibid.* 1999).

⁴ According to StatsSA 2014 demographics, 80% of the South African population is black, 4.77 million is coloured, 4.55 million is white, and 1.34 million is Asian/Indian. Over 51% of the total population is female (Stats 2014, p.7).

The third perspective argues that the media, which once enjoyed its place in the privileged apartheid system, took on a *critical watchdog role* once that privilege was taken away – not because of a responsibility to support or reinforce the new ruling power but because of vested interests reflected in the ownership of media. Here the suggestion is that the media did not support the interests of democracy either during or after.

The fourth perspective argues that media, who felt their role was to be critical of apartheid governments and systems, became "'redundant' once the newly elected, democratic government came into power, raising the question whether journalists who opposed the old government should automatically support the new one. Berger (1999) concludes that the media carried their critical role over to the new system and inadvertently hindered democratic growth by opposing the new government.

Overall, the first two perspectives could be seen as having contributed to democratic transformation, while the second two hindered it. At the same time, in observing elements of all of the above four perspectives emerging and interplaying, it becomes clear that at the time of Berger's study the media was complex and its role overlapping and contradictory (Berger 1999).

A topic dominating debates within South African journalism scholarship is the question of the media's *role and responsibility in facilitating the ongoing consolidation* and deepening of democracy in South Africa; a discussion evolving against the background of the country's authoritarian political history, racial segregation and a racially, culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse society, within a population of approximately 54 million people and 11 official languages (StatsSA 2014).

South Africa's media system is based on the British-American media system of democratic libertarianism (Wasserman and de Beer 2005). Since the first democratic elections, remarkable political changes have had a significant effect on the reorganisation of media and civil society structures; a process which has rendered the media in South Africa both "a site and an agent for change" (Wasserman 2010, p.568). In many ways, this reform has allowed the media to "emerge as a political player in their own right" and take on the quasi role of opposition to the ruling ANC party. This

in turn encourages the government to validate their interventions in the media, such as threatening to pull advertising (*ibid.*, p.573). Based on interviews with journalists and political actors in South Africa (and Namibia) which explored their understanding of freedom of speech, democratic role and responsibility of the media, Wasserman (2010) found that the most important role and responsibility of journalists was to act as a watchdog and opposition to the government (*ibid.* 2010). The 'watchdog' role has been so tightly defined and fiercely defended that the media has often been perceived as antagonistic and "seen to undermine the fragile trust in a new government" (*ibid.*, p.569).

Ongoing debates on the responsibility and role of media have progressed alongside emerging definitions of what might be a useful ethical framework guiding South African media. The relationship between the new government and the media has been strained and characterised by clashes over respective perceptions of their roles in transforming post-apartheid society. The definition of the media's role – that is, whether it should act in the 'public interest' or the 'national interest' - has been contested and debated against the normative ethical frameworks of libertarianism and communitarianism (Wasserman and de Beer 2005). Wasserman and de Beer (2005) propose conceptual clarification of the relationship between the two, and finding the middle ground within a framework of *mutualism*; a space where the two established concepts, overlap (ibid. 2005). While it is still unclear whether an orientation towards a public or national interest focus would be of greater benefit to the country's transformation, national interest is often understood in the context of apartheid era government control of media, and is therefore looked upon unfavourably by the media who defend their independence and ability to self-regulate under the public interest concept (ibid. 2005). South Africa's democratisation process, accompanied by a liberalisation / commercialisation / marketisation of media, has seen the media driven by economic imperatives over responsibilities to the public or community which would be encouraged by an ethical framework of communitarianism. The media's reorientation towards the market has been criticised for privileging those in a position to access the media - reinforcing elite voices and narrow interests while marginalising others - and appears to be at odds with the media's post-apartheid vision of promoting social cohesion and nation building (ibid. 2005). Wasserman and de Beer (2005) call for an ethical framework resembling "civic journalism" guided by a "people-centred approach" – an approach that emphasises the media's responsibility to the public, by devoting attention to the needs of the marginalised and poor, not only as watchdogs of the government's performance and accountability to the public but also as solution-seekers to societal issues: "With its emphasis on participation and interdependence, journalists working according to this normative framework will not only highlight problems and conflicts but also attempt to find solutions for the problems of 'ordinary people'" (*ibid.* 2005).

Adding to this, Blankenberg (1999) and Hyde-Clarke (2011) suggest the relevance of liberation journalism and peace journalism practices. Blankenberg (1999) explores some defining elements of the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, and how it might be relevant to the development of a form of journalism that is of value to South Africa, and globally. Ubuntu could be used as a foundation for liberatory or liberation journalism (borrowing elements of participatory communication and development journalism) which in its ideal would combine various roles: facilitator of participation in political and public spheres; mediator of conflict; catalyst for development of critical consciousness (the empowerment of people to think critically about surrounding power dynamics); and storyteller, where ultimately the information received from the people is also returned to and for the people (*ibid.* 1999). Hyde-Clarke (2011) argues that there is a need for South African journalists to employ peace journalism practices especially when reporting on issues of race, adding that commercial media often rely on "sensational and inflammatory discourse" in order to attract audiences (ibid. p.41). Hyde-Clarke (2011) analyses media coverage of a controversial political figure, Julius Malema, known for his antagonistic discourse, to evaluate whether the media narrative is conflict driven, and if so, whether peace journalism could be a solution (ibid. 2011). Terms considered as markers of *conflict discourse* and found in the monitored media were: attacks, threat, factions, battle and warnings, as well as power struggles, internal differences, and divisions. The terms 'racism' and 'hate speech' appeared in almost half of the entire sample. The author argues that in a sensitive and fragile democratic environment such as South Africa, use of conflict discourse and media frames, is "highly problematic" because of its "potential to stir up public outrage and possible violent action" (ibid., p.49). Alternatively, peace journalism practices would avoid use of inflammatory language which appears to take sides, and rather seek peaceful solutions and alternate sources (not just official ones) and highlight peaceful initiatives.

South Africa's media system is *highly legalised* and *self-regulated*, bodies such as South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) protect media freedom and the South African Press Council regulate ethical conduct. Despite this, government and political actors are often perceived as exerting pressure on both independent media and the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), through accusations of interference in governance and editorial decisions, and by subtly pressuring journalists, and especially black journalists expected to "toe the line" and play a role in "nation building" (Wasserman 2010, p.573). The Press Council, which has received an increasing number of complaints each year, (nearly 300 in 2012 compared to 150 in 2009), has faced criticism by the ruling party for being "toothless", that is, lacking the "power to sanction the press in a meaningful way" (Daniels 2013, p.46), leading to a proposal by the government to establish a statutory media regulation body, the Media Appeals Tribunal. The proposal was rejected and criticised by journalists and the media industry as an attack on media freedom (Wasserman 2010). (For further analysis of complaints to the Press Council, outcomes of rulings and nature of resolutions see Daniels 2013). The first of two reviews into the system of press regulation took place in 2011 and was carried out by the Press Council itself, resulting in a report "reasserting the principle of self-regulation" (Daniels 2013, p.47). The second review, initiated by the Press Freedom Commission, an independent body set up by Print Media South Africa and the South African National Editors' Forum, was tasked to "investigate the best possible regulatory system suitable for the South African print media" calling for a "system of co-regulation" (IREX 2012, p.376). The South African Press Council has led reforms on the establishment of the co-regulation system which allows the public and media equal representation within the council and greater opportunity to "appeal directly to ordinary courts" (Freedom House 2015b). Most recently, a Press Council Appeals Panel has called on the ruling party to publish an official document outlining the intentions of the Media Appeals Tribunal to initiate informed public debate (ENCA 2015).

Journalists interviewed by Wasserman (2010) stressed that the commercialisation of, and state intervention in *SABC* was threatening press freedom. Although South Africa's press freedom progress in 2014 was "marked by laudable legislative developments" (namely the decision by President Zuma not to sign into law

the Protection of Information Bill) and saw South Africa rise 11 places to 42nd in the World Press Freedom Index (Reporters without Borders 2014b), according to Freedom House (2015b) press freedom has declined in recent years. There is growing *pressure* from political and economic actors on both private and public media outlets, as well as an "uptick in violence" (ibid. 2015b) marked by the killing of a journalist, the first such incident since the democratic elections in 1994. Based on data collected by the Committee to Protect Journalists, four journalists have been killed since 1992, two of these deaths being classified as murder, one in 1993 and another in 2014 (CPJ 2015). According to IREX (2012), between 2011 and 2012, 12 journalists and photographers reporting from crime scenes were "detained and arrested"; journalists have experienced harassment while attending political conferences and there have been claims that investigative journalists' phones have been tapped (ibid., p.378). Journalists have been intimidated and forced by the police to delete photos (CPJ 2015). Legislation such as the Law on Antiterrorism prevents threats to the 'national interest' by restricting journalists' reporting on security or penal institutions. The coverage of political or business actors carries the risk of fines or legal action (defamation), while the National Key Points Act prohibits journalists from accessing, photographing or conducting investigations in a number of locations such as President Zuma's Nkandla home, which was controversially remodelled at an estimated cost of over US\$200 million (Freedom House 2015b). Until the start of 2015, the list of national key points was not publicly available, meaning journalists could be arrested for accessing a restricted location unknowingly. Even after local civil society organisations successfully campaigned for the document's public release, the list is incomplete and contradicts prior declarations of key points (Right to Know 2015). In 2014, a journalist was detained for taking photographs of one such national key point (a coal silo collapse at a power station) and was only released once copies of his press credentials were made by officials.

Applications under the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), which allows members of the public to request *access to information* held by the State or any private and public institutions, were granted in 16 per cent of cases between August 2012 and July 2013 (Freedom House 2015b). Approval of access was a slow and stalled process, viable only to journalists working on investigative stories with extended deadlines (IREX 2012, p.378). The Protection of State Information Bill, dubbed the

'Secrecy Bill', mandated to protect classified information and national security is perceived to be in direct conflict with the PAIA. The Bill "aims to regulate the classification, protection, and dissemination of state information [and] gives ministers the power to classify documents as state records" (*ibid.* p.373) and threatens up to 25 years' imprisonment for journalists found in possession of information deemed by state agencies as communicating issues of 'national interest' (Freedom House 2015b). Following ongoing debates and numerous reviews and amendments over the past five years, in April 2015 the bill was voted through parliament and passed on to President Zuma to sign into law, while media practitioners and civil society organisations continue to appeal on the grounds of the bill's alleged unconstitutionality (International Press Institute 2015; IREX 2012) and the risk of its misuse to "cover up crime and corruption by government officials" (FreedomInfo 2012).

Berger (1999) describes South Africa's historical media ownership as an oligopoly, made up of state-owned broadcasters and a privately-owned print industry dominated by English and Afrikaans language newspapers. After 1994, the introduction of foreign ownership to the media landscape resulted in an increase in newspaper titles, racial diversification of ownership (media were increasingly owned by black professionals) and greater competition (for detailed breakdown of newspaper titles and ownership at that time see Berger 1999, pp.97-98). Media ownership restructuring was seen as proof of a political transition happening in line with democratic principles, resulting in a media industry which, although free and pluralised, continues to reinforce "societal polarizations of the past" (Wasserman and de Beer 2005, p.38). A vision for post-apartheid media in South Africa was one that would serve as a space for "national unification and democratic citizenship" (Barnett 1999, p.649). However, the legacy of apartheid means that structural limitations created by separating broadcast programming along linguistic, cultural and racial lines continue to affect the media by creating a fragmented media market and audience. Radio and television were not equally distributed geographically, with urban areas having greater access to broadcast signal and programming than rural (and often poorer) areas. More money was invested in broadcasting services targeted at white audiences, and programming content was aimed at black and white audiences separately. On this basis, South African broadcast media "has not been organized either culturally or technologically to provide a common space of communication" (Barnett 1999, p.650).

The South African media market remains racialised and class-determined, with tabloid newspapers mainly targeted at a black audience, challenging the extent to which the media's post-apartheid diversification and pluralisation has contributed to the construction of a participatory and democratic public sphere (Wasserman and de Beer 2005). The bulk of the media is owned by four companies: Times Media Group, Independent News and Media, Media 24 and Caxton/CTP, alongside TNA Media which owns The New Age newspaper, Primedia and Kagiso which dominate radio, Sabido Investments which own e.tv and eNCA, and Naspers-owned DStv, as well as smaller independent media houses (Freedom House 2015b; IREX 2012; Daniels 2013). In 2012 and 2013 two major ownership changes occurred when *Independent* Newspapers were sold to Sekunjalo Independent Media and Avusa was bought out by Times Media Group (Daniels 2013). According to Freedom House (2015b), ownership of private media is increasingly dominated by government allies, bringing with it growing political interference. One such case is the newspaper publisher *Independent* News and Media South Africa whose change in ownership in 2013 resulted in several editors and journalists leaving or being fired (Freedom House 2015b). Alongside calling for race and gender transformation within newsrooms, the ruling party has criticised the print media sector for being "highly concentrated" and lacking black ownership, which, according to Media Development and Diversity Agency's statistics, in 2013 stood at 14 per cent (Daniels 2013, p.4). Further highlighted imbalances in the print media industry were a lack of diversity of voices, marginalisation of rural and poor communities and white-dominated ownership, which trickled down into selection of issue coverage; all these challenges were noted and measures to tackle them were taken by the 'Print and Digital Media Transformation Task Team' instituted in 2012 by industry bodies following the parliamentary Communication Portfolio Committee's emphasis on the need for a Media Charter (Daniels 2013, p.4). (For a breakdown of responses by individual print media members see Daniels 2013, pp.5-6).

When observing **broadcasting governance** in South Africa, it is important to note that the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act was passed in 1993, with a mandate to oversee the transition of the *SABC* from a state-owned and controlled broadcaster to a public service broadcaster, ensuring diversification of the broadcasting landscape by including and catering for all linguistic and cultural groups in South Africa, and diversifying media ownership (Barnett 1999). Over the past two

decades, several other pieces of legislation aimed at regulating broadcasting have been developed and implemented, including the Broadcasting Act, the Icasa Act, and the Electronic Communications Act (ICASA 2015). A policy review, known as the Triple Inquiry, (published in 1995), to which the IBA submitted recommendations on the restructuring of the SABC, concluded that the SABC would sell off six of its eight radio stations to independent/private bidders, retaining three television stations. The process was seen as a test of the government's commitment to the privatisation of media and black empowerment, by setting up a regulatory framework which "obliged white-owned capital to forge partnerships with black empowerment groups" (Barnett 1999, p.657; for a detailed breakdown of stakeholders in the sale of SABC's radio stations see also Barnett 1999, p.657). No matter how noble the intention, Barnett (1999) argues that due to the limitations of market-driven broadcasting, the diversification of ownership did not necessarily lead to a greater diversity of programming and opinions (and therefore nation-building). In fact, this increase in diversity has instead led to bigger competition among existing audiences, namely, an "affluent minority", socioeconomically placed as consumers of advertising (ibid., p.660). With this in mind, the media's position as a space for an inclusive public sphere or agent of nation-building should not be overestimated, especially in a country where access to media and technology is unequal (ibid.). Duncan (2000) adds that the restructuring of the SABC had a negative effect on the financial sustainability of the broadcaster following government's decision to kept proceeds from the sale of its six radio stations. By dividing itself into commercial and non-commercial arms, with the intention of the former funding the latter, the SABC aimed to become self-sufficient. However, increased competition led to decreased advertising revenue, and high unemployment rates and poverty meant that the broadcaster was unlikely to be able to rely on licence fees. Given that the non-commercial arm of the SABC consists of radio stations serving many of the rural and non-English speaking communities, any financial strain would undermine these radio stations and the vital role they serve in informing these communities (Duncan 2000). SABC's commercial radio stations Metro FM and 5FM, as well as commercial TV channel SABC 3, depend on advertising revenue meaning the broadcaster is "constantly caught between the conflicting demands of public service and commercialism" (Daniels 2013, p.7). In recent years, the SABC has been facing "a credibility challenge" (IREX 2012, p.378). The public broadcaster has been criticised for "displaying a pro-ANC bias" (Freedom House 2015b) and struggling with financial mismanagement, irregular recruitment practices for senior staff, and self-censorship following cancellations of political programming deemed critical of the ruling party (Freedom House 2015b; IREX 2012, p.382). In the lead up to the 2014 national elections, *SABC* journalists were instructed to reduce coverage of protests and opposition parties, and the broadcaster refused to air political advertising by two of the major opposition parties, the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) (Freedom House 2015b). Journalists were also warned by the broadcaster's chair at the time that the *SABC* was a 'national key point' meaning journalists' phones were monitored and information on internal practices was not to be leaked (Freedom House 2015b). In light of these challenges within the *SABC*, a coalition of trade unions and civil society organisations called 'SOS: Support Public Broadcasting' was set up in 2007 to "create a public broadcasting system dedicated to the broadcasting of quality, diverse, citizen-oriented public programming committed to deepening South Africa's constitution" (Daniels 2013, p.7).

South Africa's **media landscape** has witnessed considerable changes over the past two decades. In the immediate post-apartheid period radio was the most popular medium, followed by television, with newspapers' circulation falling dramatically (with the exception of new mass-market tabloids that gained, and seem to retain, huge popularity). Reasons behind this decline are thought to be a drop in the quality of news content and lack of investment in investigative journalism due to transition towards a profit-driven media; alternatively, following the democratic elections, the public lost interest in serious news content and developed a preference for entertainment (Berger 1999). At that time, South Africa had the second lowest number of newspaper titles and fifth lowest level of circulation in relation to its population, attributed to high unemployment rates (Duncan 2000). Radio continues to be the "most widespread and popular medium in the broadcast landscape" in South Africa: there are 18 public radio stations (SABC) and several private ones (702 Talk Radio, Cape Talk 567, Kaya FM, etc.) with a listening population of 31.26 million of which 8.74 million tune into community radio (Daniels 2013, p.7). According to 2013 statistics there were 16 commercial, 20 public and 130 community radio stations in South Africa, with audiences listening to radio for an average of 3.5 hours a day (*ibid.*, p.9). (For a detailed breakdown of major public and community radio listenership see Daniels 2013, pp.9-10). In 2013, 241 *newspapers* were registered with Print and Digital South Africa;

however, according to circulation statistics monitored by the South African Audit Bureau of Circulations, within the first quarter of 2013 there were 359 newspapers of which 219 were free publications. The majority catered for English language speakers, followed by Afrikaans and isiZulu (ibid. 2013). According to the South African Audit Bureau of Circulations, newspaper circulation has steadily declined by an average 5.5 per cent each year since 2008, with biggest effect on English titles (ibid.). (For a detailed breakdown of circulation per newspaper see Daniels 2013, pp.2-3). The downward economic trend has resulted in staff cuts, redundancies, voluntary and early retirement packages (*ibid.*). The SABC operates three national **television** channels, each catering to different audiences, with SABC1 focusing on youth, drama and sport, in Nguni languages and English; SABC2 focusing on nation building, culture, tradition and history broadcasting in Sesotho, Afrikaans, XiTsonga, TshiVenda and English; and SABC3 with a spectrum of programming, broadcasting in English (*ibid.*, p.8). Although SABC dominates television viewership, availability of a relatively affordable paid channel (DStv) is reducing viewership of the public broadcaster (ibid.). Despite that, SABC's most highly watched channel, SABC1, continued to attract over 27 million viewers per week, while subscription TV was reaching 27 per cent of South African households, with DStv claiming 9.1 million viewers weekly (IREX 2012, p.381). Similarly, SABC3's 7pm nightly news has also been losing its audience to e.tv's 7pm news (Daniels 2013, p.8). Although there is a plurality of media channels, the diversity of news sources is limited, particularly evident in the gender distribution, with only 19 per cent of sources being female (IREX 2012, p.382). Information is often shared among major media houses resulting in the replication of urban-centric news; some of this geographic and economic disparity is bridged by community radio which has a growing reach of over 24 per cent of South Africans (ibid., p.382) and community papers based in smaller towns and focusing on local issues, as well as the national newspaper The New Age, which focuses on regional and rural news coverage (Daniels 2013). The South African Press Association (SAPA) is the country's leading local news agency (IREX 2012, p.374) alongside international organisations such as Reuters, AFP and Bloomberg which often employ local journalists (IREX 2012, p.383).

South Africa's **journalistic professionalism** has also been affected by commercialisation of the industry. Newsrooms have been juniorised and staff numbers have been cut; there has been an increase in tabloidisation and an erosion of

investigative and in-depth reporting (Wasserman and de Beer 2005, p.39; Wasserman 2010). Journalists find this development ironic and consider it a wasted opportunity: although there is more press freedom than before, investigative reporting has suffered, which is "particularly problematic in a new democracy where the media should contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions and root out corruption" (Wasserman 2010, p.577). Investigative reporting was said to be "costly and timeconsuming" and focuses more often on "politics and economics" over issues around "health, education, gender, and poverty" (IREX 2012, p.381). Following concerns and criticisms that the journalistic profession was failing to transform to the highest standard, the South African Editors Forum (SANEF) instigated a skills audit in 2002 looking into the reporting and writing skills and accuracy of 112 reporters across 32 media institutions, who had been in the industry for up to five years (Steyn and de Beer 2004). (For the full media section of the skills audit, see de Beer and Steyn 2002). More recent investigations into the state of news reporting in the country (Daniels 2013) also show that the South African media is in turmoil, partly as a result of commercial pressures and the need to adapt to a global industry undergoing rapid change as a result of technological developments and shifts.

SANEF's 2002 study noted at the time that due to residual and persistent socioeconomic inequality black journalists often left the profession to pursue jobs paying higher salaries. While some editors maintained they would not hire black journalists for the purpose of achieving racial quotas, others said they would pay black journalists a higher than average salary to stop them from leaving the profession. Over a decade later, interviews with journalists and editors showed continued disagreement over the extent to which newsrooms were "balanced and diverse", with some saying that more needs to be done to increase black representation (Daniels 2013, p.33). In 2002 reporters were being paid between ZAR1000 and ZAR5, 999 (USD 96-573) per month (Steyn and de Beer 2004). A more recent survey of 196 respondents (South African journalists, editors and sub-editors) randomly recruited via journalism forums and various social media platforms found that in 2013 the average salary for men was ZAR26, 906, while for women it was ZAR23, 821, with some women earning more than the average (The Media Online 2013). In 2002 most journalists had a diploma in journalism, and employers preferred some *formal education* over none at all (Steyn and de Beer 2004), while the 2013 survey indicated that the majority of respondents

had a bachelor's degree (The Media Online 2013). South African journalists do not need licences to practice the profession, and are "free to form unions or professional organisations to protect their rights" though they are said not to take full advantage of this freedom (IREX 2012, p.379).

In 2002, *juniorisation* was not found to be as much of a challenge (with only 10 per cent of reporters classified as junior) however, the progression of junior reporters into higher positions too early in their career, before they acquired the necessary skills, was seen as problematic (Steyn and de Beer 2004). In recent years, efforts to cut costs and increase profit have seen media institutions lose experienced, more costly journalists and increase juniorisation of newsrooms. Exacerbating the situation further are high unemployment rates, especially among students and junior journalists, who are prepared to work for low salaries in order to gain employment. Those who leave the profession tend to do so after five years in order to pursue higher paying jobs, often in government (IREX 2012, p.380). Wasserman's (2010) study revealed that journalists and political actors perceived juniorisation to be a problem and stressed that many journalists are "inadequately skilled to obtain all sides of a story or to provide context to news events" (ibid., p.579). Faced with pressing deadlines and increasing workloads, journalists often succumb to accessing the most readily available and reliable news sources, often those in government and the corporate world (Duncan 2000). Journalists and political actors interviewed by Wasserman (2010) expressed that the media are increasingly perceived to be irresponsible and inaccurate, while tabloid newspapers were seen to be sensational, superficial and lacking context in stories. Politicians stressed that newspapers were rarely willing to admit mistakes or correct inaccurate reporting leading politicians to cut off journalists working for them from any further engagement (Wasserman 2010). In 2002, reporters were found to lack awareness of media ethics, especially the sensitivity to deal with issues such as violence against women or HIV/Aids, while media law was something that editors most often dealt with and was therefore out of the scope of the journalists' everyday practice and knowledge base (Steyn and de Beer 2004). According to IREX (2012) the standard of the South African Press Code developed by the print media industry is "in line with international codes" and "promotes the principles of fair, balanced, and accurate" reporting; however, journalists are said to demonstrate lax adherence to ethical principles, engaging in unverified/inaccurate, subjective/bias reporting, brown-envelope journalism and plagiarism, and lacking diverse perspectives and opportunity for sources to respond (*ibid.*, p.379).

SANEF's 2002 audit also found that reporting accuracy suffered due to a lack of writing and interviewing skills, and an ability to think critically, signalling weaknesses in journalistic skills training and development (Steyn and de Beer 2004). Journalists lacked the conceptual and analytical skills to develop a potential story fully, source follow-up stories looking at the issue creatively, in depth and from different angles. Reported events were not contextualized with background information, and journalists lacked awareness of important, historical news events and general knowledge. Similar challenges were noted in IREX's 2012 report; journalists often focused on covering events rather than the issues behind them, failing to unpack complexities through analytical and in-depth reporting, and concentrating more on urban over rural stories, leaving the stories of ordinary people under-reported. Specifically in reference to the coverage of 'service delivery protests' journalists are said to "follow the billowing smoke without conducting proper analysis and research" into the consequences of the protests and the government's role in delivering services (*ibid.*, p.380). In 2013, a "snapshot" study which looked into financial investment in training and skills development in three media houses, conducted discussions with media trainers and voluntary online surveys with 131 journalists on their training needs, found that in contrast to the 2002 audit, "much is being spent on training" and that journalists' training interests and needs have shifted; most journalists required more training in online and new-media journalism, followed by creative writing, investigative reporting and media law and ethics (Daniels 2013, p.55). (For further training needs and a breakdown of financial investment, training programmes and policies across media institutions included in the study, see Daniels 2013.)

The need for journalists to develop new-media skills is all the more pressing in light of media institutions shifting towards new-media strategies and growing online audiences (locally and internationally); interviews showed that South African editors encouraged media professionals to use social media (Twitter, Facebook, blogging platforms, etc.) to "break stories" and to "engage with readers" (Daniels 2013, p.38). However, new-media changes within newsrooms have affected journalists differently, with some expressing "excitement" and others "confusion and stress"; contrary to

stereotypes, sometimes younger journalists felt more overwhelmed trying to cope with the changes than older journalists with more experience (*ibid.*, p.42). Journalists revealed that the digitisation of journalism has intensified the need to multitask and "repackag[e] information for different platforms" (*ibid.*, p.43). Interviews with media trainers also revealed that skills development among newly qualified journalists would significantly improve if students were "encouraged to freelance while still studying" and more emphasis was placed on "clos[ing] the gap between university programmes and real newsrooms" (*ibid.*, p.57).

Against the criticism of traditional media's struggle to create and uphold a space for a truly democratic public sphere, it is important to highlight the role of digital communication in creating an online public sphere in South Africa. According to Bosch (2010), journalists in South Africa are using online media to practice journalism and communicate to different audiences, but also to re-evaluate the meaning and role of journalism and citizen journalism, through emphasis on civic journalism. She evaluates two online platforms and their role in facilitating online public discourses -The Mail & Guardian newspaper's 'Thoughtleader' blog, and MyNews24, a citizen journalism website, launched by the mainstream and commercial news site News24and finds that both serve the role of forming a discursive online public sphere in different ways. The Thoughtleader invites "high-quality critical commentary" contributions from experts in a variety of fields; the public is able to comment, debate and discuss, generating a high level of engagement between the authors and readers. An evaluation of this interaction shows evidence of reasoned and sustained debate the kind that Habermas (1991) argued was necessary in order to form a true and democratic public sphere. In looking at the MyNews24 citizen journalism website, the website offers readers the opportunity to freely (without invitation) post comments on news reports, generating high interactivity among those who comment (Bosch 2010). In South Africa, digital journalism serves a strong democratic role in providing a space for the promotion of local news and interaction of local views. Examples of how the new online space provides opportunity for alternative voices and community-oriented journalism are the Daily Maverick (www.dailymaverick.co.za) and Groundup (www.groundup.org.za). These spaces are, however, not without challenges. Most online media content tends to be in English, which creates "linguistic and cultural barriers" and has been described as "intellectual colonialism" (ibid., p.267). Another challenge is varying access to the internet as well as the different levels of computer literacy across the country, especially between rural and urban areas. Access to the internet increased from 3.6 million users in 2010 to 8.2 million in 2012 (Daniels 2013), with 7.9 million of these accessing the web via their cell phones (IREX 2012, p.374) and predictions that two out of every three South African adults would have access by 2016 (Daniels 2013). Economic constraints and the fact that most online content is in English means that a large majority still have little or no access to online news, and the most affected are those living in poorer areas and informal settlements (Freedom House 2015b). In order to address this, the Open Society Foundation for South Africa and Project Isizwe have recently launched a joint pilot project to establish two free internet zones for residents of Gugulethu and Khayelitsha, aiming to "kick start a 'bottom-up' campaign for free and subsidised internet access for people who live in under resourced communities" (OSFSA 2015).

Conclusions

This analysis suggests that South Africa's media landscape continues to develop as a site of democratic contestation where various political, economic and civil society actors interact with media in different ways. Since the first democratic elections in 1994, the media have undergone substantial changes, with beneficial and detrimental effects on its role in facilitating democratic development. As a result of its authoritarian past and the racial segregation under apartheid, debates about the media's transformation have questioned its role and responsibility, namely whether the media should act primarily in the public or national interest. Parallel to these debates, journalism scholarship has focused on emerging definitions of the most appropriate ethical framework to guide the debated role and responsibility of South African media.

Media freedom is a contested space which continues to be challenged and fought for by the media industry and civil society groups. Despite a strong governing foundation of media laws and institutions, in recent years media freedom has come under attack through the proposed reintroduction of various laws which have been deemed unconstitutional, and calls to restructure the current self-regulatory system into a statutory one. Transformation of the media's racial and gender balance has been progressive but slow, both in terms of ownership and newsrooms, with even greater inequality noted in non-urban media outlets. The country's public broadcaster SABC has in recent years faced questions around its credibility and criticism of its selfcensorship, pro-ruling party bias, financial mishandling and irregular appointments of senior management; issues which are ultimately affecting the broadcaster's ability to carry out its public service mandate. Professionally, there has been a decline in investigative journalism and an increase in juniorisation, attributed to cost cutting. This comes hand in hand with findings that journalists identify new-media training as a primary need, with, interestingly, younger journalists finding the increasing digitalisation of news more challenging to adjust to. Lastly, despite persistent inequalities, access to the internet and therefore online news is continuing to rise among South Africans.

In summary, the structural conditions of journalism in South Africa should be seen against the background of overcoming the authoritarian apartheid regime (political system and culture, legal framework), and redefined within a post-apartheid neo-liberal economic context (market, ownership). In terms of professionalisation and self-regulation, journalism continues to perform the role of watchdog within a racialised and class determined media space, while evolving against notions of the philosophy of Ubuntu, peace journalism, civic and development journalism, in an effort to address the country's most pressing social issues.

In general, the developed list of dimensions has proven its validity, as it guides the analysis towards the central factors of structural conditions relevant to media and journalism in South Africa. However, the relative influence of each dimension inevitably varies. In addition, the implications of the internet and social media on the structural conditions of journalism have not been considered systematically in (theoretical) literature on media systems.

Central structural factors of the political, economic and legal framework in South Africa exist on the level of the *nation-state* proving the validity of the country-specific analysis of structural conditions. However, the report also identifies transnational influences, such as the impact of foreign media ownership. Hence, although the nation-state still seems to be the central unit of analysis at the beginning of the 21st century, transnational impact should be an additional frame of investigation.

The report goes on to demonstrate the importance of *conflict communication* as a case study with regard to structural conditions: conflicts (and communication about them) can be considered a test case for the functioning of media-related structures, and serve as possible catalysts for changes to these structures. This country report also confirms the need to consider *agency* and the *procedural dimension* while investigating structural conditions of media and journalism: structural conditions have been (re-) designed by central political incumbents, economic actors and media practitioners for their personal benefit changing repeatedly during the different phases of transition and consolidation.

Although the literature allowed for a comprehensive country report, *various knowledge gaps exist* with regard to the different dimensions of structural conditions in South Africa. This applies, for instance, to a shortage of reliable information regarding

journalists' education and salary levels as well as conditions leading to the juniorisation of newsrooms, noted weaknesses in ethical adherence, and skills required for news production.

In conclusion, the report provides a useful basis for an informed analysis of MeCoDEM interviews with journalists, with regard to the structural conditions shaping media and journalism in South Africa. While the list of dimensions (Table 1) offers insight into the general factors which potentially shape journalism and media on a structural level and how they interrelate with each other, the country report provides a comprehensive overview of the current structural conditions of media and journalism as described in the interviewees' statements on their working practices, role perceptions and ethical orientations. Overall performance in the various democratisation conflicts can be analysed and better explained against this background. As the paper includes an analysis of political systems, socioeconomic frameworks and political cultures of politicians and citizens in South Africa, it provides a useful background for MeCoDEM research on conflict communication by civil society actors and political activists (work package 5) as well as for the analysis of conflict management by governmental actors (work package 6).

MeCoDEM interviews with journalists in South Africa will provide additional empirical knowledge on cases and types of journalism embedded in certain structural conditions, i.e. how journalists function within these structures. This research will not only allow us to broaden knowledge on certain dimensions of structural conditions already mentioned in this working paper, but will likely elicit new structural factors of media and journalism which have not been considered in literature to date. On this basis, MeCoDEM findings will constitute a first step to reconsider and potentially expand the existing work on media systems and structural conditions of journalism in South Africa.

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