

## #NEWACTORS, #OLDPROBLEMS

### HOW THE DIGITAL SPHERE IS CHANGING THE INFORMATION PROCESS AND THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN AFRICA

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"The Internet is Not the Answer"<sup>1</sup> is the title the British-U.S. Internet critic Andrew Keen gave his latest work, which refers to the potentially democratising impact of the World Wide Web. In his book, he justifiably criticises clicktivism and anonymity on the Web, an uncontrolled explosion of information and the fact that those who shout loudest attract the most attention. Keen's perspective is also a typically Western one, based on essentially well-functioning democracies with essentially well-functioning media. A glance at Africa, where political systems are less stable and the media are weaker, shows that the Internet can indeed further democratic development. There, the digital space provides a platform for young bloggers and social media activists, from which they are making themselves heard ever more effectively. Through their posts and articles, they are contributing to the diversity of opinion and information on the continent.

#### NEW PLATFORMS FOR GOOD JOURNALISM

The 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2012 saw South African post-apartheid society suffer a disastrous event that would have a lasting impact. There had been a strike at the Marikana platinum mine for close to a week; the workers had put forward demands for their pay to be more than doubled from 530 euros to some 1,200 euros a month. The wildcat strikes were instigated mainly by the small AMCU trade union, which was seeking to establish itself as an alternative to the large union of mine workers NUMSA, which has close links to the government. The atmosphere had become increasingly aggressive as time went on, not only between the two trade unions but also between the strikers and the police. The

1 | Andrew Keen, *The Internet is Not the Answer*, New York, 2015.

strike had already led to the death of eight people by 16 August, including two policemen and four mine workers.

Then, at around midday on 16 August, something happened that brought back traumatic memories of the apartheid era to many South Africans: the police opened fire on the strikers and killed 34 people within minutes, injuring 78 others. The next day, the newspapers quickly drew parallels to the massacres of Sharpeville and Soweto, which are among the darkest chapters of the history of South African apartheid. But the enormity of the event lay in the fact that this time it was black policemen who had fired on black protesters. What had become of the lessons the Rainbow Nation was supposed to have learnt from the time of racial segregation?

Immediately following the incident, the government and police leadership sought to quell such questions from the outset. Representatives stated that the police had acted in self-defence and that the aggression and the first shots had come from the mine workers. Police Commissioner Riah Phiyega made statements to that effect during the press conference held on the day after the massacre. While the media held back from prejudging findings about the incident, most went along with this line and even provided eye-witness accounts that seemed to confirm it.<sup>2</sup>

It took two weeks for the media to seriously question this version of the events. The journalist responsible for raising doubts was Greg Marinovich. He had gained some reputation as a member of the so-called Bang-Bang

**As a member of the so-called Bang-Bang Club Greg Marinovich together with three other photographers documented the violent side of the South African post-apartheid transition.**

Club in the early 1990s, working with three other photographers to document the violent side of the South African post-apartheid transition. In 1991, he received the Pulitzer Prize for one of his photos. Upon hearing about the shots being fired, he immediately set off to Marikana to discover for himself what had happened. After several days of research, he published a long article on 30 August 2012, which raised serious doubts about the statements issued by the police. Drawing on his experience as a photographer, Marinovich realised that the places where several of the dead had been found as well as their positions were inconsistent with the justification of police self-defence. "It is becoming clear

2 | Cf. Pascal Fletcher, "South Africa's 'Hill of Horror': self-defense or massacre", Reuters, 16 Aug 2012, <http://reut.rs/Q7NQfD> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

to this reporter that heavily armed police hunted down and killed the miners in cold blood”, he writes about his findings.<sup>3</sup>

In carrying out this research, Greg Marinovich fulfilled the role of investigative journalist, which is to monitor the state’s activities and, in the best-case scenario, help to further democracy. It was not until he published his conclusions that the significance of the incident for South African society became clear. The fact that virtually no perpetrators were named in the governmental Marikana report published a few weeks ago after an investigation lasting two and a half years says a great deal about the current state of democracy in South Africa. However, what is truly extraordinary about this story is something else: Marinovich’s report did not appear in a newspaper or an investigative radio program. Instead, it was published in the *Daily Maverick*, an online portal, which offers a mix of news, opinions and analyses. Or, in the words of the motto displayed on the website: “For people with brains. And an internet connection.”

### **AFRICA IS TURNING MORE DIGITAL – FROM TUTORING TO ELECTORAL ROLL**

In fact, there have been increasingly clear signs of changes taking place in the area of information delivery in Sub-Saharan Africa over the last few years. It is still the exception rather than the rule that important news is not first available in the “traditional media” – mainly the radio but also newspapers and television. But digital outlets are increasing in importance. This is closely linked to the proliferation of the Internet in Africa. According to *Internet World Stats*,<sup>4</sup> every fourth person on the continent had access to the Internet by the end of 2014.

This means that the access rate is still some 15 percentage points below the global average of 42.4 per cent. But when one looks at Africa’s rural areas, it becomes clear that having an Internet connection no longer represents a phenomenon restricted to urban areas and the elites. This trend has been encouraged by increasingly

3 | Cf. Greg Marinovich, “The murder fields of Marikana: The cold murder fields of Marikana”, *Daily Maverick*, 8 Sep 2012, <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-08-30-the-murder-fields-of-marikana-the-cold-murder-fields-of-marikana> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

4 | Cf. “Internet Users in the World: Distribution by World Region”, *Internet World Stats*, 2014, <http://internetworldstats.com/stats.htm> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

declining prices of mobile handsets as well as decreasing data charging rates. In a study on communication costs, the LINK Centre of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg collaborated with five focus groups from South Africa, whose participants predominantly represented the rural regions as well as the townships. The average monthly income of the respondents was below 400 euros. Nevertheless, over three-quarters of them stated they had access to the Internet on their mobiles, and that they used this predominantly to search for educational and job opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

One should not necessarily conclude that the Internet is predominantly used for obtaining useful information in Africa. No doubt, people from Dakar to Durban also watch cat videos, update their Facebook profiles and send chat messages. But the less disposable income a household has, the more selective its members are with respect to data downloads. And there

are, in fact, some impressive examples of how helpful the Internet can be for furthering development on the continent. In South Africa with its struggling education sector,

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for instance, there is *Dr Math*,<sup>6</sup> a maths tutoring service people access on their mobiles. This service is integrated into the chat platform Mxit, which is extremely popular with school children; and because of the low data usage, each posed question only costs a fraction of a euro cent. Similar applications help farmers in Ghana with setting their prices<sup>7</sup> or voters in Kenya with the registration process and with locating the nearest polling station.<sup>8</sup> The last-mentioned project was realised by Code for Africa, one of the numerous non-profit-making software developing initiatives on the continent. Before its programmers had taken on the task of making the register of the Kenyan polling stations accessible, the information was only available as a download of the entire

5 | Cf. Luci Abrahams/Kiru Pillay, *The Lived Costs of Communications*, LINK centre, 2015, S. 11 f., <http://r2k.org.za/wp-content/uploads/R2K-lived-cost-communications.pdf> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

6 | Cf. "Mixing it with Dr Math: Mobile tutoring on demand", *eLearning Africa*, 2 Feb 2012, [http://elearning-africa.com/eLA\\_Newsportal/mixing-it-with-dr-math-mobile-tutoring-on-demand](http://elearning-africa.com/eLA_Newsportal/mixing-it-with-dr-math-mobile-tutoring-on-demand) (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

7 | Cf. How we made it in Africa (ed.), "How Esoko bridges the information gap faced by farmers across Africa", 1 Jul 2015, <http://howwemadeitinafrica.com/how-esoko-bridges-the-information-gap-faced-by-farmers-across-africa/50066> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

8 | Cf. Justin Arenstein, "Data journalism boosts voter registration in Kenya", *Code for Kenya*, 3 Dec 2014, <http://code4kenya.org/?p=396> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

file from the website of the Kenyan Electoral Commission, which exceeded one gigabyte.



Farmers in Ghana: Today there are apps for mobile phones which help farmers in Ghana determine the prices for their goods. | Source: International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), flickr ©.

The Wikimedia Foundation, which handles the ongoing development of the online knowledge repository *Wikipedia*, responded to the internet usage growth in Africa by initiating project “Wikipedia Zero” in 2012. The aim is to enable people in developing countries and emerging economies to obtain free access to *Wikipedia* via the Internet. Thanks to collaboration with mobile service providers Orange, Airtel and MTN, people in eleven countries of the Sub-Saharan Region can now access *Wikipedia* without incurring any data transmission costs. The project includes South Africa and Kenya, both of which are at the forefront of connectivity development in the region with an Internet access rate of over 50 per cent.

These are also the countries where the large media companies are based, which are viewing the upcoming digital revolution with the same perplexed apprehension as their European counterparts did a few years ago. Many are working on digital strategies; and there is hardly a sizable newspaper in Sub-Saharan Africa now that does not have its own website. At the same time, there are hardly any examples of how these websites in particular and the digital sector in general can be managed as profitable operations.

In most African countries, the advertising market is too weak, and the introduction of payment barriers or “plus” contents such as those offered by the German newspapers *Bild*, *Welt* or the *Süd-deutsche Zeitung* is inconceivable considering the readers’ modest purchasing power. The well-respected South African weekly newspaper *Mail & Guardian*, which has probably been most consistent in going down the digital route over the last few years, is, in fact, now suffering considerable financial difficulties.

### **MORE OPINIONS, FEWER CONVENTIONS**

That said, the media operators on the continent are aware that they must continue their search for a viable digital model to underpin their continued existence. A third of the 44 workshops and panels at this year’s Radio

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Days Africa, the largest conference related to radio broadcasting on the continent, had a specific digital focus. A presentation by former radio moderator Gareth Cliff drew particular attention. He had turned his back on the traditional radio sector and founded an online radio station with associated podcast production. Cliff gave a very positive account of what had been achieved in the year since he took the step. He reported that *Cliff Central* had attracted a loyal customer base within a very short space of time through the use of unconventional formats and that the strongest programs reach up to 100,000 listeners. Thanks to advertising revenues, he can now pay the salaries of seven permanent staff, while the modest production costs continue to allow plenty of scope for experimentation and niche topics. “I’m glad that I already took the step into a digital medium a year ago and became one of the trendsetters, because others will inevitably have to take this step as well”, he concluded his presentation at the Radio Days 2015.<sup>9</sup>

*Cliff Central* and the *Daily Maverick* are two digital media success stories from Africa, which have several things in common. Both place emphasis on opinion. The *Daily Maverick* has a prominent list of “Opinionistas”, i.e. opinion leaders, on its landing page, who comment on current events from unusual perspectives and with well-argued texts. Gareth Cliff, for his part, reported with some obvious pride that there was true hatred between Leeds

9 | For further information on Gareth Cliff’s presentation cf. “Gareth Cliff shares the joy of taking his content online”, *Wits Journalism*, 5 Jul 2015, <http://www.journalism.co.za/blog/gareth-cliff-shares-joy-content-online> (accessed 10 Aug 2015).

and Liverpool fans among his sports commentators and that this occasionally led to verbal abuse on air. The second common aspect is the disregard of conventions. One reason why Greg Marinovich's Marikana story appeared in the *Daily Maverick* was that its editorial team was the only one that could guarantee the article would be published in full, accompanied by numerous photos. In his presentation, Gareth Cliff stressed repeatedly how much the contents and the flow of a broadcast benefit from no longer having to fit into the fixed pattern of a classic radio program with slots for news, weather, traffic and advertising. Finally, both projects are managed by "digital natives", i.e. an editorial team consisting predominantly of young people who have grown up with the Internet and social networks and therefore have a better understanding of the delivery of information in the digital sphere.

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However, it is precisely these three common areas – strength of opinion, willingness to experiment and digital thinking – where most established media companies in Sub-Saharan Africa are struggling. This is mainly caused by the ownership structure. Particularly in countries such as Angola, Malawi and Zambia, the media output is influenced very strongly by the government. The radio stations with the greatest reach are those operated in the public sector or under government control, and many of the larger newspapers are also subject to influence either via their owners or via government advertisements. In these cases, strong opinions are only in demand when the objective is to support the government line. True diversity of opinion is different. Another issue is the way the staffing policy is affected by the links with government. Many public radio stations in particular are not headed by media professionals; instead, the top executives are selected on the basis of their political convictions and connections. This has the effect of stifling innovative power and digital thinking in the great majority of cases. One can see the amount of damage that this approach can have in the case of South Africa. There, Frans Matlala was recently presented as the new CEO of the public broadcasting corporation *SABC* – already the ninth to occupy this post since 2009.<sup>10</sup>

10 | Cf. Thinus Ferreira, "Frans Matlala appointed as new SABC CEO", *fin24tech*, 1 Jul 2015, <http://fin24.com/Tech/News/Frans-Matlala-appointed-as-new-SABC-CEO-20150701> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

## NEW HOME FOR NEW DIVERSITY OF OPINION

Notwithstanding this state of affairs, an unprecedented diversity of opinion and information has been developing in the publicly accessible digital sphere in Sub-Saharan Africa over recent years. However, this diversity is to be found not so much on the websites of established media brands but instead in blogs and social networks. The Arab Spring in North Africa suddenly brought home the effect the latter can have on political processes. Even if the phrase “social media revolution” is ultimately not applicable to the upheavals in the Maghreb, social media undoubtedly played a role in the rapid proliferation of information and in the protestors’ efforts to organise. This potential has now also expanded to the region south of the Sahara.<sup>11</sup>



The “Walk to Work” campaign protested against rising petrol prices in 2011. The protest degenerated into rampages leaving several people dead and numerous injured. | Source: © Yannick Tylle, picture alliance/dpa.

One case in point is the “Walk to work” campaign, which Ugandan civil society initiated in protest against the persistent increases in food prices and living costs after the 2011 presidential elections. In order to express people’s dissatisfaction with the development of fuel prices in particular and to put the government under pressure, the group “Activists for Change” had called upon all Ugandan

11 | Cf. Arthur Chatora, “Encouraging political participation in Africa. The potential of social media platforms”, Institute for Security Studies, 15 Mar 2012, <http://dspace.cigilibrary.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/32998/1/15Mar2012SocialMedia.pdf> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).



citizens to walk to work. The call spread above all via the country's social networks and blogs and quickly gained in popularity. On 11 April 2011, the first high-profile walks to work took place; however, security forces stopped leading opposition politicians in particular and arrested them. The brutality shown on these occasions resulted in a proliferation of the protests, which led to further use of force. Two weeks of protest activities throughout the country sadly resulted in nine people being killed, over one hundred being injured and close to 1,000 activists being arrested.<sup>12</sup>

**Ruth Aine Tindyebwa represents a group of young Africans who see themselves as journalists, but for whom a career in the traditional media is out of the question.**

Ruth Aine Tindyebwa is a Ugandan blogger, who commented on the events at the time as part of her training at Deutsche Welle.<sup>13</sup> She represents a group of young Africans

who see themselves as journalists, but for whom a career in the traditional media is out of the question for the reasons mentioned above. Instead, they have found online platforms to publish their comments, often simultaneously in blogs, on Facebook pages, on Twitter channels and on other local social media sites. And this is also the case for Ruth. With her blog entitled *In Depth*,<sup>14</sup> she has become one of the country's leading bloggers on issues relating to political processes and developments in society. When the Ugandan police shut down the editorial offices of media company Monitor Publications in Kampala in May 2013 for ten days to search them for confidential sources and documents, Ruth's Twitter channel was the best source for obtaining an overview of events during the first few days. It is therefore not without good reason that she has some 13,000 followers on the microblogging site. Editor in Chief of *Spiegel* magazine, Klaus Brinkbäumer, has a significantly smaller Twitter following of some 7,500 by comparison.

Particularly in the numerous African countries where traditional media cannot adequately fulfil the role of Fourth Estate, Ruth and her fellow bloggers therefore definitely represent interesting actors in the area of information delivery and diversity of opinion. One cannot assume that bloggers will one day be the better journalists in Africa. There is still a demand and a need for good journalism

12 | Cf. Human Rights Watch, "Uganda: Launch Independent Inquiry Into Killings", 8 May 2011, <http://hrw.org/news/2011/05/08/uganda-launch-independent-inquiry-killings> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

13 | Cf. Ruth Aine, "Uganda walks to work with social media", *onMedia*, 19 May 2011, <http://onmedia.dw-akademie.de/english/?p=911> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

14 | Ruth Aine, *Ruth Aine's Blog: In Depth*, <http://aineruth.blogspot.com> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

with high investigative standards and a solid ethical foundation. But on a continent where these characteristics are not always guaranteed even in well-established media companies, bloggers and social media activists increasingly function as important actors. This applies in the area of information delivery, because they address issues and topics that the established media will not touch for various reasons. They do, however, tend to treat subject matter more subjectively than one would expect from a purely journalistic product. Bloggers are therefore even more important where diversity of opinion is concerned; they provide us with well-founded opinions and assessments beyond the African media mainstream. One go-to source in this context is the weekly overview entitled "Tops of the Blogs",<sup>15</sup> in which every Friday the Media Programme Sub-Sahara Africa of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung compiles blogs from the region that are worth reading. It also provides a good idea of the different types of actors within the political blogosphere in the region.

### **LONE WARRIORS, NETWORKERS AND EXPERTS**

The first group encompasses actors such as Ruth, who define themselves first and foremost as bloggers. They regularly publish opinions, comments and news on their blogs.

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The blogger's personality plays an important role as it defines their brand. The topics covered therefore typically range from personal experiences and everyday observations to current affairs. As the blogs do not generate sufficient income, the actors from this group frequently work as social media consultants or guest authors. Some have gained a qualification in the media, communication or technology sector. Besides strong personal opinions and good analytical skills, many of these bloggers benefit from a good network, which may well reach beyond national borders.

The second category involves blogs operated by experts from other fields. For these people, blogging represents something of a hobby or an additional channel to offer their own expertise to the public. The topics they cover tend to be more restricted and relate to the area the author works in, with personal experiences and everyday observations being the exception rather than the rule. One case in point is the South African constitutional law scholar

15 | Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, "Tops of the Blogs", <http://kas.de/medien-afrika/de/pages/12530> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

Pierre de Vos. The 52-year-old is a lecturer in constitutional law at the University of Cape Town. He began writing a blog entitled *Constitutionally Speaking*<sup>16</sup> back in October 2006, in which he examines current political and social issues from a constitutional law perspective. In his posts, he frequently comments on these issues with considerably less agitation than the traditional media but also frequently with much more well-founded arguments – be it on the security upgrade at South African President Jacob Zuma’s private residence in Nkandla, the costs of which are put at 15 million euros, or on the fact that Sudan’s President al-Bashir was allowed to leave South Africa unchallenged after attending the AU summit in June this year despite his being subject to an international arrest warrant.



Regularly chosen for “Tops of the Blogs” – young political bloggers from sub-Saharan Africa attending a workshop of KAS Media Africa in Nairobi in November 2015. | Source: KAS Media Africa.

In the third category the lines between the blogging sphere and the academic and journalistic sphere are even more blurred than in the first two categories. Bloggers belonging to this group are associated with the larger blogger networks, which operate with a regional or global outlook and act as an umbrella brand for individuals. The texts published on these platforms generally attract a fee, although this is rarely sufficient to fund the person’s livelihood.

16 | Cf. Pierre De Vos, “Why the ad hoc Committee on Nkandla is legally irrelevant”, *Constitutionally Speaking*, 22 Jul 2015, <http://constitutionallyspeaking.co.za> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

Good examples of such networks operating in Sub-Saharan Africa are *African Arguments*<sup>17</sup> and *Global Voices*.<sup>18</sup> The latter is a network for bloggers and citizen journalists, which was founded back in 2006 and operates worldwide, although it focuses predominantly on developing countries with a poorly developed media landscape. In the Sub-Saharan section of this website, which is translated into up to 43 languages, one to two articles are published each week, dealing mainly with current affairs as well as human rights and cultural topics. In the case of *African Arguments*, the focus is slightly different. This platform, which is operated by the Royal African Society based in London, mainly features academics, who may not write in a style entirely suitable for social media, but at least aspire to a journalistic standard. The text commenting on al-Bashir's trip to South Africa published there, for instance, was penned by a PhD candidate and visiting lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. One recently established platform in this category, which is of particular interest from a German perspective, is the online news portal *JournAfrica!*.<sup>19</sup> This was founded last year by journalists from Leipzig and collaborates with a network of over 50 African contributors to improve reporting about the continent in Germany.

There is a fourth and last category covering blogs that are directly associated with established media brands. These often serve to convert the editorial section of a newspaper into Internet-compatible form, albeit with more space for detailed texts and analyses as well as for experiments. There is also more scope for the authors to come to the fore than on the classic editorial page. At the same time, however, expectations with respect to journalistic standards are higher than in the case of independent blogs of individuals, for instance. One media brand that is particularly active in this area is the above-mentioned South African weekly newspaper *Mail & Guardian*, which set up not just one but two such platforms in recent years, namely *Thoughtleader*<sup>20</sup> and *Voices of Africa*<sup>21</sup>. *Thoughtleader* features a truly impressive list of South African thought and opinion leaders in its author index, very few of whom are in the paper's direct employ. The idea of the blog is to find a genuine authority in the relevant field to write about

17 | Cf. *African Arguments*, <http://africanarguments.org> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

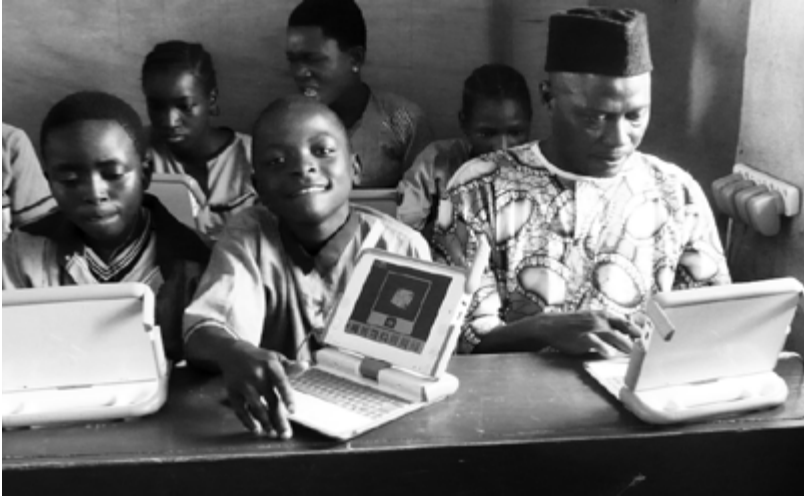
18 | Cf. "Subsahara-Afrika", *Global Voices*, <http://de.globalvoicesonline.org/category/world/sub-saharan-africa> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

19 | Cf. *Journ Africa!*, <http://journafrika.de> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

20 | Cf. *Thoughtleader*, <http://thoughtleader.co.za> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

21 | Cf. *Voices of Africa*, <http://voicesofafrica.co.za> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

any particular topic to be investigated. This regularly turns into a controversial and interesting enterprise when an author attempts to make an assessment of the relationship between blacks and whites in the rainbow nation. *Voices of Africa*, for its part, focuses on unusual stories from the continent – similar to the approach taken by *JournAfrica!* – and therefore does not include texts relating to current affairs. Instead, readers learn about a rapping news reader in Uganda or the lack of inspiration in the African Union’s vision for the continent.



The initiative “One Laptop per Child” aims to enable children and teenagers to participate digitally – an important step in training future generations’ media competence. | Source: Carla Gomez Monroy, flickr ©<sup>1</sup>.

## **GROWING INTEREST IN REGULATING THE DIGITAL SPHERE**

Blogs and websites from all four above-mentioned categories are already making significant contributions to the diversity of opinion on the continent. This does, however, also bring them more strongly to the attention of the authorities, who are keen to define the grey area involving journalism, blogging and the voicing of opinions in social media more clearly. This interest first came to light when the *Zone 9* bloggers were arrested in Ethiopia. *Zone 9* is a network of Ethiopian bloggers, who repeatedly voiced criticism of the government in relation to issues of legal certainty and social change in their country on their website. In April 2014, six members of this group were arrested, together with three Ethiopian journalists, under anti-terror legislation. Despite a great deal of international attention, the court proceedings have dragged

on for over a year.<sup>22</sup> While the three journalists and two of the bloggers were released from custody in mid-July, presumably in connection with the impending visit to the country by U.S. President Obama, four of the bloggers remain incarcerated without a valid conviction.<sup>23</sup>

But even if this case represents an inglorious exception in Sub-Saharan Africa to date, there are increasing indications of greater regulation in the digital sphere. In March of this year, the South African Film and Publication Board presented a Draft Online Regulation Policy,<sup>24</sup> which the Electronic Frontier Foundation, which defends freedom of expression on the Internet, immediately denounced as "Africa's Worst New Internet Censorship Law".<sup>25</sup> The draft includes a provision for the Board to have the power to remove any content from the Internet that it may deem "to be potentially harmful and disturbing". Seen in the context of the highly opaque decision-making process within the Board, this extremely broad definition gives justified cause for concern that the planned legislation could be used as a weapon to limit freedom of speech. However, observers assume it will not be introduced following the massive criticism, at least not in the form presented in the current draft.

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In any case, it becomes clear that the digital opinion formers of the continent around Greg Marinovich, Gareth Cliff and Ruth Aine Tindyebwa deserve greater attention and support. Greater attention, because they offer a genuine alternative to the frequently "dependent" journalists on the continent as they help to modernise the African media landscape and, not least, because their contributions are more easily accessible from Europe as well.

22 | Information on the latest state of the proceedings is available here: Endalk Chala/Melody Sundberg, "We blog because we care!", *Trial Tracker Blog*, <http://trialtrackerblog.org> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

23 | Cf. William Davison, "Ethiopia courts scepticism after freeing imprisoned writers ahead of Obama visit", *The Guardian*, 9 Jul 2015, <http://theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jul/09/ethiopia-releases-imprisoned-writers-obama-visit-financing-for-development-addis> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

24 | Accessible under Republic of South Africa, *Government Gazette*, 4 Mar 2015, <http://fpb.org.za/profile-fpb/legislation1/514-draft-online-regulation-policy-2014/file> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).

25 | Jeremy Malcolm, "Africa's Worst New Internet Censorship Law Could be Coming to South Africa", *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, 21 May 2015, <http://eff.org/deeplinks/2015/05/africas-worst-new-internet-censorship-law-could-be-coming-south-africa> (accessed 10 Aug 2015).

Greater support, because they are subject to pressure from the efforts of several governments to impose greater regulation and because they have a special responsibility for the ethical use of what is a relatively new technology on the continent in their role as early adopters.

In line with these aspirations, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung introduced the blogger network #africablogging at this year's re:publica. This is a platform intended to fulfil precisely the objectives referred to above: making interesting political bloggers of the continent visible and helping them to perform their work as well as possible. And this ties in with a statement Kenyan author Brenda Wambui made about her motivation for blogging during the re:publica panel discussion: "No-one can speak for us but us. No-one will fight for us but us."<sup>26</sup>

26 | Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, "#AfricaBlogging-Panel auf der re:publica 2015 in Berlin", 12 May 2015, <http://kas.de/wf/de/33.41306> (accessed 24 Jul 2015).