



Diasporic Media and the Appropriation of Technologies: The Case of Nehanda Radio and Zimbabwean Politics

Trust Matsilele, Shepherd Mpofu, and Dumisani Moyo

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we argue that social media extends the public sphere and acts as an enabler for online and offline political mobilisation. This is especially true in a context like Zimbabwe, a country that operates as a complex mix of authoritarian and civilian dictatorship. Social media is allowing previously ‘muted’ voices to enter the public sphere to challenge dictatorships’ hegemony and hold on power (Matsilele & Ruhanya, 2021). The metaphor of a voice is used in this instance to refer to online activity such as memes, videos and other posts. It is within this context that we explore

T. Matsilele (✉)

Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa

S. Mpofu

Communication Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

D. Moyo

Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature
Switzerland AG 2023

251

T. Matsilele et al. (eds.), *New Journalism Ecologies in East and Southern Africa*, Palgrave Studies in Journalism and the Global South, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-23625-9_14

the confluence between social media and online media platforms in profiling activists fighting for democracy in Zimbabwe. The study looks at articles published by Nehanda Radio as a benchmark in exploring the relationship between social media posts and news content.

Lahneman (2005, p. 1) defines a diaspora as “[a] group that recognises its separateness based on common ethnicity or nationality, lives in a host country, and maintains some kind of attachment to its home country or homeland”. In Zimbabwe the term diasporic media has been used to refer to media that was established by journalists who left Zimbabwe due to media repression and closure of newspapers viewed to have been anti-ZANU–PF and anti-Mugabe (Mukundu & Ngwenya, 2011, p. 75). Writing in 2008, Pasura (2009, p. 1) argued that “in a country of thirteen million people, estimates suggest that between three to four million Zimbabweans live in the diaspora”. For this study, we consider Nehanda Radio to be part of the diasporic media as it was founded and operates from the United Kingdom.

Nehanda Radio prides itself as a Zimbabwean radio station that provides 24-hour running news on their website and during broadcasts. It also claims to provide breaking news as it happens via its popular e-mail alert system which listeners and readers can subscribe to. Of interest is the news media organisation’s characterisation of the country: “Zimbabwe is amid a great tragedy and we believe we have a role to play in informing everyone involved in trying to change things”. This chapter, in studying how the news media uses social media, will also explore how the organisation is informing “everyone involved in trying to change things”. To do this, we use agenda setting and subalternity as our theoretical lenses to understand the role and effectiveness of social media political activism.

CONTEXT

Zimbabwe attained independence from British settler rule in 1980, following a protracted civil war and colonisation that lasted nine decades. The country’s independence brought optimism, as Robert Mugabe extended a hand of reconciliation to former white settlers. However, this political honeymoon did not last forever, as three decades later, Mugabe reversed his reconciliatory stance and took aim at everyone he branded as anti-revolutionary. Among those targeted were the country’s independent media, white commercial farmers, civil society and the urban black population who were increasingly voting in favour of the opposition. To ensure

his continued hold on power, Mugabe employed various censorship tactics on state media journalists including ‘negative’ promotion, firing of those who failed to toe the line, and closing down private newspapers and arresting their journalists who were perceived to be a threat to his rule. This dark period, which intensified at the turn of the millennium, led to the country’s economic malaise as Harare became a pariah following a raft of sanctions by a number of western countries. This forced almost a third of the country’s citizens into the diaspora to find second homes in Western Europe, North America, Australia and neighbouring Southern African countries (Matsilele, 2013). The country that used to be the breadbasket of Africa became a shadow of its past self, with some political scientists describing it as a ‘basket case’. Since Mugabe’s political demise in a sanitised military coup, many Zimbabweans across the political divide have exerted efforts to ensure the country sees a political and economic turnaround. This has not succeeded, as most of Mugabe’s structures and systems in the governance architecture remain in place. It is in this environment that we discuss social media’s relationship to news production, factoring in the reality that most senior journalists are now domiciled outside the country and those who remain are censored through various forms, including the statutory Zimbabwe Media Commission, which is responsible for registration and licensing of media houses, as well as accreditation of journalists.

In this study, we look at how social media has become the primary source for online news platforms that cannot afford to hire journalists. This study explores how Zimbabwean diaspora-based online platforms are using social media to cover political events back home. We use Nehanda Radio, an online radio and television platform that largely relies on free content on social media and the internet, as a case study. We consider the use of social media to counter hegemonic narratives as part of an ‘alternative’ public sphere. The activists, on the other hand, are the ‘subalterns’, as they consider themselves to be on the margins of state decision-making and are on the receiving end of state violence when they protest—for instance, through beatings, arrests, torture and abductions. We selected for analysis articles that appeared between May and August of 2016 when protests in Zimbabwe were widespread. Some of the milestone events that took place during these four months were the #ZimShutDown campaign, ban on imports, and arrest of Pastor Evan Mawarire of #ThisFlag campaign that recast global lenses on the Southern African nation and its threats to regulate social media use. This periodisation helps in identifying

and aggregating stories that appeared on the Nehanda online platform, having been sourced through or from social media. It is also a period that saw enhanced government threats to social media users through the Cyber-crime bill. The government has since established the Ministry of Cyber Security, Threat Detection and Mitigation, in a move that received widespread backlash and was the subject of memes and mockery from Zimbabweans on various social network platforms.

MEDIA IN ZIMBABWE

At independence in 1980, the new Zimbabwean government replaced the repressive colonial media landscape with a new infrastructure designed to create a media system that supported the ruling ZANU–PF party in its development agenda. This type of journalism by the Mugabe regime would promote what veteran journalist Willy Musarurwa characterised as “minister and sunshine journalism” (Mano, 2008). Under this dispensation, journalists, especially from the state media, covered ‘petty’ government ministers’ events such as cutting of ribbons when launching boreholes, and opening new roads or buildings. To this day this kind of journalism persists through state-controlled media such as Zimpapers and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation. Such coverage was aimed at romanticising the role played by the new government. Two decades later, Zimbabwe started seeing decay of the economy, worsening of human rights violations and emergence of radical independent media such as *The Daily News*, *The Standard* and the *Independent*. The independent media, starting in the late 1990s and beginning of the twenty-first century, questioned the state’s behaviour and the government responded with censorship, abductions of journalists, bombing of media houses, and repressive media laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and Public Order and Security Act (Matsilele, 2013; Moyo, 2010). Because of these draconian laws, Zimbabweans saw the shrinking of alternative media and an exodus of independent media journalists to ‘friendly’ countries.

AIPPA banned foreign news organisations from reporting in Zimbabwe and resulted in the closure of many media houses (*Mirror*, *Daily News*, Radio VOP, Capitol Radio). To continue practice some senior journalists left the country for Western Europe and North America, where they established news outlets and continued to cover events happening back home (Matsilele, 2013). Some of the outlets that emerged as a result of

this newly exiled community include Radio VOP based in South Africa, Studio 7 based in the United States, and a number based in the United Kingdom: SW Radio Africa, Nehanda Radio, NewZimbabwe.com and Zimbabwe Journalists.com, among many others. This is the same AIPPA that drove many journalists who remained in the country into the streets to moonlight for international media organisations, in most cases using pseudonyms and anonymous sources. Several journalists were arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned as an act of intimidation. Those who remained formally employed adopted self-censorship, fearing loss of livelihood, and citizens became the collateral as they were fed with state propaganda. The worsening political and economic crisis saw ZANU–PF losing control of Parliament in 2008 and President Mugabe losing the first round of elections, which forced the liberation party to enter into a coalition arrangement with other political formations. The period of unity government saw the government reversing some of the repressive media laws and a few journalists returned.

As soon as the unity government folded, President Mugabe retained his autocracy, and this time he would face a new wave of resistance through social media activism. Social media has also meant that previous consumers can now actively participate in news production (Kozinets, 2007; Allen, 2013), to an extent, and this has led to a wave of activism of which Tajamuka/Sesijikile and #This Flag campaigns are a part. While private media are still operational, albeit at a minimal level, social media platforms have managed to bridge the gap both in providing news through news-feeds and offering a stage for activism, news ideas and news of activities and events unfolding in the country which journalists cannot afford to attend due to the economic strains newsrooms are facing. Moyo (2007) argues that private media in countries where the opposition is dysfunctional plays an oppositional role, and the same could be said of social media where traditional private media is mute or playing a somewhat compromised role of keeping the government in check notwithstanding its own limitations.

CONTEXTUALISING SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM IN CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWE

Technological advancement opened new avenues for resisting Mugabe's misrule. Though Africa's internet connectivity is still the lowest in the world, mobile technology seems to be growing at a faster rate, particularly among the youth. Zimbabwe, a case study for this investigation, is currently at 55 per cent internet penetration (Internet World Stats, 2022), which is much lower compared to countries like Morocco, the highest in Africa, at 84 per cent penetration as of January 2022 (Statista, 2022). Zimbabweans are now using social media through these technologies to become politically vocal. The year 2016 saw a surge in the use of social media as a necessary tool in fighting for democracy and resisting the ruling ZANU–PF's regressive policies. At the helm of Zimbabwe's attempts to effect 'regime change' have been the country's youth movements called Tajamuka/Sesijikile, the #ThisFlag movement led by Pastor Evan Mawarire, the National Vendors Association led by Sten Zvorwadza and the Zimbabwe Informal Sector Organisation led by Promise Mkhwananzi.

Traditional mainstream media has played the agenda-setting role in national discourse from the fifteenth century. However, this role has gone through a major reconfiguration in the past two decades with the advent and acceleration of social media outlets (Mpofu & Matsilele, 2020). Consumers are no longer passive as they also produce content and determine what makes it to the main headlines for the day through Facebook and Twitter trends. In a way, journalists are no longer setting the agenda but rather mirroring the agenda set through social media by the public. The public, up to now, have largely been viewed as consumers of news and information filtered by the powerful media and other 'thought leaders'. The media was used as a public sphere where the masses shared and exchanged views regarding events taking place in their respective countries. Studies have proven that most often the views reflected in the traditional media mirror positions of the media itself, advertisers or powerful special interest groups.

The advent of social media through social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram has changed the "monopoly of the unidirectional communication" of traditional mass media to participatory communication by citizens who can now report, create, decide and form opinions in the public sphere (Wyrwoll, 2014; Allen, 2013). Social media has managed to break down multiple gatekeepers who enjoyed unrivalled

power of censoring what ended up in the pages of national dailies or prime time television news. However, the question remains as to who is actually using social media platforms, especially in semi-urban economies like Zimbabwe.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Zimbabwe had an estimated 850,000 Facebook users in 2016, which was a drop from 1.4 million in 2013 due to the country's internet access challenges, according to Internet World Stats 2016. This number, at the time of writing this chapter, was back at 1.3 million Facebook users in 2022 (Internet World Stats, 2022). Facebook is regarded as user friendly, and easy to open and administer, and does not use much data compared to other platforms such as YouTube and Myspace. It is against this background that we focus on the use of Facebook by Tajamuka/ Sesijikile and #ThisFlag in their political activism. The use of Facebook as a public political platform in Zimbabwe caught the world's attention in the runup to the 2013 elections when a Facebook character known as Baba Jukwa posted detailed revelations about assassination plots and government corruption under Mugabe.

The mystery on Baba Jukwa, a social media mole who burst onto the social media and political scene around the 2013 elections, remains unresolved. This character exposed secrets and plots of the ruling ZANU–PF party, which left the liberation party and its leaders looking for mechanisms to police the social media sphere (Matsilele, 2013). As if Baba Jukwa alone wasn't enough trouble, several other Zimbabweans took to social media to register their anger against President Mugabe's rule and also mobilise for action. This threat saw the government in August 2016 introducing a cyber-law bill. This bill was meant to empower law enforcement agencies with the power to prosecute any person caught in possession of, generating, sharing or passing on abusive, threatening, subversive or offensive telecommunication messages, including WhatsApp or any other social media messages that might be deemed to cause despondency, incite violence, threaten citizens or cause unrest (Matsilele, 2019). Despite these efforts to suppress freedom of expression, citizens were not deterred, as demonstrated by the Tajamuka/Sesijikile and #ThisFlag political campaigns.

Lack of access to technology hampers some people's participation in social media activism but suffice it to say that there is a possibility of a wide

reach of messages spread on social media even to those who are not active on social media. This is possible especially considering that some news and information is spread through word of mouth in such places as commuter buses, taxi ranks, schools and markets. Government relaxation of taxes on cheap Chinese and South African-made gadgets such as cellphones and laptops has made technological devices and software accessible. Cellular network companies have also been innovative in trying to maximise sales of airtime and data in an economically restrictive environment through offering citizens data packages where they may use more data for the lowest possible payment per day. For instance, there are daily bundles that afford one access to Facebook for a day in some cases. Again, the economic challenges mean that even a dollar is difficult to obtain for some people, and if they have that kind of money they must prioritise their informational needs over their nutritional needs.

Social media has given rise to citizen journalism, a system of journalism whereby citizens package and broadcast news without having to abide by a set of journalism ethics, principles or editorial constraints. Citizen journalism, as argued by Kelly et al. (2010), is loosely defined by “a number of attributes which make it distinct from professional journalism, including unpaid work, absence of professional training, and often unedited publication of content, and may feature plain language, distinct story selection”. Couldry (2003) defines it as new ways of consuming media, new infrastructures of production and distribution, while Rosen (2008) defines it as when the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they now have in their possession to inform one another. A journalist operating online becomes both reporter and publisher. The widespread availability of smartphones means every owner of such a device is a potential walking newsroom or television. It is believed that citizen journalism offers alternative views using multi-media technologies such as video, images and the written word. Social media gives people the ability to express themselves in a way they could not in mainstream media. Some postings from citizen journalists have made it to international news media.

Citizen journalism assumes the notion of ‘citizenship’ and ‘journalism’ and presupposes that citizens play a journalistic role in their content generation and broadcasting or publication. This assumption has received equal critique and one of the leading scholars who has attempted to look at this is Stuart Allen (2013). Allen brings out interesting debates over whether owning a gadget with photographic capabilities and being able to share pictures and information can be regarded as journalism. These

researchers are also aware of many other debates on what citizen journalism entails (Banda, 2009, 2010). We, however, proceed with the simple definition of citizen journalism as defined by Kelly et al. (2010) outlined above. It is not necessarily the role of this chapter to look at citizen journalism, but rather to focus on the relationship between social media and news production. The ‘citizen’ in citizen journalism (Muneri, 2016) suggests some form of responsibility on the part of citizens by participating in information gathering and sharing activities. This could be done for the purposes of pride in one’s country and therefore documenting its positive aspects for the rest of the global village to see, or it could be informed by the desire to expose and weed out corruption and other negative aspects from society.

THEORETICAL FRAMING

We use agenda setting and subalternity theoretical frameworks as tools of analysis to help understand how and the extent to which online platforms use social media for content generation and political mobilisation. The two theories (agenda setting and subalternity) will be employed to look at how people at the margins (also called the subalterns) fight to contest narratives advanced by hegemonic forces by advancing counter-narratives (setting an agenda). Subalternity refers to the subordination of a state, society or group of people in service to a ruling master (Ling et al., 2009, p. 34). These scholars also note that the master can take various forms, for example a military commander, a colonial metropole, a dominant market, a ruling ideology, an imperial infrastructure or a global hegemony. In Zimbabwe’s case, the master would refer to the ruling party and/or the ideology of the ruling party.

Agenda setting argues for a strong correlation between media content and activity by mass audiences. It is used to influence the public agenda (McCombs, 1994). McCombs et al. (2011) note that the role of journalists is to create a market for the ideas advanced by members of the field, and to do this they lead society to worry and concern itself about things the media chooses to give prominence. McCombs and Shaw (1972), supporting the above point, just like other researchers on agenda-setting theory, insist that the media are very persuasive in their unique way—in bombarding the masses with preferred messages. They argue that media is perceived as powerful but not as predicted by the hypodermic needle model, in shaping and manipulating people’s attitudes towards political,

economic and social matters. This can best be seen in how ZANU–PF through public media has attempted to manipulate public perceptions over the past two decades. ZANU–PF, especially during the election cycle, bombards the masses with anti-opposition propaganda and information on its contribution to the liberation struggle.

The argument by McCombs and Shaw is challenged by Weaver (2007), who argues that the ‘first level’ of agenda setting is focused on the relative salience of issues or subjects regarded by journalists as important. Agenda setting in the context of this research therefore refers to the importance of issues highlighted and then transferred into the public domain by the mass media. It is important to note that what we seek to do here is to demonstrate that, in changing the ways we have known traditional journalism, new media has made it possible, through #ThisFlag and Tajamuka, for citizen journalists to set the agenda for mainstream media and the public.

METHODOLOGY

The authors employed virtual ethnography and a qualitative content analysis of Nehanda Radio articles and videos as data collection and analysis methods. Nehanda Radio was considered the most suitable media outlet because of its focus on news about Zimbabwe and its active presence on social media. In determining which cases to employ, we carried out a random selection of articles through a Google search of links using the tag-lines Nehanda Radio, #ThisFlag and Tajamuka/Sesijikile. The top three articles were picked for our sampling process. The period chosen was significant because it covers the period when Tajamuka/Sesijikile and the #ThisFlag campaign started up until Pastor Evan Mawarire fled into exile for fear of his life and that of his family. The social media campaigns resulted in several street protests by Zimbabweans calling for an economic and political revolution. In-depth interviews were carried out with Promise Mkwanzani, spokesperson for the Tajamuka movement, and Pastor Evan Mawarire of the #ThisFlag movement. They were selected based on their active involvement in both offline and online activism in Zimbabwe. Evan Mawarire and Promise Mkwanzani have both been arrested by state operatives for ‘attempting to topple the legitimate government’ and ‘causing’ damage to public property. It is their role in social media platforms and offline that makes these two individuals the most suitable candidates for this study. This study observed the ethical requirements for a scholarly publication.

Nehanda Radio is an online radio station operating from the United Kingdom. It is run by Lance Guma, a Zimbabwean journalist known for his claim to be fighting for a democratic Zimbabwe. Nehanda Radio started operations in 2012 after Guma left SW Radio Africa. The radio station relies on interviews that are conducted from the organisation's studios in the United Kingdom and the rare occasion when journalists conduct telephonic interviews. Nehanda Radio also relies on free content online and generates its content from social media conversations (on Twitter and Facebook). Nehanda Radio has been chosen due to its influence on opposition politics in Zimbabwe and its model of activist journalism. Nehanda Radio's website states that it has 296,749 Facebook fans, and its Facebook page is followed by 62,000 people. This study looks at how Nehanda coverage is influenced by social media activities such as videos and posts by ordinary citizens.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter we look at three aspects as a window into understanding how Nehanda Radio employed social media posts for its news gathering and reporting purposes. The three aspects we look at are the #ZimShutDown campaign that called on people to not report for work on 7 July 2016 as a form of protest, a call to protest the introduction of surrogate currency also known as bond notes, and profiling of activities by activists. The introduction of bond notes faced resistance as citizens felt this was a move to re-introduce a local currency that would spur inflation. The ban on imports was viewed as a direct attack on the economic base that most Zimbabweans rely on as the formal economy has virtually collapsed. This resistance saw Zimbabweans burning a warehouse at the Beitbridge border post that housed goods impounded by customs officials.

#ZimShutDown

As mentioned, this campaign was an amalgamation of activities meant to shut down business in the country, initially for a day, and then later embark on rolling protests and collapsing the government. This campaign was led by Evan Mawarire of #ThisFlag together with the Tajamuka youth movement led by Promise Mkhwananzi. Mawarire would call on citizens to stay at home and not turn up for work; this would become a point for mobilisation. On the other hand, Tajamuka would scare those few who turned

up at the bus terminus and stop them from reporting for work. This youth movement would also coordinate with transport operators by paying them not to operate on that specific day. This operation was evidently funded by some underground forces who feared detection as any links to such acts would land them in collisions with the state apparatus. On 5 July 2016, Mawarire recorded a video, the recording of which is as follows:

Tomorrow 6th July 2016 Wednesday Shut Down Zimbabwe is going on hatisi kumira [we are not backing down]. Mangwana tirikuvhara Zimbabwe [tomorrow we are shutting down Zimbabwe]. Munhu wese tiri kuvhara nyika, no one is going to work, vana havasi kuenda kuchikoro [children are not going to school]. ... Let's do this together for once and send a clear message to this government that we are the citizens and we have a voice. Let's move away from our political stand points and be Zimbabweans, mangwana unosapota Zimbabwe [tomorrow we are all supporting Zimbabweans]. Let's tell the government not to give us their bond notes, lift the import ban. Our ministers varikuba mari [they are stealing our money].

This video went viral and media houses such as Nehanda Radio used it as part of their content. On its main page Nehanda Radio shared Mawarire's video encouraging Zimbabweans not to report for work. The organisation's headline was more catchy: 'Don't be intimidated, Shut Down Zimbabwe is in full force tomorrow—#ThisFlag'. This post featured on 5 July, a day before the scheduled shutdown. If anything, Nehanda Radio demonstrated its reliance on social media posts, as it never bothers to conduct a separate interview but rather posted the same video Mawarire recorded with just an inhouse headline. The news organisation, which also doubles as a platform for incitement, would carry live updates on the status of the shutdown from 6 to 10 July.

Bond Notes

Another contentious issue that gripped the country in the same quarter was the issue of bond notes, a surrogate currency introduced by the government to address cash challenges. Leading up to the introduction of these bond notes, activists from Tajamuka, This Flag and Bus Stop ran a campaign against them. While Tajamuka and This Flag are known for their open confrontations, Bus Stop questions the political order of the day

using jokes and satire. In May 2016, Bus Stop TV broadcast its bond notes satire 'equating' the surrogate currency to the greenback. The online pre-packaged broadcasts questioned the 'real' value, worthiness and reliability of the bond notes.

These suspicions were raised against the backdrop of the 2008 crisis where millions of the country's citizens lost their hard-earned money as the government banned the use of the local currency without any rational compensation. The popular comic pastor who conducts the satires on this video 'educates' two women about the value of the bond notes. His style is interesting as he assumes the government position while retaining his comical character. In so doing, the pastor leaves the audience suspicious of the bond notes, reducing the whole exercise of the surrogate currency to another national bad joke. In one of the videos reposted by Nehanda Radio, a Tajamuka activist on 28 May films a group of men discussing bond notes saying,

Zvatave kuitirwa zvema bond notes umbavha, vanoda kutiita zvavakambotiita gore riye. Kana iye achiida ngaende nayo kwaZvimba. [What he is now planning to do is like what he did in 2008 when he took our money. If he wants these bond notes he should have them himself and use them at his homestead in Zvimba].

Zvimba is President Robert Mugabe's homestead. By calling on him to use these bond notes there, Zimbabweans were demonstrating their hesitancy towards and dislike of bond notes. It is such videos that Nehanda Radio would use on its website, sometimes accompanied by a short headline. This video was accompanied by a protest headline: *Zvema Bond Notes umbavha—#Tajamuka*. Of course, such a headline, though it captures verbatim the mentioned video, also helps in fuelling both protest and suspicion over the bond notes. It would seem this is also part of this news media's role, fuelling discontent that can potentially lead to an uprising. Following these protests, conducted online and offline, the governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe was forced to meet activists in a bid to allay fears that the introduction of bond notes was the first step towards re-introduction of the Zimbabwean dollar.

Profiling Activists

Finally, we discuss how Nehanda Radio seem to have deliberately profiled activities by pressure group activists who were challenging President Mugabe's regime. In this instance, we look at the discourse the news media used to 'fuel' anger and cause outrage among citizens. We argue that Nehanda Radio's actions were not limited to the newsworthiness of the events, but went beyond that. On 3 August 2016 Nehanda Radio (2016) published an unsubstantiated claim under the headline: *Mugabe orders arrest of #Tajamuka leader*. While one cannot underestimate what Mugabe's government is capable of doing, this particular article relied on claims by Tajamuka's spokesperson. The article claims Mugabe issued a communique for his arrest. Although he went on to be arrested over protests that he organised during the same period, there is no evidence that such a communique was ever issued. The claims could have been published as a deterrent after Mawarire fled the country in fear of abduction. In this instance, Nehanda Radio worked as a propaganda tool that assisted in perpetuating unsubstantiated claims against the government.

Nehanda Radio would also profile activists through its online radio and TV platform. An example is the interview the radio conducted with one of the leaders, Sten Zvorwadza, on 17 August 2016. This interview saw Tajamuka activists giving flowers to the country's police. This is an oxymoron as police are known for brute force and by extending these flowers to the police force, Tajamuka turned the whole logic of protest upside down as it disempowered police from using brute force. In the interview Zvorwadza threatened to 'deal' with 'rogue' elements within the police who at the slightest provocation resorted to violence. Such an interview could only be found on a protest radio station, as within the country's laws profiling activities and language of that nature could be regarded as promoting violence and public disorder. The video was initially posted on Facebook by one of the people who filmed the protest used a mobile device, and Nehanda used the video with permission from the owner.

CONCLUSION

Social media has not only become the main platform for pulling traffic of emerging online news platforms in Zimbabwe such as Nehanda Radio and TheZimbabweNewsLive and ZimEye, it has also become the source of their content. These online platforms operating on shoestring budgets

cannot afford to employ journalists, which leads them to resort to free content from Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. In most cases these platforms cover political developments back home as they are based in the diaspora. Such platforms have become spaces of protest as news reportage remains stifled within the country through state or self-censorship (Makwambeni & Adebayo, 2021).

REFERENCES

- Allen, S. (2013). *Citizen witnessing: Revisioning journalism in times of crisis*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Couldry, N. (2003). Beyond the Hall of Mirrors? Some Theoretical Reflections on the Global Contestation of Media Power. In N. Couldry & J. Curran (Eds.), *Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World* (pp. 39–54). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lahneman, W. J. (2005). *Impact of Diaspora Communities on National and Global Politics. Report on Survey of Literature*. University of Maryland.
- Ling, Lily HM, Ching-Chane Hwang, & Chen, B. (2009). Subaltern Straits: ‘Exit’, ‘Voice’, and ‘Loyalty’ in the United States–China–Taiwan Relations. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*: lcp013.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2007). 10 Netnography 2.0. *Handbook of qualitative research methods in marketing*, 129.
- Makwambeni, B., & Adebayo, J. O. (2021). ‘Humour and the Politics of Resistance’: Audience Readings of Popular Amateur Videos in Zimbabwe. In *The politics of laughter in the social media age* (pp. 155–173). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Mano, W. (2008). The Media and Politics in Zimbabwe: Turning Left While Indicating Right. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(4), 507–514.
- Matsilele, T. (2013). *The Political Role of the Diaspora Media in the Mediation of the Zimbabwean Crisis: A Case Study of the Zimbabwean-2008 to 2010*. PhD diss., Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.
- Matsilele, T. (2019). *Social media dissidence in Zimbabwe*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
- Matsilele, T., & Ruhanya, P. (2021). Social Media Dissidence and Activist Resistance in Zimbabwe. *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(2), 381–394.
- McCombs, M. (1994). News Influence on Our Pictures of the World. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), *Media Effects. Advances in Theory and Research* (pp. 1–16). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- McCombs, M., Holbert, L., Kioussis, S., & Wanta, W. (2011). *The news and public opinion: Media effects on civic life*. Polity.

- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public opinion quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- Moyo, D. (2007). Alternative Media, Diasporas and the Mediation of the Zimbabwe Crisis. *Ecquid Novi*, 28(1-2), 81-105.
- Moyo, D. (2010). The new media as monitors of democracy: Mobile phones and Zimbabwe's 2008 election. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa*, 29(sed-1), 71-85.
- Mpofu, S., & Matsilele, T. (2020). Social Media and the Concept of Dissidence in Zimbabwean Politics. In *The History and Political Transition of Zimbabwe* (pp. 221-243). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mukundu, R., & Ngwenya, N. (2011). The tragedy of media reforms since the GPA. *Zimbabwe at crossroads, Openspace*, 1, 73-79.
- Muneri, C. T. (2016). Beyond blind optimism: The case of citizen journalism in the struggle for democracy in Zimbabwe. In *Participatory Politics and Citizen Journalism in a Networked Africa* (pp. 171-184). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Nehanda Radio. (2016). Mugabe Orders Arrest of #Tajamuka Leader. Retrieved August 3, 2016, from <http://nehandaradio.com/2016/08/03/mugabe-orders-arrest-tajamuka-leader/>
- Pasura, D. (2009). *Zimbabwean Migrants in Britain: An Overview*. Network for Migration Education.
- Rosen, J. (2008). A Most Useful Definition of Citizen Journalism. [Online] Retrieved April 17, 2014, from http://archive.pressthink.org/2008/07/14/a_most_useful_d.html
- Statista. (2022). Share of Internet Users in Africa as of January 2022, by Country. Retrieved July 24, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1124283/internet-penetration-in-africa-by-country/>
- Wyrwoll, C. (2014). *Social Media. Fundamentals, Models and Ranking of User-Generated Content*. Doctoral Thesis, Universität Hamburg, Germany.