THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA:

The case of the SABC's soap operas as a cultural public sphere

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Declaration

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“Democracy is in itself a cultural form”.

– Jostein Gripsrud

Abstract

This study has been inspired by the political events in the past few years that signalled a general decline, instead of consolidation, of democracy in South Africa. The decline has caused a rising trust deficit between the government and the citizens of South Africa. These events have raised questions of the role of the media in the consolidation of democracy. Katrin Voltmer's pioneering work, *The Media in Transitional Democracies* (2013) shines an important light in delineating the role of the media in transitions, including democratic consolidation. Much of the focus of scholastic research in the subject of media and democracy has been on news and journalistic content. Jurgen Habermas' seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989) also accorded more weight to the rational and cognitive, as opposed to the affective and emotive aspects of the media when arguing in favour of emancipatory potential of the public sphere. The rational and cognitive aspects are generally associated with news and journalistic content (McGuigan, 2005: 430). Unlike Habermas, this study follows the lead by scholars like Van Zoonen (2006) and McGuigan's (2005) interest in the popular entertainment content which has often been regarded as having little significance in politics, especially democracy.

In its emphasis on the consolidation aspect of South African democratic transition, the study is conducted against the backdrop of the broader 'third wave' transitions of the early 1990's (Huntington, 1991). The study's theoretical framework is aligned with Christians et al.'s (2009) revision of the *Four Theories* (Siebert, et al, 1956) of the press. Their approach is useful because of its normative strength that opens the possibilities of media roles in democratization. The normative approach allows a free exploration of the potential of the media, instead of restricting the media to the political systems within which they operate. In addition, it aligns itself to Jim McGuigan's theory of the cultural public sphere which highlights the often-ignored political potency of popular cultural texts in the public sphere. McGuigan (2005: 430) argues that the affective or emotive aspects of popular cultural texts enhance, rather than hinder, the quality of political engagement in the public sphere. Through entertainment television

programmes, democratic ways of life can be portrayed as part of everyday, ordinary life (Stevenson, 2010: 276).

Against the widely held expectation that the media should play a positive role in democracies, some scholars have noted that in reality, “this is not necessarily so” (Jebril, Stetka & Loveless, 2013: 3). Rather, the media can serve dictatorships as happily as they serve democracies (Voltmer, 2013: 23). Using the case studies of two soap operas of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), *Muvhango* and *7de Laan*, the study explores the role of popular media in the enhancement or consolidation of democracy, and the circumstances under which this is carried out.

The media of interest for this study is public service broadcasting (PSB). For most democracies of the third wave, especially in Africa, PSB has been an easy victim of political power. Because of its dependence on the state, PSB tends to be more susceptible to political interference than other media types. Like other PSBs, the SABC has clearly spelt-out objectives that are linked to the national developmental objectives, including the goal of promoting and deepening democracy. This connection makes it possible to evaluate the selected entertainment case studies against these objectives. The study uses Multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) because it allows for the analysis of text in its multimodal form such as visuals and audio. It equally allows for the application of analytical tools borrowed from film and television theories. By indirect measurement, MCDA model is used in the study to evaluate how democracy is represented (promoted, negated, omitted) in various aspects of the text.

Keywords:

Democratic consolidation; cultural public sphere; public service broadcasting; SABC; normative theories of the media; soap operas.

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Acronyms

AFP	Advertiser Funded Programme
ANC	African National Congress
ANCIR	African Network of Centres for Investigative Reporting
ANCWL	African National Congress Women's League
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BLF	The Black Land First
CA	Conditional Access
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CE	Commissioning Editor
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CGE	The Commission for Gender Equality
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COGTA	(Department of) Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COO	Chief Operations Officer
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
DA	Democratic Alliance
DAF	Delegation of Authority Framework
DFI	Development Finance Institution
DG	Director General
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DStv	Digital Satellite Television
DTT	Digital Terrestrial Television
DTV	Digital Television
EE	Entertainment Education
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EIU	The Economist Intelligence Unit
FTA	Free to Air
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCIS	Government Communication and Information Services
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HOD	Head of Department
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICC	International Criminal Court
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IP	Intellectual Property
ISS	Institute for Strategic Studies
LGBQTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning

LSM	Living Standard Measure
MAT	Media Appeals Tribunal
MCA	Multichoice Africa
MCDA	Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MISA	Media Institute for Southern Africa
MMA	Media Monitoring Africa
M-Net	(Electronic) Media Network
MOI	Memorandum of Incorporation
Naspers	Nasionale Pers Beperk
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NPA	National Prosecution Authority
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTT	Over the Top
POV	Point of View
PP	Public Protector
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
PSM	Public Service Media
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RFP	Request for Proposals
ROI	Return on Investment
SAARF	South African Audience Research Foundation
SAB	South African Breweries
SABC	South African Broadcasting Services
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAPS	South African Police Services
SFL	Systematic Functional Linguistics
SONA	State of the Nation Address
SSASA	Social Security Agency of South Africa
STATSSA	Statistics South Africa
STB	Set Top Box
TAMS	Television Audience Measurement System
TNA	The New Age
USAASA	Universal Service and Access Agency of South Africa
WMC	White Monopoly Capital
ZANU-PF	The Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwean Broadcasting Corporation

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1 Introduction

In the early 1990s, South Africa witnessed the start of a political transition which, among other things, resulted in the collapse of the apartheid regime. Apartheid, which in Afrikaans language means ‘apartness’ or ‘separateness’, was a racial segregationist regime characterized by discrimination of the black population by white supremacist government of the National Party (Clark & Worger, 2004: 101). The collapse of apartheid in 1994 ushered in the political order of the new South Africa, marked as the “rainbow nation” (Lange & Van Eeden, 2014: 68). This new order provided a glimmer of hope for an equal society in which oppression and discrimination of any kind would have no place. It provided optimism for a society in which the government would be based on the will of the people, and in which all civil liberties (including protection of minorities, property rights, cultural identity and freedom of association, among others) were guaranteed by the country’s new constitution.

In recognizing the role of the media in the enhancement of democracy, the new political order made a provision for freedom of speech and abolition of censorship. The government also sought to create media diversity by transforming ownership of existing media, as well as promoting regional and community media (Duncan, 2016: 7). In this new institutional reconfiguration of the South African media, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) – the country’s Public Service Broadcaster (PSB) and the main focus of this study – was reconstituted to embrace the values of democracy such as “equality, editorial independence, nation building, diversity, human dignity, accountability and transparency” (Dibetso & Smith, 2012: 2). As such, through diversity of control (management), equitable representation of different groups in South Africa as well as development agenda (e.g., education, of democracy) the SABC was transformed to shed its apartheid history and embrace the new democratic dispensation (Ndlela, 2007: 77). These were to be some of the markers of a new democratic SA. These are also some of the features

against which SABC's role in the consolidation of SA democracy were evaluated in this study.

In transitioning from apartheid to democracy, South Africa joined the many third world and east European countries in the 1980s and early 1990s in what some transitology theorists refer to as the "Third Wave" of democratisation (Friz, Menocal & Rakner, 2007: 1). One of the key observations in the assessment of these 'new' democracies like South Africa is that while a few have fully consolidated their democracies (e.g., Chile, Argentina), some have regressed towards dictatorship, for example, Burundi, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe (Friz, Menocal & Rakner, 2007: 19). Majority of them are stuck in a "democratic grey zone" – a perpetual state of transition in which there is evidence of some democratic attributes (e.g., regular elections) but with some critical aspects like the free press missing, making these democracies lack progression towards true democratic consolidation (Carothers, 2002: 9).

Given the foregoing, it is important to assess South Africa's project of democracy consolidation and the media's role in it. Since the start of political transition in 1990, South Africa has had many challenges in consolidating its democracy. There has been, for example, widespread concerns about the ANC's use of its majority muscle to pressure the institutions of democracy to accede to its demands (Southall, 2014: 56), and to protect their president from facing repercussions of corruption and state capture (Mbatha & Wild, 2015). In this light, the political state of the country is being feared by some analysts of being that of a one-party state (Brooks, 2004: 3, 122), in which the political elites use their political dominance to enrich themselves through corruption (Lannegren & Ito, 2017: 56), patronage and the system of clientelism. Given the power of political elites in some democratic transitions, one of the pertinent questions relates to the extent to which the South African political elites may have used their influence to either enable the SABC to perform its democracy building mandate as PSB, or captured it for party-political or business interests.

This study therefore locates itself within the broader context of political transitions. It assesses the role of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's contribution to the consolidation of democracy by examining the broadcaster's popular entertainment (as opposed to news or journalism) content.

1.1 Rationale

There are three main reasons that have necessitated an interest in this study. The first is the idea that, much as it is a good point of progress to transition to democracy, democracy is reversible. So, after more than 20 years of democracy in South Africa, it is worth assessing whether democracy is under threat. This question defines the key concern that citizens worried about their country's democratic future have.

The second one is the conviction held by many media scholars that popular or entertainment media have a crucial role to play in the consolidation of democracy. Woudri Botha (2010) notes that when SABC1 changed its image and positioned itself as an honest, responsible popular television that "offers information and entertainment that is in touch with [the viewer's] world" (Botha, 2010: 153), the channel resorted to "grim and gritty reality of increasingly ghettoized and rough townships of South Africa as they sunk deeper and deeper into poverty and abyss" (ibid). The consequence for highlighting this failure of government, Botha notes, resulted in the discontinuation of SABC1's two flagship drama series – namely *Yizo-Yizo* and *Zone 14*. The study is therefore an attempt to answer the question of what role South Africa's only PSB network's entertainment programming has been, and what has influenced it. The selected case studies of *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* are an attempt to see if the case of the above discontinued series was incidental, or if they confirm a trend of deliberate intent.

The third reason is the dominance of studies that focus on 'political' content (news and current affairs) when assessing the role of the media in transition. Most of the scholarly works on media and democracy (and consolidation thereof) have focused

on political content (journalism and news) and generally ignored popular entertainment content (Street, Inhorn and Scott, 2011: 338). While Carina Weinmann defines entertainment as users' experiences (2019: 139), entertainment here refers to popular, non-news genres like drama, soap operas and magazine programmes. Popular entertainment content comprises the biggest chunk of television programming, and it is for this reason that this study argues for the importance of this content category in keeping the citizens meaningfully engaged in their democracy.

1.2 Context

The defining moment of South Africa's political transition is widely accepted to be President FW De Klerk's speech of 2 February 1990 in which he announced the rollout of South Africa's political reforms or liberalisation (Van Zyl Slabbert, 1991:5). The central features of the *liberalisation* were the unconditional unbanning of all political organisations which saw the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990. The reforms were followed by the *regime change* which saw the first democratic elections in 1994 and the ultimate adoption of the new South African constitution in 1996 (see Bauer & Taylor 2005: 248; Habib, 1995:50). Then South Africa entered into *democratic consolidation* where various efforts have been made to strengthen democracy. This included efforts by the state to instil a "naturalised" (Schedler, 1998:18) democratic culture beyond elections, creation of democratic institutions intended to form a permanent democratic state, as well as efforts to improve the quality of lives of people through reduction of unemployment, delivery of essential infrastructure and services, amongst others (Nkuhlu, 1999:15). The rollout of the three phases of transition is used for conceptual convenience, but does not necessarily follow a teleological order – the key weakness for which transitology theory has been criticized. Instead, many aspects of the phases co-exist and overlap (Schedler, 1998:5).

The central concern raised by some analysts was that South Africa has become a dominant-party state (Brooks, 2004:122) - a de-facto one party state in which there is very little chance of power changing hands (Carothers, 2002: 12). One-party

state is a threat to democracy because of the tendency towards “the gradual weakening of democracy by those elected to lead” (Wieczorek, 2012: 28) as they try to hold on to power for as long as possible. It is against this context of South African democratic transition that the assessment of the SABC’s entertainment programming’s contribution to democratic consolidation will be conducted.

1.3 Research objective and research question

Following the rationale and context, an important question is thus germane - *perhaps better articulated by Schmitt-Beck and Voltmer (2007: 76) – whether and in what ways the media is supportive of a political culture that is conducive of democracy?* This study therefore explores the role of public service broadcasting with a specific focus on the role played by entertainment media in South Africa’s attempt to consolidate its democracy. More specifically, the study asks, “what is the role of SABC2’s soap operas in creating a culture conducive to democracy in South Africa?” The study considers that the best way to assess SABC television’s compatibility with normative notions of democratic consolidation is by looking at how this ideal is represented and upheld in its entertainment content.

As demanded by the research objective and questions outlined above, the study pays attention to the social context of democratic consolidation, institutional analysis of the SABC, as well as analysis of the public broadcaster’s entertainment programming. The Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), which evolved out of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), is employed as the analytical approach for the study. CDA’s main subject of analysis is linguistic text or language – although it has been applied in the study of other semiotic modes. Instead of looking at text as language only, MCDA looks at text as a more complex “semiotic resource” consisting of visuals, gestures and sounds (van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). MCDA lends itself more naturally to the analysis of televisual text and enables the analyst to incorporate television’s multimodal text consisting of captions, camera, sound, editing, acting and performance.

1.4 Research parameters

Since the focus is on democratic consolidation, the study restricts itself to the SABC during the tenure of President Jacob Zuma whose influence effectively ended when Cyril Ramaphosa won the ANC presidential race during the ANC Elective Conference at Nasrec in December 2017. For a sharper focus, the study restricts itself to SABC2, the channel that purports to be the torchbearer of the public service mandate of the SABC. For consistency of analytical tools, the study considers two long running soap operas on SABC2 - *7de Laan* and *Muvhango*.

1.5 Conceptual clarifications

In examining the scholarly work in this field, the study conducts a review in two parts. One is a discussion of democratic consolidation in depth by looking at what generally happens to some of the democracies of the third wave, of which South Africa is part. The second part, inspired by the work of Katrin Voltmer, Joke Hermes and Jim McGuigan, amongst others, explores the dialectical relationship between the media, especially popular media, and the process of democratic consolidation.

1.5.1 Democratic consolidation

Democratic consolidation concerns itself with "conditions under which democracies survive" (Voltmer, 2013:95). It is a stage within the broader political transition where democratic institutions are so strong that "democracy is the only game in town" (Schedler, 1998: 91; Linz & Stepan, 1996: 5). It establishes and entrenches a democratic culture in which a regression to autocracy is not likely. There seems to be a broad consensus amongst scholars that democratic consolidation happens when there is a general acceptance that popular, democratic rule is the only viable approach to government compared to any other realistic alternative (Aknur 2012; Diamond, 1999; Fritz, Menocal & Rakner, 2007). Muge Aknur asserts that democratic consolidation involves the full rooting of the new democracy and the internalization of its rules (Aknur, 2012: 14). Gerardo Munck adds that consolidation is only realized when "all the major actors accept

the rules of the democratic game, and when none of these actors uses resources outside those sanctioned by the democratic game" (Munck, 1994: 364).

1.5.2 Concepts of democratic consolidation

Amir Khorram-Manesh contends that the minimalist definition of consolidation is not useful in research because it creates "operational difficulties" (Khorram-Manesh, 2013: 8) – in other words, its failure to provide useful characteristics or indicators of success of consolidation makes democratic consolidation a subject difficult to research. On the characteristics, different scholars have come up with different and often divergent lists. Literature review conducted in Chapter 2 has led to identification of a few characteristics. The study has adopted the use of five broad interdependent attributes that will be useful for the study going forward. These are *peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability, and active citizenship*.

Liberalism is the idea that the state should not exercise its power at the expense of freedom of the individual – that the control of arbitrary use of (state) power protects civil liberties (Starr, 2007: 16). So, guarantee of *civil liberties* is in line with the universal declaration of human rights, which protects people from the tyranny of oppressive social groups, repressive states and powerful corporate organizations. Some of the rights include freedom of speech, religion, assembly and association, etc. These are adopted by many democracies and enshrined in their respective constitution's bill of rights (Zakaria, 1997: 22).

For a sustainable democracy, *democratic institutions* must be established to "reinforce the democratic rules of the game" (Aknur, 2012: 2). The functioning of these institutions is enhanced by the principle of separation of powers, which the South African constitution upholds (Fombad, 2005: 309).

Pippa Norris cites *peacebuilding* as one of the democratic roles of media systems (Norris, 2010: 24). Therefore, a democracy marred in violence and lacking peace limits the civil liberties of its citizens, thus producing a "low intensity citizenship" (von Holdt, 2014: 147). Irina Filatova adds that for the majority of the African population, stability, peace and delivery, all which can only be achieved through

access to the levers of power – is what 'democracy' actually means - rather than the abstract notions of institutionalized equality and representivity (Filatova, 2000:36).

In reference to the Third Wave democracies, many authors have lamented a lack of citizen participation, or *active citizenship* in political and social life. This might stem from citizens refraining for lack of trust in political leadership like is the case Nigeria (Falade, 2014: 19) or disillusion in democracy amid fear of violence and victimization like is the case in Zimbabwe (Bardall, 2018: 13). In a consolidated democracy therefore, citizen participation in political life is key (Hagen, 1992: 17) not only in legitimating democracy, but also in ensuring its future sustainability.

Mark Philp argues that the ruling elites are likely to respect the public interest, or the public will if they are somehow "representative of, and/or *accountable* [my emphasis] to those they rule" (2009: 28). *Accountability* is a call on the ruling elites to have high personal and political integrity (2009: 37) in order to follow the ethics of good governance. The opposite of good governance is corruption, which can be summed as "the misuse of public power for private gain" (Treisman, 2007). For instance, John Emmanuel Gyong (2011: 71) argues that the lack of good governance and accountability are to blame for the poverty in Nigeria despite the country being one of the largest producers of petroleum in the world.

In short, beyond the minimalistic definition of democracy, the attributes for a fully consolidated democracy are peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability and active citizenship. These will serve as democratic values whose reflection in the selected texts the study seeks to evaluate.

1.5.3 PSB and popular entertainment programming

Many scholars agree that formal institutional setup is not enough for democracies to thrive (Voltmer, 2010: 139). Rather, conducive political culture is key. Political culture refers to the cumulative whole of politically relevant options (from Nieguth & Wilton, 2015: 5) cognitive mobilization, civic competence and political interest and participation (Voltmer, 2010: 139). Such a participation does not only manifest in formal politics, but in the culture of everyday life too. Cultural studies similarly

examines the linkages between (popular) culture and nature of social power relations ideologically embedded in everyday life (Nieguth & Wilton, 2015: 9). Popular culture is understood as a site of struggle (Dolby: 2006: 33) and a place of negotiation over forms of social (in)equality such as class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, race, etc (Fiske, 1987a: 255).

Within the context of South African democratic transition, healing the wounds of the past and building a united South Africa was a priority for delivering a successful transition through nation building (Dannhauser, 2013: 44). After the collapse of apartheid, attempts were made to transform the SABC from a state broadcaster into a true public service broadcaster. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli highlights the normative notions of the public service broadcaster as one that privileges the "public interest and the public good" (2008:75), and as such will "aim to provide relevant information, balance or fairness on controversial and political issues, and diversity of programmes and services" (2008:75). The dual objective of public service broadcasting, according to O'Neil (1998) is to provide citizens with information to make informed political choices, as well as to serve as feedback mechanism for politicians to take stock of the views of the public (1998:3). Therefore, popular entertainment on PSB has continued to play a key role.

Because of their high entertainment value, soap operas have been seen as escapist and offering very little public value. However, some scholars have argued that as a form of popular culture, the soap opera genre is one of the resources in the performance of cultural citizenship (Müller & Hermes, 2010: 194)

One of the defining characteristics of soap opera is 'melodrama' which, through its dramatic weight, heightens affect and seriousness of tone (Bayman, 2013: 82), prompting an emotional and affective response from its audiences. Jostein Gripsrud (2002: 12) argues that this is not arbitrary as it has its foundations in the core of morality during the start of the modern period. From this point of view, melodrama is the soap opera's strategy of limiting interpretations, because the nature of media text" remains a determining factor in the kinds of readings and appropriations that viewers can make" (Muller & Hermes, 2010: 194). It is in agreeing with Müller and Hermes that some texts may have more potential to

support the performance of cultural citizenship than others (ibid). The assessment of SABC2's soap operas will also in part examine the "semiotic resources" of SABC text in the performance of cultural citizenship.

1.6 Theoretical considerations

The study of the media's role in democratic consolidation with a focus on popular entertainment content has warranted a look at popular culture, in this case the concept of the 'cultural public sphere'. Most importantly, because the study is ultimately about the role of the media in society, normative theories of the media will also form part of the theoretical mix of this study. Before briefly discussing the theories below, the study adopts as its broader paradigm and language of analysis, the concepts of cultural studies.

Cultural Studies has for years positioned itself as a theory in pursuit of social equality (Frazer, 1993: 530), and by extension, as democratic. Cultural studies defines culture not as an aesthetic form, but as "political" (Fiske, 1987a: 254) – because culture cannot be imagined outside of power relationships that form and inform them (Lewis, 2002: 34). It is a site of struggle against domination and subordination, and purports to challenge any form of social inequality, and stands for the liberation of the repressed (Walsh-Cashman, 1999: 108-9). Forms of social equity include class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, race, etc (Fiske, 1987a: 255; Baker, 2005: 53). From this perspective, Baker argues that cultural studies embraces a "mix of values that centre on a democratic tradition" (Baker, 2005: 52). He identifies the key values as difference, tolerance, equality, solidarity, diversity and liberty (ibid). The study aligns itself with the "democratic" strand of cultural studies – one which concerns itself with emancipation and production capability of cultural systems that assist with the extension of cultural citizenship (Lumby, 2003: 224).

1.6.1 The cultural public sphere

Jurgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere has been used by some scholars as a justification for public service broadcasting (Iosifidis, 2011: 4). Habermas refers to 'the ideal speech situation' as an unrestricted, unconstrained exchange of

argument and speech in which reason and rationality prevail, making it possible for participants to reach mutual consensus – where disagreements are resolved without the use of violence or force (Teigas, 1997:232). For the ideal speech situation to prevail, Habermas (1989) argues that it is necessary for the state to enable the public sphere. The public sphere facilitates a social intercourse that disregards social status and recognises equality among the participants (Habermas, 1989: 36). Today the media are, as Dahlgren asserts, "the chief institutions of the public sphere" (1995:8).

When applying Habermas's ideas to public service broadcasting, scholars tend to emphasize information and argument (Teer-Tomaselli, 2008: 81), the "rational-critical", 'cognitive' (Rutherford, 1993: 123) and not "emotive", 'affective' (McGuigan, 2005: 430) aspects. Habermas's formulation is "inadequately cultural" (Roberge, 2011: 1) and is strongly biased towards 'political' (news and current affairs) programming. Therefore, in developing the idea of the 'cultural sphere', Jim McGuigan sought to close the conceptual gap in Habermas's original thesis. According to McGuigan, the cultural public sphere "refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication" (2005: 435). McGuigan concedes that no representational form is entirely affective or cognitive, and that even news contains some affective and entertainment (ibid). His formulation of the cultural public sphere opens a conceptual possibility of using a (modified) version of Habermas's public sphere on entertainment content.

McGuigan argues for the inherent existence of both the cultural and the political in the concept of the public sphere. He laments Habermas's relegation of the cultural to the 'system' – the domain of absence of critical thought in which the masses are prone to capital's instrumental reason. The political, on the other hand, belonged to the domain of the 'lifeworld' where matters of critical political importance are deliberated on. He argues that the affective means of communication available in the cultural public sphere provides a platform through which people can think about their own lifeworld situations. Sharing of emotions, pleasures and pains "through willing suspension of disbelief" (McGuigan, 2005: 435) in a soap opera, for

example, enables the viewer to talk and argue with friends and relatives about what characters should and should not do (ibid). This he argues provides a vehicle for imagination, thought and feelings that enable the viewer to "negotiate their way in and through systems that may seem beyond anyone's control on the terrain of everyday life" (McGuigan, 2005: 435). In his examples and application of his theory, McGuigan seems to debunk the idea of the distinction between the affective and cognitive modes of representation. Where prior scholarship on media and popular culture has seen the role of entertainment as having indirect influence on politics at best (e.g. being ideological), or deceptive at worst (Adorno & Horkheimer 2006; Postman, 1985), Liesbet van Zoonen asserts that entertainment has direct influence on mainstream politics too. She dismisses as insignificant the distinction between cognitive and affective modes and argues instead that entertainment such as soap operas can serve as alternative ways to make sense of politics. These, she says, they use to "express their understanding, reflection, judgement, and utopian visions of politics and politicians" (2005: 18).

1.6.2 Normative Theories of the Media

Normative theories of the media are always useful to act as the standards by which to assess the media's extent of contribution to democracy. Otherwise, as Carina Weinmann and Peter Vorderer assert, it would be difficult to evaluate the content and effects of political entertainment as "good" or "bad" in a democratic sense (2018: 467). Clifford Christians, Theodore Glasser, Dennis McQuail, Kaarle Nordenstreng and Robert White, 2009 (Christians, et al.) offer a revisionist critique of the original *Four Theories of the Press* (1956) by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (Siebert, et al., 1956). Their main criticism against Siebert, et al. is that, even within a given political system, the roles of the media are too diverse that a one-size-fits-all theory is not possible (Christians, et al.., 2009: 239). Also, by seeking to objectively describe the reality of the media systems as they were, *The Four Theories* are criticised for acting as "affirmative instruments to strengthen the prevailing ideology" (2009: ix), thereby losing their normative appeal. In response, Christians, et al. add the definition of the media's

role in society through the prism of the ideal and the normative too (2009: vii). The revised take on normative theories is predicated on the emancipatory potential of the media, wherein the ideal and normative are added to the sociological and the real (2009: iv). As such, the new take by Christians et al. suggests four normative roles of the media. Nordenstreng summarises these as follows: The collaborative role is what the media plays when the nation state is young and insecure; in times of war, emergency; the surveillance role is typically designated as adversary, watchdog and agenda-setter, when violations of moral and social order are exposed; also, informational role when bringing important issues to the attention of the community; the facilitative role for the media where journalists seek to create and sustain public debate; essence of public civic journalism movement, and critical/dialectical role being a role of the media when journalists in a radical way examine the assumptions and premises of a community; constitutes public debate about, not within, the prevailing political order (cf. Nordenstreng, 2006: 108-109) and Christians, et al. (2009: 139-221).

Of the roles presented above, the ones that are of particular interest in this study are collaborative and facilitative. These roles are deemed suitable for PSB whose goal is not radical subversion, but cultural enhancement of democracy.

1.7 Chapter breakdown

The current Chapter 1 is the introduction that provides a summary of the whole study. Chapters 2 and 3 are literature review chapters. The former reviews the concept of democratic consolidation within the context of political transitions. The latter delves into the role the media plays during transitions to democracy and democratic consolidation. This it does by considering various case studies in Africa and the rest of the world. Chapter 4 discusses a selection of theories for the interpretation of the role of the media in the consolidation of democracy. The main theories are the normative theories of the media, as well as Jim McGuigan's theory of the cultural public sphere. Chapter 5 discusses Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis as the chosen methodology that analyses text with its multiple modes within its social and discursive practice contexts. Social context, discussed at

length in Chapter 6, looks at the broader social context of democratic consolidation in South Africa.

Discursive practice or institutional analysis of the SABC, as conducted in Chapter 7, looks at the functioning of the SABC as an institution in order to highlight the presence of institutional practices that might enable/defeat the SABC's role of promoting democracy. It will look at aspects such as official documents, (editorial) policies and instances of political interference where applicable.

Finally, Chapters 8 and 9 conduct textual analysis of a selection of local entertainment programmes.

2 Literature Review I: Democracy and its consolidation

2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the key motivators for this study is a concern about the health of democracy in South Africa, and the observation by scholars that some Third Wave democracies have regressed back to autocracy. The chapter seeks to place the study in the broader body of work around 'democratic transition' with emphasis on democratic consolidation. It provides a useful context for the study as it seeks to describe what generally happens during democratic consolidation, and to identify patterns and trends as experienced by some of the Third Wave democracies, including those in Africa. The chapter shows that none of the Third Wave democracies in Africa, including South Africa, have successfully completed the process of consolidation. South Africa therefore seems to suffer a similar fate of some of Third Wave democracies most of whom are stuck in a democratic grey zone in which there is neither a direct dictatorship nor a fully consolidated democracy. After the review, the chapter identifies several democratic attributes that, from a popular media point of view, were used later in the research to assess the role of the SABC in the consolidation of democracy.

2.2 The concept of democracy

The original meaning of democracy stems from the Greek words "demos", which means 'the people' and "kratos" which means 'rule' (Hagen, 1992: 16). The term therefore literally means the rule by the people. Democracy is hailed as the preferred system of government developed out of the need to replace autocratic forms of government with the ones founded on the will of the people. It is therefore not surprising that many political revolutions around the world have been carried out with the aim of ushering in a democratic order (Hutchinson and Colón-Riós, 2012: 597). Democracy is a "ritual of collective belonging, joining people from virtually all social sectors in a common cause" (Dahlgren, 2013: 524).

It is a system of government which gives the people the "right to choose for itself the form of government it believes is most promotive of its own happiness." (Hutchinson and Colón-Riós, 2012: 597). The ‘people’ or ‘public’ are therefore central to this thinking because non-democratic systems of government do not centre the will of the people as the basis of their legitimacy (Von Soest & Grauvogel, 2015: 5-6). It is the most preferred political system because it is based on the guarantee of liberty and equality (Christians, et al., 2009: 91). Beyond the ideological dimension of democracy, an extensive survey by Jones, Epp and Baumgartner (2019) found that democracies have attributes that generally lend themselves to flexible and adaptive policies than authoritarian systems. Authoritarian regimes, by contrast, display more policy instability leading to a lack of ability to solve problems faced by the political system (2019: 22).

Democracy is often the rallying point of many different peoples across race, religion, gender and creed during the calls to oust autocratic regimes. However, it is often the case that activists fighting for democracy are too caught up opposing the undemocratic governments that they don’t pay enough attention to what democracy actually means within their own context. Gerardo Munck observes that in Latin America, some countries followed the trend of democratic transition in the early 1990s, and only when they were in power did a commotion over different visions of democracy emerge (Munck, 2015: 365). Cees Hamelink, one of the proponents of democracy, warns that no society can attain the ideal of democracy in its perfect, idealist sense:

> It is commonplace that ‘direct’ democracy – the form of government in which the right to make political decisions is exercised directly by the whole body of citizens – does not exist (Hamelink, 1995: 17).

To concur with Hamelink, it is impractical to literally involve the entire citizenry of several millions of people in every government decision making process. Even where they are expected to participate, there is often very little public participation and high prevalence of political apathy (Dahlgren, 2013: 524). This also happens in Western democracies where there is presence of freedom of expression and freedom of association and political alignment (ibid). Carl Cohen (1971) also wrote

that true democracy as intended from the normative definition of “government by the people” is impossible to attain because people cannot rule themselves (Cohen, 1971: 4). Dahlgren concurs, stating the following practical reasons:

> Even with the most noble of intentions, the process of government has become paralysingly difficult. Many decisions which government faces require a degree of knowledge beyond the grasp of most citizens (Dahlgren, 2002: 2).

However, even considering the impracticality of direct democracy of ‘government by the people’, Hamelink sees more value in its normative dimension:

> The normative approach addresses reality as it should be and provides grounds for normative choices. I want to use the concept “ideal” since it refers to a process. It suggests that we view democracy as a developmental and educational process which is never fully achieved (Hamelink, 1995: 17).

Following Hamelink’s logic, it is only possible to perhaps talk about any given society’s proximity to or distance away from the ideal rule driven by the will of the people. In place of ‘direct’ democracy, a practical approach has been adopted and accepted by governments and scholars alike. Philip Lee posits that in order to govern, for example, certain people are chosen to represent the vast majority of others and to take decisions on behalf of ‘the people’. In most cases, this takes no account of established institutions such as the judiciary, the civil service, the financial and banking systems, or even the military. In this account by Lee, democracy becomes a compromise between the ideal of total participation and “the praxis of delegating responsibility – usually called representative or constitutional democracy” (Lee, 1995: 2). This system inevitably creates an elite that is politically powerful. In some Third Wave democracies, the elites enjoy absolute powers to run the government as they wish, thus becoming the enemies of the people. It is these elites that the media are expected to try to help the public to hold accountable.

Be that as it may, the ideal of democracy (Hamelink, 1995: 15) is one that keeps societies on their toes in the pursuit of what Steven Friedman calls ‘open-ended utopia’ … “because, while the end goal is never achieved, it is possible to make progress towards it (Friedman, 2012: 12). It is this ideal that is used as a normative

canon to measure the extent of social equality and citizen well-being in any society. This thesis stands in favour of the concept as a system that is best placed to protect the rights and general well-being of societies and individuals.

2.3 Types of democracy

As Dahlgren has observed, although democracy as a concept embodies so many desires for the good of society, a closer inspection can generate complication (Dahlgren, 2013: 524). Schedler asserts that “the most widely accepted criteria for identifying a country as democratic [are] civil and political rights plus fair, competitive, and inclusive elections” (Schedler, 1998: 92). Schedler refers to these types of regimes as "liberal democracies" (ibid). However, there are almost endless kinds and varieties of democracies. As Schmidt notes, democracy types are representative of a wide variety of regimes which include “radical democracies and moderate ones, representative and direct democracy, parliamentary versus presidential government, majoritarian and consensus democracy, and established democracies as opposed to partial democracies”, for example (Schmidt, 2002: 147). After studying democracies in multiple countries, David Collier and Steven Levitsky identified 550 types, but out of these they came up with 4 broad types of democracy, which are *authoritarianism*, *electoral democracy*, *liberal democracy*, *advanced Democracy* – (Schedler, 1998: 93).

Schedler (1998: 92) calls “electoral democracies” all semi-democracies that are on the borderline between democracy and authoritarianism – they have some but not all of democracy's essential features. In his view, “these regimes manage to hold (more or less) inclusive, clean, and competitive elections but fails to uphold the political and civil freedoms essential for liberal democracy” (Schedler, 1998: 92-93). “Advanced democracies” on the other hand are regimes that possess some positive traits over and above the minimal defining criteria of liberal democracy, and therefore rank higher in terms of democratic quality than many new democracies (Schedler, 1998: 93).

In terms of fully developed democracies – which exclude semi-democracies or any type of hybrid regime (discussed fully later in this chapter), Peter Dahlgren identifies two broad types of democracy – direct democracy and liberal democracy. Direct democracy, or participatory version of democracy (Dahlgren, 2013: 525) refers to a procedure of majority rule. A radical variant of this usage is government by the common people (Hagen, 1992: 16). Dahlgren regards this version as "blatantly utopian" and "dismally ideological" (Dahlgren, 2013: 525). However, like Hamelink, he deems this view useful for its idealist value. The second type, which he calls liberal or constitutional democracy, refers to "the powers of the majority being bound by a framework of constitutional restraints designed to guarantee certain individual and collective rights, such as freedom of speech, religion or opinion, and association" (Hagen, 1992: 16). In practice, liberal democracy is not a majoritarian rule in its strict sense, but it is manifest through a system of representation by the chosen delegates. It is a system through which citizens exercise their right to make decisions, with parliament as its usual highest decision-making body, through chosen representatives (ibid).

Dahlgren's criticism of this type of democracy is its propensity to create political elites who often do not act as agents of expression of the will of the people. He also blames this system for the declining levels of citizen participation. He however thinks that a balance between the direct democracy and liberal democracy can lead to a healthier option. Direct democracy has a normative value, where "vision or horizon" is important in keeping the liberal democratic version in check (Dahlgren, 2013: 524). At the same time, elements of liberal democracy are "important for setting limits on state power and for generally handling conflicts of interests and social antagonisms" (Dahlgren, 2013: 524).

There are of course numerous democratic subtypes, and in this light, Schmidt (2002) and Schedler (1998) warn against idealization of English-speaking (Westminster and United States models) democracies, a point explored further in sections to follow below. Schmidt expands on this by making examples of countries

like Austria, Germany and Benelux countries, who have heritage of “enlightened absolutism and corporate representation” in their democracies. In these countries, he says, democracy has developed into negotiation democracy based on inclusiveness, extensive bargaining and compromise, and not as purely competitive majority rule systems (Schmidt, 2002: 149). However, many democracies of the Third Wave are yet to be advanced or consolidated – thereby acquiring a label of some qualified democracy. Larry Diamond elaborates:

> If we use a very demanding standard of democracy, encompassing not only democratic elections but solid protection of civil liberties under a strong rule of law, then the proportion of intermediate regimes truly swells because so many of the new “democracies” of the third wave are ‘illiberal’ (2002: 25).

What Diamond is saying is that strictly speaking, illiberal democracies are not full democracies, but hybrid. Schmidt, on the other hand, seems to recognize hybrid systems as some of the legitimate types of democracy. Because of the importance of this category of democracies, and because South Africa is increasingly feared to be in danger of slipping into a type of a hybrid democracy, this category will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Hagen adds some key differentiators in the different kinds of democracies, which add to the variety of sub-types present in democratic categorization. These differentiators (i.e., social, economic, elites, participation, dialogue and competition) are historically based, and are often informed by the challenges a particular country is trying to overcome with the specific democracy type it adopts on the one hand, and by the decisions the political elites make in safeguarding their interests on the other (1992: 17).

As discussed above, many scholars have tended to foreground western liberal democracy as the golden standard towards which all political systems must aspire. Fareed Zakaria (1997) contends that a fully consolidated democracy is a western, liberal one:

> A political system marked not only by free and fair elections, but also by the rule of law, a separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion and property (Zakaria, 1997: 22).

He says it is only this system of democracy that can discourage leaders from acting outside of the rule of law, deprive citizens of their individual liberties like free speech and freedom of assembly (1997: 23) – and offers citizens some protection from the tyranny of those who might be abusive of their political and economic power. He places a particular emphasis on constitutional liberalism – “it is liberal because it draws on the philosophical strain, beginning with the Greeks, that emphasizes individual liberty. It is constitutional because it rests on the tradition, beginning with the rule of law” (1997: 26). In addition, proponents of western liberal democracy argue that “countries that subscribe to it very rarely go to war with one another” (Oduor, 2019: 108), a view that subscribes to the democratic peace theory (Harrison, 2010: 155). These countries also rarely murder their own populations, nearly always have peaceful transitions of government, and respect human rights more consistently than other systems of government do” (Oduor, 2019: 108). Along the similar vein, Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and The Last Man* (1992) puts forward the idea of western liberal democracy as being universally applicable and most suitable anywhere. Fukuyama argues that the definitive victory of liberalism over monarchy, fascism and most recently communism meant that the world had reached the final form of mankind’s rule (Fukuyama, 2005: 1). Following on this, Fukuyama makes a bold assertion that history had come to an end (McCarney, 1994: 38).

However, western liberal democracy has come under fire for its lack of suitability and applicability in non-western contexts, for example in Asia (Shin & Kim, 2016) and Africa (Oduor, 2019: 111). The imposition of western democratic system on non-western countries (Mentan, 2015: 2) has been criticised as the extension of western imperialism (Ikenberry, 2018: 13). This has been achieved through the use of military force (Thompson, 2008: 164) or economic sanctions or incentives through DFI’s such as the IMF (wa Muiu, 2013: 340; Subreenduth, 2013: 586). Mueni wa Muiu explains his reservation against western liberal democracy in Africa, calling it a “mistake:”

> The culture and values of the people are very important in how they view themselves. … it's through having a rich and secure cultural structure that people can become aware, in a vivid way, of the options available to them, and intelligently examine their value […] Self-respect comes from cultural awareness without which one cannot be an active participant in any aspect of society. Each society must decide on the type of democracy that suits its culture and history …Promoters of liberal democracy ignore both the culture and history of Africans by assuming that democratisation in these countries will follow the same pattern as it did in Western ones (wa Muiu, 2013: 339).

Reginald Oduor adds that liberal democracy is inconsistent with African societies because in Africa, it is impossible for individuals to exist on his or her own without others. That it is impractical and unfeasible because of the largely communalistic outlook of many Africans. He further says that liberal democracy's affirmation is inconsistent with its action – because, as he argues, it defends the rights and dignity of individuals while simultaneously enslaving Africans. That it violates the right to ethnic identity (Oduor, 2019: 108-111). For critics like Anton M, poverty levels would have reduced in countries that have adopted liberal democracy, but has instead resulted in the welfare gap between the rich and the poor (M, 2017: 2). It is for the above reasons that some African scholars have rejected the western notion with the call to consider and adapt the traditional or indigenous African notion of democracy. As Fayemi observes, scholars such as Wamba dia Wamba, Marie P. Eboh, Francis Offor and Kwasi Wiredu hold the view that African societies were democratic even in their monarchical social organisations, and that a resort to those values, principles and traditional political culture in contemporary Africa would perhaps yield to the challenges Africa faces (Fayemi, 2009: 13). However, traditionalism runs into problems when it seeks to roll back the clock of time towards a political system that negates individual civil liberties in favour of the 'collective' – something that the modern African has been accustomed to. Therefore, any alternative which threatens this 'privilege' might be opposed in some contemporary African societies.

Fayemi argues that although the concept 'democracy' originated in ancient Greece, democratic practices have been a part of African political life for centuries.

Therefore, in discussion of African democracy, Fayemi observes that “precepts like consensus principles, human rights and social responsibilities, accountability, tolerance, participation, etc have been identified”, making these principles not distinct from, but also common in Western democracy too (2009: 13). Authors such as Tatah Mentan and Max du Preez have made a similar observation. Mentan argues that the desire for representation, inclusion, and participation in public affairs— essential elements of democracy—are universal to all humans; however, the difference rests in the methods of attaining these goals (Mentan, 2015: 4). Du Preez (2018) also observed that Lesotho’s King Mohlomi’s ideas on governance were very similar to democratic ideas of his European contemporaries in the 18th century even though he had never met Europeans in his life.

This view of African theory is lauded for its championship of democracy beyond dogmatism or allegiance to politics of identity and traditionalism (Fayemi, 2009: 13). As research conducted by Heidi Brooks, Trevor Ngwane and Carin Runciman on popular conception of democracy in South Africa indicates, this is a perspective open to suitable aspects of western democracy while being responsive to local sensibilities (Brooks, et al. 2020: 20). It is hybrid in the sense of advancing and respecting individual civil liberties while balancing this against broader “socio-economic rights are not guaranteed by liberal constitutionalism” (ibid: 22). The idea seems to be that African democracy must ultimately result in the betterment of the people it serves rather than adhere to ideological principles of a democratic type for the sake of it. It is opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach, recognising that no two democracies are the same, let alone African democracies, with diverse cultures, languages, ethnicity and religion, among other variants.

South Africa’s democracy appears to have followed a similar, mixed model which has incorporated the idea of western democracy but recognizing the cultural and group rights, including customary law (Soyapi, 2014: 1446).

2.4 Consolidation as a concept of transition

Once a country has initiated a democratic transition, some of the democratic ideals expressed during the calls for democratisation are met with reality on the ground. Therefore, democracy in the early stages of transition goes through many internal and external threats until it is consolidated (Ihonvbere, 2002: 142). This implies that consolidation is the last 'phase' in the transition continuum. The earlier proponents of the theory of transition, or transitology (O'Donnel & Schmitter, 1986: 6) attempted to come up with a "science of transitions" that would make it possible to predict the outcome of any country's transition to democracy. The basic tenet of transitology is that it is possible to come up with a model that would help map patterns of transitions across many countries within any given 'wave' (O'Donnel & Schmitter, 1986: 6). However, the transition paradigm has been criticized for this teleological approach – that once a country initiates a transition, then a set sequence of stages would unfold towards an inevitable full democracy (Carothers, 2002: 7).

This thesis does not follow the debunked teleological approach. Therefore, the different 'phases' of democratic transition are mentioned for conceptual convenience only. As many analysts have observed, each country has its unique path to democratisation, and as such, 'democratic consolidation' in different countries has diverse outcomes (Schmitter, 1995: 15). As a result, it is impossible to come up with a one-size-fits all list of requirements for all countries. Fritz, Menocal and Rakner identify the three phases of democratisation or transition to democracy as liberalisation, transition and consolidation (2007: 7). This study, however, used Voltmer's adopted developmental theory of democratisation, which helps formulate a more consistent naming convention for the three aspects. Voltmer 'renames' the second phase to be 'regime change', and her formulation becomes the following process:

> Liberalisation within the old regime and its eventual decay; Transition to democratic rule; Consolidation and maturation of the new democratic order (Voltmer, 2013: 73).

Liberaliation efforts involve the opening up or crumbling of the old regime (Fritz, Menocal & Rakner, 2007: 7), the release of political prisoners, relaxation of restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press (Voltmer (2013: 73) and the installation of some legal safeguards for individuals and toleration of political opposition(Linz & Stepan, 1996: 3). Voltmer (2013: 92) defines the regime change as a period when the authoritarian regime collapses and the new democratic dispensation begins, “often culminating when the first competitive elections are held” (Fritz, Menocal & Rakner, 2007: 7). Democratic consolidation concerns the long-term entrenchment of democracy, “when democratic practices are expected to become more firmly established and accepted by most relevant actors (Fritz, Menocal & Rakner, 2007: 7), resulting in the “effective functioning of a democratic regime” (O’Donnell, 1992: 18). Consolidation is essential for the establishment of durable and sustainable democratic regimes – ones which cannot easily regress back to dictatorship. Democratic consolidation has proven to be the most challenging for emerging democracies in the developing world – with some countries remaining unconsolidated since transition (Schmitter, 1995: 11).

2.5 The consolidation of democracy

It is a widespread belief among scholars that while it is possible for a country to regress from a democracy back to dictatorship, this happens less often, and is much harder in fully consolidated democracies (Schedler, 1998: 103). Democratic consolidation is more complex and longer than reforms and regime change phases (Voltmer, 2013: 3) because it takes much more than just putting an electoral system in place (Linz & Stepan, 1996: 3). Democratic consolidation is the aspect of the broader process of democratisation in which all players get to accept that democracy is “the only game in town” (Schedler, 1998: 91). Therefore, democratic consolidation is the completion of the actual transition (Aknur, 2012: 13). Loosely defined, democratisation is the process of transition from dictatorship to democracy. Because it is part of the broader complex process, consolidation cannot be dealt with in a vacuum, but needs to be understood within the greater context of transition.

Consolidation is understood to mean the setting up of systems that would help create a long democratic life, thus strengthening democracies against the negative effects of “reverse waves” (Schedler, 1998: 91). Schedler notes that in addition to the original definition of democratic consolidation as ‘strengthening of democracy’, countless other tasks have been added. He expresses a concern that the never-ending list of "conditions of democratic consolidation", as well as the corresponding list of "problems of democratic consolidation" has made the definition of democratic consolidation expand beyond all recognition (Schedler, 1988: 91). Schedler notes the many attributes scholars have come to associate with democratic consolidation over the years, as reflected below:

> It has come to include such divergent items as popular legitimation, the diffusion of democratic values, the neutralisation of antisystem actors, civilian supremacy over the military, the elimination of authoritarian enclaves, party building, the organisation of functional interests, the stabilisation of electoral rules, the routinisation of politics, the decentralisation of state power, the introduction of mechanisms of direct democracy, judicial reform, the alleviation of poverty, and economic stabilisation (Schedler, 1998: 91-92).

He expresses caution against using democratic consolidation to mean anything and everything that needs to be seen or happen in new democracies, as he deems this approach to stagnate any study of consolidation and leads to a conceptual confusion. Instead, he encourages a return to the original concern with democratic survival (Schedler, 1998: 92). What Schedler suggests is to restore the “classical” meaning of consolidation by restricting its definition to the "negative" notion: avoiding democratic breakdown. This, according to Schedler, means avoidance of persistent regime-threatening "unbounded uncertainties" (Schedler, 1998: 95). So, the democrats' fundamental concern shifts from “establishing democracy's core institutions to securing what they have achieved” (ibid). It means reducing the probability of the breakdown of democracy “to the point where they can feel reasonably confident that democracy will persist in the near future” (Schedler, 1998: 95). A consolidated democracy is one that can withstand not necessarily

overthrow, but a gradual or intermittent erosion or weakening by those elected to lead it (Schedler, 1998: 103).

Fritz, Menocal and Rakner (2007: 12) adopt Przeworski's definition of democracy as "institutionalised uncertainty" – in which all outcomes (including election of political representatives) are unknown and subject to an open contest among key players, and that such outcomes will be determined within a framework of pre-established democratic rules. Above that, Fritz, Menocal and Rakner (2007: 12) suggest that "structural factors such as underlying economic, social and institutional conditions and legacies – have a considerable impact on the prospects and sustainability of democratic consolidation."

2.6 Consolidation as the maximalist view of democracy

The above debates show that democracy types can be placed into a continuum that ranges from maximalist to minimalist approaches (Kazeem, 2009: 3). Thus, Seymor Lipset and Jason Lakin (2004) seem content with a minimalist view of popular elections as enough to define any country as democratic:

> … an institutional arrangement in which all adult individuals have the power to vote, through free and fair elections, for their chief executive and national legislature. Thus, democracy is a system of political rights that specifies how leadership should be designated at the highest national level in society (Lipset & Lakin, 2004: 19).

As Kazeem observes, the minimalists share a viewpoint wherein democracy does not set conditions for its outcomes or characterize itself as anything other than an electoral system (2009: 3). However, many scholars have rejected this minimalist notion, and asserted that "having popularly elected authorities" is not enough because such a country will "still lack the characteristics associated with the consolidated democracy" (Aknur, 2012: 2). To concur, Linz and Stepan (1996: 3) contend that while democratisation requires an open contestation over the right to win control of the government through free competitive elections, they warn against 'electoral fallacy' where the presence of elections spell the end of democratic transition process (Linz & Stepan, 1996: 3). As observed by Voltmer, this growing

scepticism among students of democratisation have led some to declare the end of the transition paradigm (Voltmer, 2013: 5). Thus, for some of the 'electoral democracies', the quality of life of citizens has not improved from the pre-election period. This trend is widespread in Africa where democracy has not successfully led to development (Sikuka, 2017). As Steven Friedman observes, the minimalist democracy has underserved African peoples for many years, and has placed the general population under prolonged suffering from their power-obsessed leadership:

> If we see democracy as a system that institutionalises universal adult participation in public decision-making, civil liberties, and the resolution of conflicts within a common political space by peaceful political contest and accommodation, Africa's formal democratisation has, as Richard Joseph (1998) has argued, in most cases proved illusory: popular participation in decision-making and control over elected officials is very weak, while in many cases, rulers present a facade of democracy while denying their opponents and dissenting citizens civil liberties (Friedman, 1999: 838).

Larry Diamond sees democracy as encompassing "not only a civilian, constitutional, multiparty regime, with regular, free and fair elections and universal suffrage, but organisational and informational pluralism, extensive civil liberties (freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations), effective power for elected officials, and functional autonomy for legislative, executive and judicial organs of government (Diamond 1988: 33).

Democratic consolidation, on the other hand, is a complex process about how the "newly established rules and institutions become routinised and accepted as the best way to govern the country" (Voltmer, 2013: 95). In other words, it is a view that demands a look at the development of a political culture and conditions underlying entrenchment or shifting away from democracy itself. Robert Pinkney adds that consolidation does not merely mean the existence of new structures but also the presence of attitudes, behaviour, and processes that reflect the spirit as well as the letter of democracy (Pinkney, 2003: 179). Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan further suggest that consolidation has been achieved when (a) no significant political actor tries to achieve their objectives by creating non-democratic regime

or encourage violence, foreign intervention or secession; (b) the vast majority of the population believe in democratic government, and supporters of anti-democratic alternatives are few and isolated; and (c) conflicts are resolved within specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the democratic process (Pinkney, 2003: 179). Therefore, democratic consolidation is achieved when there is a political situation in which democracy is "the only game in town" (Linz & Stepan, 1996: 5).

2.7 Elite continuity

Earlier discussions on democracy have defined it essentially as a system in which the responsibility to govern has been delegated to the political elite (Lee, 1995: 2). The role of the elites during transition and specifically democratic consolidation deserves some special attention. As such, what follows below is the discussion of Colin Sparks' theory of Elite Continuity.

In his review of a sample of transitions, Sparks (2009, 2011) rejects the theory of transitology as altogether irrelevant. His criticism is based on the observation he made in Africa and Eastern Europe – where some countries have seemingly abandoned the democratic transition project in favour of illiberal hybrid regimes which have now settled as the new normal. He instead asserts that the real manifest phenomenon is actually that of Elite Continuity. The theory proposes that the political elites negotiate over the transfer of power, but this political and economic power does not trickle down to the people but remains amongst the elites (Sparks: 2011: 7). As a result, the considerable continuity in both institutions and personnel between the old regime and the new frustrates the process of political change. The old and the new elites exchange and retain opportunities due to their connection to political power. From the media perspective, the institutions that emerge from the transitions, such as PSB, are strongly influenced by this phenomenon (Sparks, 2009: 196-197).

Henry Ani Kifordu makes a distinction between two rival perspectives of political elites – the liberal pluralist version and the critical elite version. In the former sense, the elites come from different backgrounds and have divergent views which leads to the fragmentation of power. This becomes the catalyst for change to happen over time (Kifordu, 2011: 17). The latter view emphasises elite power concentration and cohesiveness, leading to resistance to change and limited openness and inclusiveness (ibid). Although Sparks does not make the above distinction, his description of elite continuity takes a critical dimension. Additionally, Sparks's theory aligns specifically with the "elite reproduction". Elite reproduction theory has best been described by Szelényi and Szelényi (1995), who took a study of elite continuity patterns in Russia and Eastern Europe during post-communist transformation. Their study presents the evidence of elite reproduction in which the regime change did not result in the change of the elite: "those who were privileged in the past remain privileged in the present" (1995: ii). After conducting 40,000 interviews in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia, they found that there was generally a limited outflow of the old nomenklatura. In Russia, there was a much stronger retention of the old communist nomenklatura than was the case in Poland and Hungary (1995: ii). The old communist nomenklatura is now becoming the new propertied bourgeoisie (1995: i) - a transition from bureaucracy to new private oligarchy. It would therefore seem like Sparks' theory of elite continuity ties in with Szelényi and Szelényi's (1995) elite reproduction theory.

Querida Smith observed a similar pattern in Indonesia, though for a different reason. Between 1998 and 2008, North Maluku region of Indonesia experienced political violence and protracted socio-political crisis. However, during the elections that followed, state incumbents who were responsible for corruption, maladministration and general disruption of normal civic life, succeeded in governorship elections that saw them continuing their political control of the region (Smith, 2009: 3). Smith observed that, because of the violent conflict displacing many families, destroying infrastructure and the agricultural economy, only the

elites had the resources to contest the elections, and were generally seen by the electorate as the best possible chance of bringing back the stability and economy (Smith, 2009: 247).

The dimension of elite continuity during transition seems to have a direct influence on the direction and quality of democratic consolidation. After analysing changes in the core Nigerian executive political elite, Henry Ani Kifordu (2011) observed decades of prevalence of elite continuity (Kifordu, 2011: 16). Based on this, he concluded that the elite continuity results in the retention of power by a very small group of people, and denial of opportunities to new groups. From the Nigerian case he further concludes that the greater the influence of a small number of elites, "the more the rights of others, and the openness of the political system, inclusiveness and the rule of law may come under pressure" (Kifordu, 2011: 16). Kifordu further suggests that "reproduction" (lack of circulation) of elites with similar backgrounds and social networks "leads to a hybrid form of government" (ibid), where there is incomplete liberalisation and ineffective government (Kifordu, 2011: 16). What is being implied here is that elite continuity/reproduction creates a state where governments do not complete the transition process (and do not fully consolidate). Tetiana Kostiuchenko (2012) observed a similar trend in Ukraine. Fourteen years after the collapse of the USSR, disillusioned masses in Ukraine organised marches aimed at protesting against the country's political leadership. In 2005, elections were held in order to bring about positive change in the country. However, many political incumbents managed to retain their positions and statuses in the government, thus defeating the elite "replacement circulation" outcome which was hoped for (Kostiuchenko, 2012: 14).

In South Africa, transition to democracy resulted in the old nomenklatura – characterised by white officials from the previous apartheid regime - leaving state institutions as part of transformation. The new regime deployed many of the icons of the anti-apartheid struggle into positions in government, replacing white officials. While this might seem to have resulted in the change of guard, whites have retained many of their economic privileges through surrendering their monopoly of

political power (Sparks, 2009: 204). This appears to have continued into the media sector as well. Private media organisations continue to be controlled by white economic elites while public ones, such as the SABC, have seen a mere replacement of white executive management by a black one. This polarisation has often caused a rift between government and the private media, who sometimes behave “in terms that liken it to an opposition political party” to counterweigh the “absence of a significant opposition party to the ruling ANC” (Wasserman, quoted in De Albuquerque, 2016: 3043). The continuation of political elites, or elite circulation in South Africa, has been worsened by the ruling party ANC’s dominance of politics in the country. The creation of the dominant one-party state has enabled the unabated deployment of loyal party elites into positions of control of state institutions, including the nation’s public broadcaster.

2.8 Consolidating democracy in Sub Saharan Africa

There are many research organisations conducting regular status checks on the health of democracies around the world. These organisations differ greatly in research approaches, scope, assessment criteria and methodology. One such organisation is The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The research conducted in 2017 covered 167 countries and considered electoral procedures, civil liberties, political participation and threat to free speech. In this research, seven African countries were classified under flawed democracies,[1] 13 under hybrid and 23 under authoritarian regimes (EIU, 2017: 5-9). According to this report, then, there is a scarcity of consolidated democracies in Africa.

[1] The EIU defines flawed democracies as “those that also have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected. However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation” (EIU, 2017: 64).

2.8.1 Consolidated democracies

There is a debate on whether there exists a fully consolidated democracy in Africa. Fritz, Menocal and Rakner (2007: 17) had included South Africa as one of the three consolidated democracies in Africa, the other two being Botswana and Mauritius. However, while Freedom House has given the three countries the status of 'free', it provided a cautionary "backsliding" note when it comes to South Africa.[2] However, the (EIU) Democracy Index (2017) indicates that Mauritius is the only African country with a full democracy. Roger Southall expresses a concern that South Africa's democracy is at risk due to ANC dominance and subordination of parliament, merger of party and state, as well as widespread corruption (Southall, 2014: 57-63). However, Southall does not conclude that South Africa's democracy is not consolidated. For De Kadt & Hudson, inefficient state system, unaccountable "troublesome" elites, inequality and unemployment are factors that make South Africa's democracy to be "fragile" (2014: 8-10). From the press perspective, Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House have both categorized media independence as "fragile" and "partly free", respectively.[3] Reporters Without Borders had observed Botswana as having "a tight grip on the media"[4], while Freedom House categorised media freedom in Botswana as "partly free.

In general, the majority of sub-Saharan African democracies are either authoritarian or 'hybrid regimes' (Cilliers, 2016: 19). These regimes suffer a lot of democratic inefficiencies that have prompted some analysts to give them the status of 'qualified democracies' through the use of terms such as "demi-democracy, formal democracy, façade democracy, pseudo democracy, weak democracy, partial democracy and virtual democracy" (Carothers, 2002: 10) or

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[2] Source: https://freedomhouse.org/regions/sub-saharan-africa. Accessed 04/01/2019

[3] Source: https://freedomhouse.org/country/south-africa. Accessed 04/01/2019

[4] Source: https://rsf.org/en/botswana. Accessed 04/01/2019

"uncertain regimes, semi-democratic regimes, electoral, delegative or illiberal democracies" (Holzer, 2006:2).

2.8.2 Indicators of a consolidated democracy

In the review conducted so far, most scholars agree that consolidation is concerned with the strengthening of democracy such that regression to dictatorship is unlikely, unless as a result of external threats. However, this minimalist definition is not useful in research because it creates "operational difficulties" (Khorram-Manesh, 2013: 8) – in other words, its failure to provide useful characteristics or indicators of success of consolidation makes democratic consolidation a difficult subject to research. On the characteristics, different scholars have come up with different and often divergent lists.

Constructs of democratic consolidation in South Africa				
Democratic concepts	Democratic constructs in the study			
Peace	Gender violence	Inequality	Protests	Racism
Civil liberties	Rights	Equality	Expression	Information
Democratic institutions	Strengthening of institutions		Chapter 9 inst.	Public Broadcasting
Accountability	Transparency		Transparency	Public responsibility
Active citizenship	Inclusivity	Accessibility	Culturally engaging the citizen	

Table 1: summary of constructs of consolidated democratic concepts

The discussion below is not an attempt to resolve the ever-contested list, but as summarised in the table above, it is to create a set of five broad interdependent attributes that will be useful for the study going forward. Central to this is the importance of free media – both public and private – in creating and promoting a lively democratic culture.

2.8.2.1 Civil liberties

Liberalism is the idea that the state should not exercise its power at the expense of freedom of the individual – that the control of arbitrary use of (state) power protects civil liberties (Starr, 2007: 16). This is in line with the universal declaration

of human rights, which protects people from the tyranny of oppressive social groups, repressive states and powerful corporate organisations. Some of the rights include freedom of speech, religion, assembly and association, etc. Aspects of liberalism are adopted by many democracies and inscribed in their respective constitution's Bill of Rights.

By contrast, unconsolidated democracies often deprive their citizens of individual freedom. Put differently, if a country regresses on its path to democratic consolidation, the first casualty is the liberal aspect of democracy – where the ruling party ignores civil liberties, for example, freedom of speech. There is evidence that in some African democracies, women, for example, are deprived of their rights on the basis of African culture (Holtmaat & Naber, 2012: 657; Oluga, et al., 2010: 368). One of the rights enabled by civil liberties is the right to communicate. This right is given expression in Freedom of Speech and by extension, media freedom – which is not given its prominent place in much literature tackling the subject of transition (Jebril, Stetka & Loveless, 2013: 28). This is largely because transition is often regarded as the subject of political studies – the scholars thus leave out the centrality of the role of the media as crucial to deepen or consolidate democracy.

2.8.2.2 Democratic institutions

Because democracy is a result of a conscious programme of change, it will not maintain itself automatically by some spontaneous chance. Democratic institutions must be established in order to "reinforce the democratic rules of the game" (Aknur, 2012: 2). Hence, there exists the three pillars of democracy, which are legislative (parliament), the executive (cabinet), and the judiciary (courts of law). The South African constitution makes a clear disjuncture between the three pillars. In South Africa, there are also chapter 9 institutions whose work is to serve as "a system of checks and balances provided by the different branches of government upon each other's power and by the Constitution itself" (Calland & Pienaar, 2016:67). In South Africa, the Chapter 9 institutions are:

- The Public Protector (PP)

- The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)
- The Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL)
- The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE)
- The Auditor-General (AG)
- The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)

Although hailed for "guarding the guardians" (Calland & Pienaar, 2016), the Chapter 9 institutions have had challenges of their own. For example, the media had to come to the rescue of the IEC by exposing corrupt practices which resulted in the resignation of then head of the IEC, Advocate Pansy Tlakula. The scandal involved the awarding of R302m office lease contract, which was awarded while Adv. Tlakula was the CEO of the IEC. The contract was awarded to Abland, a company in which Advocate Tlakula's business partner in another company, was a shareholder (Ndletyana, 2015: 173).[5] The media have also acted in defence of these institutions against the growing hostility of the government – the case of the office of Thuli Mandonsela, the then PP being the example. The editor of City Press, one of the biggest Sunday newspapers in the country, lauded Thuli Madonsela's (the then PP) report on State Capture while lambasting President Jacob Zuma, the ANC and relevant state institutions for failing to implement the PP's recommendations.[6] The media has been hailed as one of the critical institutions of democracy, and as such, most advanced democracies have legislation protecting freedom and independence of the media, including the public service media.

[5] Ndletyana reports that the media (City Press) brought the scandal to the public six months after a complaint was lodged in the PP's office by the leader of opposition party UDM, Bantu Holomisa.

[6] Source: https://www.news24.com/Columnists/Mondli-Makhanya/mondli-makhanya-the-masses-will-stop-capture-20171008-3. Accessed 07/01/2019.

2.8.2.3 Peace

In her edited book addressing the impact of news media on governance, Pippa Norris cites “peacebuilding” as one of the democratic roles of media systems (Norris, 2010: 24). This is supported, in the same book, by comprehensive case studies of Ethiopia and Iraq (Price, Marashi & Stremlau, 2010: 221). To their support, this thesis holds a view that prevalence of peace is a fertile ground on which democracies thrive. Karl von Holdt (2014) observes the possibility of co-existence of violence and democracy – citing South Africa as an example of what he terms as a ‘violent democracy’. He, however, observes that the social and political violence is concentrated in the ‘developing’ democracies of the global South (2014: 129) – and this violence, he argues, constrains, and subverts the workings of democracy by eroding the effectiveness of democratic institutions and limiting the democratic rights of citizens and the rule of law (ibid). In Latin America, Gerardo Munck notes how the new democracies were constantly concerned with the possibility of the reversal of democratic gains by the military (Munck, 2015: 366). An example of this is Ethiopia: when President Abiy Ahmed, a graduate of Institute for Peace Studies, took over power in Ethiopia, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his commitment to democratic transition and peace in both Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. However, the tensions, which evolved into an armed conflict between his central government and the Tigray Region, have posed a real existential threat to the seeds of democracy he has sought to sow (Zelalem, 2020). The DRC in Southern Africa, as another example, has the largest deposits of mineral resources. Yet, because of its instability and violent conflict (wa Muiu, 2018: 333), this ‘democratic’ country is, according to Freedom House (2018), “not free” (Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2018). This observation gives credence to the idea that the presence of violence, at best, yields a compromised version of democracy, or in von Holdt’s words, “low intensity citizenship” (von Holdt, 2014: 147). In fact, established democracies have mechanisms for peaceful resolution of conflict without resorting to violence – such as through peace communication (Oatley, 2011: 9). Håvard Hegre assigns such peace-building or maintenance function in established democracies to democratic institutions – deeming them

formal codifications of nonviolent conflict resolution procedures (Hegre, 2014: 168).

Until the second half of the twentieth century, peace has been understood by some scholars simply as the absence of war or (direct) violence – what Arthur Keith calls 'negative peace' (1946: 200). Negative peace is not sustainable because deep structural defects created by violent conflict can easily reignite violence. In addition, absence of direct violence often does not acknowledge the presence of structural violence. Structural violence, which Johan Galtung explains further below, is subtle, indirect and usually hidden violence:

> …if a person died from tuberculosis in the eighteenth century it would be hard to conceive of this as violence since it might have been quite unavoidable, but if he dies from it today, despite all the medical resources in the world, then violence is present … (Galtung, 1969: 168)

Leslie Sponsel's elaboration is more pertinent to the quality of democracy:

> Structural violence refers to … the violence of ethnocentrism, of racism, of sexism, of ageism, of nationalism, of poverty, of malnutrition, and of disease (Sponsel, 1994: 3).

Making an example of GBV, Galtung argues that patriarchy is structural violence legitimised by certain cultural patterns (1996: 33). To this point, Herman Wasserman cites the example of the reporting of Oscar Pistorius' trial by tabloids as "an act of individual's misdeed, dislocated from the broader societal scourge of gender-based violence" (Wasserman, 2018: 109), as a failure to see it as a bigger, structural violence issue. In Southern Africa, for example, a thousand people died during the 2003 political transition in the DRC due to vulnerability to diseases and malnutrition because violent outbreak had impeded access to humanitarian aid (Daudu & Dube, 2017: 101), creating a deadly "deliberate structural condition" (Galtung, 1969: 171). For peace to prevail, structural violence has to be eradicated and replaced by social justice. In this light, Toran Hansen (2016: 212) defines peace as the absence of (structural) violence and the presence of social justice . One of the first priorities of political transitions is to end violence which is often a legacy challenge of pre-democracy eras. Daudu and Dube show how in South

Africa and the DRC, for example, efforts were made to secure peace during the political transitions of these two countries (2017: 101 – 105). So, absence of violent conflict is arguably a healthy condition in which democracy can thrive – for the simple reason that war destroys infrastructure and physically reduces individual freedoms as was witnessed in the two world wars.

A consolidated democracy therefore is one in which there is absence of (structural) violence and prevalence of social justice (Galtung, 1969: 171). The idea of social justice is broad and demands a consideration of various factors and conditions that make up a peaceful democracy. Its demand for the general, societal well-being is commensurate with the maximalist view of democracy discussed earlier. Like liberal democracy itself, the globally circulated western frameworks of social justice have been criticised for their failure to attend to the complexities of social justice efforts in non-Western contexts (Subreenduth, 2013: 586). Irina Filatova contends that for the majority of the African population, stability, peace and delivery, all which can only be achieved through access to the levers of power – is what 'democracy' actually means - rather than the abstract notions of institutionalised equality and representivity (Filatova, 2000: 36). Mueni wa Muiu contends that in Africa, democracy must move beyond free and fair elections to address economic and social rights (Wa Muiu, 2013: 335). He emphasises that its focus must not only be on individual, but on collective rights too. This social justice must extend to poverty alleviation and create a condition for economic participation by the masses, which includes the restoration of the economy of the traditional society (ibid). The perception of presence or absence of social justice by individuals or groups often determines levels of general (dis)content about democracy in any given society. It is often assumed that peace promotes social justice because in times of peace, resources used during conflict can be redirected to, for example, the promotion of disadvantaged groups, provision of better social services and the opportunity to promote economic justice and human rights (Kaufman, 2018: 369). Ethel Tobach argues that social justice is essential for peace rebuilding. She makes an example with girl soldiers returning from war, and how social justice for them requires

programmes that are tailored for the social integration (Tobach, 2004: 305). In the South African situation, social justice might include issues of equality, human rights and social rights (improvement of living conditions) (Smith, 2005: 52 - 57). More specific issues will include gender and economic equality, as well as non-violence both by the state on its citizen, and protection of vulnerable groups like some minorities, women, and children.

As one of the theories seeking to connect peace to democracy, it is important to briefly discuss liberal or democratic peace theory here. 'Democratic peace' theory, which originates from the writings of Immanuel Kant more than 200 years ago, proposes that peace is more likely to prevail among democracies (Harrison, 2010: 155). The theory also proposes that an extension of democracy across the world will lead to the 21st century ending in widespread international peace and security (Bindi & Tufekci, 2018: 1158; Coetzee & Hudson, 2012: 258). The rationale for this is that citizens of a (democratic) republic will hesitate before embarking on a war, republican states are more transparent and accountable to their citizens, and hence their commitment to the consent of the voters reduces the chances of engaging in war (ibid). For these states, the priority is the avoidance of all the miseries of war for their citizens (Hegre, 2014: 159). Another aspect of this normative explanation is that democracies supposedly socialise their leaders and citizens with liberal norms which are expected to decrease propensities for war among these individuals. The argument goes that this value system is then shared among nations that are liberal or democratic (Bakker, 2019: 1). Because non-democratic states do not require approval of their citizens, it is more likely to be motivated to wage war (Bindi & Tufekci, 2018: 1159). From internal conflict perspective, Håvard Hegre adds that democracy is seen as a system for peaceful resolution of conflicts, and that citizens might be incentivised to adopt violence if they are "denied the political rights and the economic benefits they believe they are entitled to" (2014: 162). Ironically, liberal democracies have been quite aggressive towards other political systems they do not deem 'democratic'. Wars of regime change in various parts of the world have elicited a great deal of criticism

by liberal peace theory (Coetzee & Hudson, 2012: 257) as self-fulfilling prophesy (Houghton, 2009: 558). Criticism has also come from a growing body of scholarship (Coetzee & Hudson, 2012: 257), not least of which is African scholarship – as discussed earlier in this chapter. Håvard Hegre's extensive literature review on democracy and armed conflict shows that at the dyadic level, there is less compelling evidence for democratic countries being less warlike overall and that 'relatively free' countries participated in war just as much as the 'less free' (Hegre, 2014: 160).

Although some scholars do agree that democracies rarely engage in violent conflict with each other (Bakker, 2019: 1), the reasons as to why are less clear (Hegre, 2014: 161). Femke E. Bakker contends that the gap in the knowledge is due to studies not empirically testing the actual presence or respective absence of liberal norms in different regime-types, the expected effect of liberal norms on the willingness to use force, and that experiments have been conducted in democracies only (2019: 3). In her study on the foundations of normative democratic peace theory in the US, Russia and China, Bakker (2019) found that widespread presence of liberal norms in liberal democracy was not proven; and that there was no presence of the effect of liberal democracy on its citizens that makes them 'morally more advanced' and that would make them subsequently more peace-prone. Her research also found that regime-type showed to be of no influence on the willingness to attack, or the willingness for other relevant policy options, of decision-makers in the three samples (Bakker, 2019: 20).

A peaceful democracy – as defined by Galtung as 'absence of violence and presence of social justice' (1969: 111) does not, of course, mean a conflict-free democracy. As mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, cultural citizenship, as practiced in various public spheres in a democracy, is a situation of constant management of conflict – and the discussion will not be repeated here. The argument is however that a healthy democracy is one in which resolution of conflict is non-violent and happens "within a common political space" (Friedman, 1999: 838). Therefore,

peace will be discussed throughout the study as one of the critical indicators of a consolidated democracy.

2.8.2.4 Active citizenship

Many authors (e.g. Dahlgren, 1995: 1) have lamented a lack of citizen participation in political and social life. This is because democracy itself is dependent on the active participation of all its members (Christians, et al., 2009: 8). The lack of participation might stem from deprivation of certain rights and freedoms in illiberal democracies. This can result in citizen apathy due to a lack of trust in political leadership like is the case in Nigeria (Falade, 2014: 19) or fear of violence and victimisation like is the case in Zimbabwe (Bardall, 2018: 13). It can also be a result of successful liberalism in which citizens are more concerned about their own individual matters than the collective public issues as in the case of North America and Western Europe (Doughty, 2015). In a consolidated democracy, citizen participation in political life is key (Hagen, 1992: 17) not only in legitimating democracy, but also in ensuring its future sustainability. To bring about, and sustain a consolidated democracy, every individual enjoys democratic citizenship, a sense of membership in a political democracy (Heywood 1994: 155). This membership, however, goes beyond just legal status that affords a variety of rights. It is largely a responsibility – duties and expectation that they be active in society. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan focused on the development of a free and lively civil society, a relatively autonomous and valued political democratic government and an institutionalised economic society as the conditions for creating democratic consolidation (Aknur, 2012: 3). To this effect there are two major liberties that a democracy must afford its citizens – freedom of speech and freedom of association and/or assembly. However, active citizenship can sometimes be a force of political change even in cases where such rights do not exist or are not enjoyed in full. A cultural (studies) perspective on citizen participation contends that a seeming decline in the consumption of conventional news and journalistic media does not mean that there is a decline of interest in social life – it just means that politics has taken a broader meaning (Dahlgren & Hermes, 2006: 260). In a consolidated

democracy, public service television is free to facilitate active citizen participation through the creation of the (cultural) public sphere using both journalistic and entertainment programming.

2.8.2.5 Accountability

Mark Philp argues that the ruling elites are likely to respect the public interest or the public will if they are somehow “representative of, and/or accountable to those they rule” (2009: 28). This means that the elites have to govern not for their own benefit but for the benefit of the public. This highlights the need for a call on the ruling elites to have “high individual and corporate integrity (Philp, 2009: 37). The opposite of good governance is corruption and mismanagement. Treisman defines corruption as “the misuse of public power for private gain” (Treisman, 2007). This is also the definition used by both the World Bank (1997) and UNDP (1999) (cf. Khorram-Manesh, 2013: 9). Corruption is an anti-democratic practice that “involves both the abuse of public roles and resources allocated in the public sphere for private gains” (Khorram-Manesh, 2013: 9). It is anti-democratic also because it reduces fairness and greater social justice in the granting of opportunities (ibid). When it comes to delivery of services by the government, it robs the beneficiaries (often the poor) of the means to earn a better life for themselves. For instance, John Emmanuel Gyong (2011: 71) argues that the lack of good governance and accountability are to blame for the presence of poverty in Nigeria despite the country being one of the largest producers of petroleum in the world.

2.9 Democratic non-consolidation

Consolidation is the aspect of transition in which most of the so-called “Third Wave Democracies” most of which ‘democratised’ more than 20 years ago, including South Africa, appear to be stuck. According to Fritz, Menocal and Rakner (2007: 7), the Third Wave of democratisation in Africa started in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They note that between 1989 and 1994, external and internal demand for democratisation resulted in 41 out of 47 countries in sub-Saharan Africa

undergoing significant political reform. The authors further assert that few African political systems have so far developed into institutionalised, consolidated democracies (Fritz, Menocal & Rakner, 2007: 16). The question asked by most scholars is: why is it that these countries do not seem successfully consolidated, while others are under serious threat of receding back to dictatorship, thus undermining efforts towards democratisation? Scholars call such democracies hybrid regimes. A "hybrid regime" (Holzer, 2006: 3) is a regime that has not fully consolidated its democracy. As Robert Pinkney points out, these democracies are stuck in a situation in which all the minimal procedural criteria for democracy are respected (Pinkney, 2004: 181). It is, according to Larry Diamond (2002: 25), a regime that is neither clearly democratic nor conventionally authoritarian. Leonardo Morlino elaborates:

> Hybrid regimes are those regimes that have acquired some of the characteristic institutions and procedures of democracy, but not others, and at the same time, have either retained some authoritarian or traditional features, or lost some elements of democracy and acquired some authoritarian ones (Morlino, 2008: 7).

Fritz, Menocal and Rakner (Fritz, et al.) have observed that Third Wave democratic transitions, including the sub-Saharan African countries, have remained in a 'grey zone' as hybrid regimes. Their democratisation, the authors observe, has not led to the institutionalisation of formal democratic rules, particularly when it comes to elections and functioning party systems (2007: 18). The 2017 EIU report also makes a similar observation:

> Elections have substantial irregularities that often prevent them from being both free and fair. Government pressure on opposition parties and candidates may be common. Serious weaknesses are more prevalent than in flawed democracies—in political culture, functioning of government and political participation. Corruption tends to be widespread and the rule of law is weak. Civil society is weak. Typically, there is harassment of and pressure on journalists, and the judiciary is not independent (EIU, 2017: 64).

The concept of hybrid regimes also challenges the theoretical assumptions of transitional theory. As observed by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, much of the literature has been characterised by a "democratising bias" (2002: 52). This means

that many scholars have assumed that the direction of transitions automatically meant ‘towards democracy’. However, as Levitsky and Way have observed with the case of Mexico, Senegal and Taiwan, some hybrid regimes have moved closer to towards democracy; while, as also observed with Azerbaijan and Belarus, other regimes have moved in a distinctly authoritarian direction. Yet, other hybrid regimes have either remained stable or moved in multiple directions (Malaysia, Russia, Ukraine, Zambia, Zimbabwe). This, they conclude, has made the “unidirectional implications of the word ‘transitional’ misleading” (Levitsky & Way, 2002: 52).

What makes this category of democratic regimes relevant to the study is that there seems to be an increase in regimes of this nature among the Third Wave democracies whose heightened democratic drives was hailed in the early 90’s (Morlino, 2008; Diamond, 2002; Zakaria, 2007; Fritz, et al., 2007). Moreover, South African democracy seems to display characteristics of a regime that is increasingly becoming ‘hybrid’ to a lack of tolerance of government criticism, as well as lack of freedom of the press. They only give a “rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy” (Fritz, et al., 2007: 12) by claiming to be fully democratic while in practice, they have questionable means to holding onto power. A hybrid regime is often a result of a process of transition to democracy. Because a transition is a ‘process’, a regime engaged in transition might become hybrid for a few years while consolidating its democracy. In other words, a state of hybridity is one of the stages towards democratic consolidation. However, as has been observed, many of the Third Wave regimes have remained in this state for a very long time, and perhaps too long to still regard them as being in transition. In this light, Levitsky and Way have urged analysts to regards the various hybrid states of these regimes as the way they actually are:

> Particularly in Africa and the former Soviet Union, many regimes have either remained hybrid or moved in an authoritarian direction. It may therefore be time to stop thinking of these cases in terms of transitions to democracy and

> to begin thinking about the specific types of regimes they actually are (Levitsky & Way, 2002: 51).

Leonardo Morlino mentions the presence of “veto players”, which are “individual or collective actors who are influential or decisive in maintaining the regime in its characteristic state of ambiguity and uncertainty” (Morlino: 2008: 9). He makes examples of veto players to include:

> … an external, foreign power that interferes in the politics of the nation; a monarch or authoritarian ruler who has come to power by more or less violent means; the armed forces; religious hierarchies; a hegemonic party run by a small group or a single leader; economic oligarchies; other powerful groups; or a mixture of such actors (ibid).

In summary, Fritz, et al. (2007) highlight the following characteristics of hybrid regimes: These regimes tend to be characterised by populist politics with minimal political participation and accountability. There are also high levels of corruption and clientelism, aggravating the weak state’s capacity to respond to increasing demands for basic services. There is an uneven application of the rule of law, meaning that the equality of citizens before the law cannot be guaranteed. Lastly, Fritz, et al. observe cases of democratic reversals caused by the political elites rather than by pressures from below. Examples include presidents that have sought to amend the constitution to increase their term in office (Fritz, et al., 2007: 13).

Hybrid regimes are not necessarily better than direct dictatorships because they still subject citizens to much suffering. While direct violence might not be present in some hybrid democracies, structural violence (indirect violence) is rife. This violence often comes from failure of the political elites to achieve national goals like effective management of diseases (e.g., AIDS), elimination of poverty and unemployment, infrastructure development, improvement of the economy, etc. The role of the political elites highlighted above is a pertinent issue that has been dealt with as a separate subsection within the bigger scholarship of transition to democracy (e.g., Sparks, 2009). The central issue with political elites is that they tend to benefit economically through political influence.

2.10 Non-consolidated democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa

As it was done in section 2.9 above, it is now deemed necessary to make examples of non-consolidated regimes to bring the point closer to home. The non-consolidated democracies fall within two of the three possible trajectories of democratisation – hybrid regimes or democratic regression.

2.10.1 Hybrid regimes in SSA

Zambia is, according to the latest (EIU) Democracy Index (2017)[7], categorised as a hybrid regime. After three multiparty elections and a promising prospect for consolidation, the government under MMD has become more authoritarian (Fritz, et al., 2007: 18). Reporters Without Borders have observed a growing number of independent media being censured since President Edgar Lungu was re-elected in 2016 and his subsequent consolidation of political power: "The authorities closed the most important independent newspaper, *The Post*, in June 2016 and arrested members of its staff. Several radio and TV stations had their licenses withdrawn in August 2016."[8] Freedom House has categorised the overall freedom in the country as partly free, and media freedom as "not free".

Uganda, according to the 2017 EIU Democracy Index, is placed as a hybrid regime. In 2006, Uganda's 'no-party democracy' (Maiyo, 2008: 5) was given hope when the first multiparty democracy in 20 years were held. However, this "transition without transition" (Maiyo, 2008: 5) was dealt a blow when President Yoweri Museveni amended the constitution to lift the two-term limit in order to stand as a presidential candidate (Fritz, et al., 2007: 18). By 2020, Museveni had 'won' his sixth term in office amidst allegations of misuse of power such as harassment and arrest of his political opponent, Bobi Wine (real name Robert Kyagulanyi), a reggae

[7] Source: http://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index. Accessed 05/01/2019

[8] Source: https://rsf.org/en/zambia. Accessed 05/01/2019

music artist turned politician (Melchiorre, 2021). In the run-up to the elections, there were reports of widespread restrictions on Bobi's political campaigning, including shutting down the social media (ibid). Reporters Without Borders have noted that Uganda is a country with "grave attacks on the media", adding that "Any criticism of the authorities can result in journalists being beaten, abducted, or deprived of their equipment with impunity. Charges of treason under the criminal code, which carry a heavy sentence, are often used to gag the media."[9] Freedom House has categorised the overall freedom in the country, and media freedom in Uganda as "partly free".[10]

2.10.2 Regression to autocracy in SSA

Fritz, Menocal and Rakner define this category of democracies as a political meltdown in which the quality of political institutions erodes and regresses over time, and key political institutions malfunction simultaneously (Fritz, et al., 2007: 19). According to the EIU, many countries in this category are outright dictatorships but with some formal institutions of democracy such as elections in existence. In this category, EIU states that there is widespread infringement of civil liberties, and political pluralism is absent or suppressed. The judiciary is not independent, and the 'independent' media are typically controlled by groups connected to the regime (EIU, 2017: 64).

In Ethiopia, the period after 1991 witnessed significant political institution-building and democratic reforms (Fritz, et al., 2007: 19). The incumbent political party, the EPRDF[11], took over after the collapse of the Derg, a provisional administrative council which had run the government after the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 (Kebede, 2015: 181). However, Ethiopia has remained under control of the

[9] Source: https://rsf.org/en/uganda. Accessed 05/01/2019

[10] Source: https://freedomhouse.org/country/uganda. Accessed 05/01/2019

[11] Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPRDF since then, and like many African democracies, the country has become a de-facto one-party state. Whenever there is a real potential of losing power, the EPRDF was determined to stay in power by all means (Fritz, et al., 2007: 19). This included a restriction on political freedom, marked by the introduction of the state of emergency in 2018. The ruling party has also used the 2009 terrorism laws to clamp down on the media by regularly harassing the independent media and by arresting and detaining journalists without trial.[12] The EIU classifies Ethiopia as "authoritarian" (EIU, 2017: 33) while Freedom House deems the country's general freedom status and press freedom as "not free". The country has, however, seen a ray of hope with the election of Abiy Ahmed, the new leader of the ruling party in 2018. Despite challenges of ethnic violence and regional conflict, Ahmed has been praised for seeking to fulfil his belief that democracy is the only future for Ethiopia (Gedamu, 2020). However, Ahmed is already facing criticism for failure to peacefully resolve tensions between Tigray Region and the central government. Instead, he is engaged in full scale war with Tigray (Pilling & Schipani, 2020).

Zimbabwe, like Ethiopia, has been ruled by the same political party (ZANU-PF)[13] since the ushering in of democracy in 1980. Like many dictatorships, the ruling party under late Robert Mugabe has paid a lip service to democracy. The real threat to their dominance became visible when in 2000 the government was defeated in the referendum in which they proposed constitutional reforms. This was made possible by a powerful civic alliance, was followed by the emergence of a strong parliamentary opposition through MDC's[14]' electoral gains in the 2000 parliamentary elections (Fritz, et al., 2007: 20). In response, the ZANU-PF government instituted a series of repressive political interventions. This included a desperate populist land reform in which skilled white landowners were evicted

[12] Source: https://rsf.org/en/ethiopia. Accessed 06/01/2019

[13] ZANU-PF = The Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

[14] Movement for Democratic Change – Main opposition party in Zimbabwe

amid land grabs by ZANU-PF connected war veterans and "cadres" (Moretti, 2017: 8). The judiciary was restructured, resulting in the "passing of legislation that increased the government's powers of repression", which further resulted in the general reduction of civil liberties and freedom of expression (Fritz, et al., 2007: 20). Reporters Without Borders laments the state of the media in the country as the "era of uncertainty"[15] after Mugabe resigned from the ruling party and government in November 2017. Censorship of private media are a regular occurrence, while the Zimbabwean Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), a public service broadcaster, is still under the tight grip of government control (Masters & Lister, 2017: 140). Media Institute of Southern Africa has documented reports of journalist arrests, while at the same time lamenting the prevalence of media capture by politicians – in which some journalists are working in cahoots with politicians, thereby compromising the media professionalism (ibid).

2.11 Reflections

Transitology as a paradigm has been useful in providing some conceptual distinctions between different phases of transition. However, it has been observed by various scholars that once transition process has started, the outcome is not certain, and democratic consolidation is not guaranteed. The study has also considered consolidology (Schmitter, 1995) to enhance an understanding of what happens during political transitions. Consolidology opposes a teleological view of transitions, contending that the outcomes can vary from regime to regime. Most importantly, consolidologists have observed that transitions can remain stagnant, and stuck in a 'grey zone' where they are neither dictatorial nor fully democratic (Carothers, 2002: 9). At worst, consolidology asserts that some democracies are "revocable" (Schmitter, 1995: 15) and can regress towards dictatorship. The possible negative outcomes of transitions are a course for concern, and which have prompted this study. However, it is a theory of consolidology that offers a

[15] Source: https://rsf.org/en/zimbabwe. Accessed 06/01/2019

maximalist view of democracy – that a healthy democracy is one that goes beyond periodical elections to establish a political culture where citizens are empowered with knowledge, assisted by democratic institutions and embrace democracy as the only game in town. This opens up possibilities of looking at democracy from a cultural point of view – as a forum where citizens can participate beyond formal politics. This idea is explored further in the next chapter.

Collin Sparks has developed the theory of Elite Continuity to explain the agency of elite groups in the dynamics of political transitions. The public has delegated the governing powers to the elites, and in most struggling democracies, it is the elites who fail the citizenry by seeking to hold on to power through undemocratic means, weaken democratic institutions, and build personal wealth through corruption. This theory is relevant because the elites have a significant role to play – whether in deepening democracy or regressing it – because of their involvement in law-making and leadership of democratic institutions, including PSB. After scanning the literature, the following have been identified as attributes for a successful democratic consolidation: peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability, and active citizenship.

It is against these attributes that this study assesses the quality of South Africa's democracy: whether the country is democratically progressive, caught up in a democratic grey zone or whether it is regressing towards dictatorship. This assessment is conducted from the perspective of the SABC's entertainment content using two of SABC's soap operas as case studies.

3 Literature Review II: Media and democratic consolidation

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to critically discuss the role of entertainment media in the consolidation of democracy. The central theme of the review is that, as Dahlgren asserts, the health of democracy *and its consolidation* (my own addition) is linked to the health of the means of communication (1995: 2). Moreover, Katrin Voltmer notes that the Third Wave transitions are different from their predecessors in that they happened in full view of the media – to the extent that the media has been seen as a weapon both for those fighting for or against democratisation (Voltmer, 2013: 2). In this review chapter however, the 'role' of the media takes a descriptive form – as the more theoretical discussion will be carried out in the next chapter with a view of creating a coherent conceptual framework. As is the interest of this research, the review below explores popular entertainment media, as opposed to the formal media usually associated with news or journalism.

This review explores the linkages between popular culture and democracy by exploring how popular culture has been used didactically to 'educate' the public on the one hand, and 'ideologically' to represent democracy in the depiction of the otherwise normal, banal life. It also situates the role of entertainment or popular media in the democratic consolidation scholarship by exploring how the process of transition has impacted entertainment media or vice versa. The concepts of cultural citizenship and the cultural public sphere have also come up strongly in literature where democracy and popular media are discussed together, thus enriching the study further. The review below starts on the general dynamic of the media during consolidation before delving into the role of soap operas as examples of popular media.

3.2 The role of entertainment media in a democracy

When applying Habermas's ideas to public service broadcasting, scholars tend to emphasise information and argument (Teer-Tomaselli, 2008: 81) – thus giving it a strong bias towards news and current affairs programming – a very journalism-

oriented approach. However there also exists other, more entertainment-oriented content that is being produced and broadcast by public service broadcasting. In fact, John Street (2001: 61) notes that the majority of media content focused on entertainment (human interest stories, gossip, etc) and a lot less on news and current affairs (political, social and economic affairs). He makes an important point that political views can be present in programme types such as satires, conspiracy films and chat shows (2001: 74).

Democratic consolidation, as observed in the previous chapter, takes a maximalist view of democracy by looking at broader issues of democracy (e.g., active citizenship and general social justice) beyond formal politics of government and administration (Dahlgren & Hermes, 2006: 261). While the media are credited with a positive role in transitions, many scholars such as Katrin Voltmer have noted that transitology has failed to address issues of mass media impact in any depth. This is despite the fact that the media have not only reflected on the transitions, but they have also been forces of change in their own right (Voltmer, 2013:1). For this reason, Voltmer intertwines the media's role into the process of transition. However, Voltmer warns that the fact that media often play the role of "midwife" during regime change does not necessarily mean they automatically play a democratic role in the new regime (Voltmer, 2013: 3). One of the reasons, she opines, is that the media find themselves fighting for survival in a commercialised global market in which decisions are largely governed by profit and audience rates and less by considerations for their possible consequences for the young democracies (Voltmer, 2013: 4). Leo Bogart also mentions "political authorities motivated by ideological zeal or crude self-interest, economic forces that limit their resources, their variety and their integrity" – as points at which the media in transition remain vulnerable to manipulation. Sadly, the media in this view "are not inevitably an agent of democracy" (Bogart, 1998: 3); "they serve dictatorships as happily as they flourish in democracies" (Voltmer, 2013:23).

From cultural studies point of view, entertainment media has been deemed as having a detrimental effect on the masses (cf. Adorno & Hockheimer, 1993) on the one hand, and useful instruments for active citizenship (cf. Hermes, 2006) on the other. On the detrimental side, there have been claims that negative messaging in popular culture is polluting and contaminating audiences at worst, or that it offers only escapism with no relationship to the actual world issues at best (Dolby, 2006: 33). This view of popular media comes from a school of thought that sees the viewer as a helpless consumer in the face of all too powerful capitalism (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993: 41). Dahlgren argues that such views tend to neglect the ways in which popular media produce a wide variety of subject positions beyond that of the privatised consumer (from Nick Stevenson, 2003: 122). Indeed, popular cultural media can also be a crucial democratic force that assists a popular adoption of the democratic culture. As such, understanding popular culture matters greatly to understanding politics (Nieguth & Wilton, 2015: 9).

John Street makes an important point that political views can be present in programme types such as satires, conspiracy films and chat shows – and that the state, as either the sponsor or censure, can use these programme types to promote its interests and thwart its enemies (2001: 74). Gunther and Mughan (2000) say the reason for the state's interest in television is that the medium's combination of sound and vision has made it the "pre-eminent and dominant source of national and international political news for the majority of the population" (2000: 402). This makes the public vulnerable to possible state abuse. Unfortunately for young democracies, citizen empowerment and development by means of television has been the initiative of the government from whom the public rely in establishing public service broadcasting. Television as a medium command a lot of trust as an objective and impartial source of political information even in some authoritarian regimes (Gunther & Mughan, 2000: 403). In markets where the media industry has been commercialised and deregulated, PSB is the source of entertainment and information among poorer masses who cannot afford pay-tv.

The case for the importance of popular media in entrenching democracy is made by scholars who have also observed a general decline in formal politics in both developed and developing democracies. Putnam argues that this decline has also affected the public's engagement at civil society level, or what he calls social capital (Putnam, 2000). This is the reason Van Zoonen argues that politics has to be connected to the everyday life of its citizens; otherwise "it becomes an alien sphere, occupied by strangers no one cares or bothers about" (2005: 3). Other analysts observe a general trend towards viewership of entertainment television content at the expense of serious news media. In response, serious news media have tended to stray further from the ideals of journalism (from Dahlgren & Hermes, 2006: 260). Regardless of viewership trends, the sheer amount of entertainment programming (e.g., drama, magazine, reality, lifestyle and soap operas) makes up the bulk of television programming and far outweighs news and journalism type of television content. While John Street (2001: 61) makes the same point, he however contends that politics does not disappear from television as soon as the newscaster bids 'goodnight' (2001: 61).

From a cultural studies perspective, Dahlgren and Hermes opine that consumption of entertainment does not mean a lack of investment of 'ordinary people' in social life. Rather, politics has been taken to have a far broader meaning and significance that relate to citizenship as a lived practice (from Dahlgren & Hermes, 2006: 260). As such Liesbet van Zoonen contends that television entertainment programming provides an alternative avenue for politics in a broader sense (2005: 39). She observes that popular media like movies, television shows, music, magazines, novels, and comic books are highly entertaining and have become a part of audience's lives as they relate to them and care about the characters that they present (2005: 52). Lily Goren expands thus:

> Popular genres like television series might provide avenues for discussions about gender dynamics, economic security or insecurity, racial identity, religion, partisanship, or specific policy issue areas (Goren, 2016: 483).

Van Zoonen contends that soaps and music can serve “as instances of popular culture from which one could learn how citizens can be informed, engaged, and mobilised in our contemporary entertainment societies” (2005: 52). Tim Madigan adds that these are the tools that are most likely to connect with the real-life interests of the populace (2005: 181). To expand, Kaela Jubas, Nancy Taber and Tony Brown (2015) posit that audience’s relationship to, and their care for soap opera characters, provides opportunities to learn about how other people live, the dilemmas that they encounter, and the choices that they make. It is also an opportunity for audiences to “learn something about what is problematic or missing in their lives, and how to predict possibilities of life from other people’s experiences” (Jubas, et al: 2015: 1).

Even though they do not refer directly to democracy and its consolidation, many scholars maintain that popular genres can be used to achieve certain objectives as they go about reflecting everyday lives (Bratić, 2006: 85; Hulshof, 2009:7). It is argued that these programmes do not have to deal with debates concerning journalistic objectivity, as they can be biased towards a specific objective such as democracy without losing credibility (Bratić, 2006: 174). Michael Carpini (2012) identifies three ways in which entertainment media can influence democratic engagement. The first one is by way of cultivating socio-political world views. In this observation, Carpini asserts that biases in mainstream entertainment media are not random, but rather reflect “the dominant, even hegemonic social, economic and political agendas of those in positions of power” (2012: 11). The second is the way in which entertainment becomes a distraction or a source of disengagement. This view has been supported by scholars concerned with the decline in the consumption of public affairs media – and that time devoted to entertainment media, specially by the younger audiences, is the major source of decline in the ‘social capital’ (2012: 11). The third and final way is that entertainment media serve as an alternative source of political engagement. On this point he concurs with a lot of offers reviewed further below. He asserts that the same way that traditional news media can influence attitudes, opinions and knowledge and behaviour, so

also can entertainment media content (2012: 13). McGuigan's uncritical populism and critical intervention (2005: 438) seems like Carpini's 'reinforcement of the status quo' and 'alternative source of political engagement', respectively. McGuigan's third position, which is radical subversion, becomes the fourth possible way in which popular media can impact politics (ibid) (in the combined typology).

3.3 Entertainment with an objective

It is appropriate, at this stage, to focus attention on examples in which entertainment has played a role in social interventions. There are many recorded instances where entertainment has been blamed for the promotion of undesirable social outcomes such as pollution and contamination of the young or offering only escapism with no relationship to the actual world (Dolby, 2006: 33). There are, by the same token, instances where popular culture has been lauded for its potency to provide an alternative way of political engagement – thus acting as an instrument of emancipation. As mentioned elsewhere, PSB's objective is to broadcast content that contributes towards the attainment of national development objectives such as social cohesion, nation building and democracy building. A theoretical review of this is provided in the next chapter. In the following section, a few contemporary examples of popular television entertainment as delivery mechanism of public value are attempted. A selection of South African examples shows that for years since the dawn of the democratic era, television, largely SABCTV, has played a role in democracy building.

Perhaps the most famous[16] example of such a democracy building E-E programme in the post-transitional era is *Yizo-Yizo*. Using a gritty realist approach to narrative construction, *Yizo Yizo* (in Zulu, this means 'this is it') was a drama reflecting the

[16] During its airing, *Yizo-Yizo* enjoyed the highest viewership ratings in the history of South African television (Ndlovu & Smith, 2011: 4)

disastrous state of public schools in South Africa and how South African youth struggled with the reality of post-apartheid South Africa in general. Issues such as drugs, teenage pregnancy, violence and unsafe sex were infused within the highly entertaining storylines against a trendy township lifestyle with kwaito music performed by popular young South African stars. By highlighting these challenges, it hoped to stimulate interventions from all three stakeholders involved such as parents, the government, and learners themselves. It became the ultimate catalyst for critical public debates important in a democracy (Modisane, 2010: 123). Clive Barnett argued that *Yizo Yizo* brought to life the role of public service broadcasting in supporting citizenship (2004: 254). It did so by innovatively drawing upon "multiple and increasingly globalised cultural literacies of citizens' (2004: 264) while at the same time helping to bring into the mainstream the "previously marginalized cultural tastes and popular knowledges of the majority of black South Africans" (2004: 266). In doing so, Barnett lauds it as an example of "television that helps make democracy work" (Barnett, 2004: 268). René Smith (2003) analysed the E-E communicative strategies in *Yizo-Yizo* in order to articulate "the role of the series in promoting dialogue" (2003: 155) by highlighting the challenges engulfing education in township public schools:

> These include rape, sexual harassment, lack of educational materials, educator morale, problems relating to motivation of learners, literacy, HIV/AIDS, gangsterism, corporal punishment, drug abuse, crime and corruption (ibid: 158).

However, elsewhere, Smith (2001) was critical of the way in which the series, in its stylised representation of township realism, might have glorified or commodified violence without promoting social responsibility (Smith, 2001: 39). Litheko Modisane (2010) has also studied the ways in which the series actively tried to prompt public debate around issues of education in the country. He observed that it created "destabilisation of the distinction between the private and public spaces of debate" (Modisane, 2010: 123), and observed that the debates went beyond the confines of the government, the producers and the broadcaster (Modisane, 2010: 133).

Entertainment with positive social intervention, such as one intended for PSB, is often referred to as entertainment education (E-E). According to Rogers and Singhal, E-E refers to “the intentional placement of educational content in entertainment message” (2002: 117). Rooted in development communication (Brown & Singhal, 1999: 267), E-E is not a theory, but rather a strategy or approach used to “positively influence awareness, behaviour, knowledge, attitudes and/or behaviour” (Moyer-Gusè, 2008: 407) for the good of society.

Like development communication campaigns, E-E interventions are replete with challenges, especially on the political front. Such campaigns have been criticised by some analysts for their biases in favour of donor countries, for being conduits of politicized aid or even as a means to keep corrupt leaders in power (OECD, 2014).

E-E studies in South Africa have also embraced useful aspects from critical cultural studies which recognises that television programmes by themselves are not political and value-free. In South Africa, for example, Rebecca Hodes demonstrates how a television programme, Beat It! became a battlefield between two schools of thoughts – those that supported former President Mbeki’s denialist views on HIV and AIDS, and those that challenged it (2014: 153). An E-E label on a programme, or a PSB label on a television network does not mean absence of undesirable outcomes, whether inadvertently or deliberately. Warren Parker has, for example, critically analysed *LoveLife* to reveal the way the television programme regarded as E-E attempted to self-legitimise and to dominate its competitors in its response to the Aids epidemic (2012: 32). Parker’s study is a description of an E-E programme with parallel ulterior motives to those of delivering education through entertainment. In most developing countries, the state remains one of the biggest controllers and funders of the media, especially PSB, to use these programme types to promote its interests (Street, 2001: 74). To this effect, Afrika’s (2021) study on *90 Plein Street* observes a similar, but more politically conspiratorial intent. Although the television series was created as a democracy

building programme, a closer look at its story or plot resolution, narrative construction and characters, *90 Plein Street* appeared to favour the Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma campaign at the expense of the Cyril Ramaphosa campaign in the run-up to the ANC's 54th Elective Conference held at Nasrec (ibid).

3.4 Media dynamics during consolidation

Voltmer reminds us that democracy is only possible within a functioning state, and by extension, it is the state that sanctions democratic state institutions. By initiating institutional and legal reforms the state in this regard acts as the primary agent of change (Voltmer, 2013: 133-234). Consequently, PSB as one such democratic institution has generally been established as a project of the state even though its independence from the state is protected by most democratic constitutions. For this reason, Voltmer has noted the complexity of the relationship between the media and the state, saying that it is more "ambivalent than normative ideas imply" (Voltmer, 2013: 32). Because of various macro and micro level variables, this relationship can take different forms depending on different contexts in different countries (Gunther & Mughan, 2000: 403). Voltmer has observed a more dependent and less oppositional relationship in earlier stages of transition where in some situations, a cooperative relationship can provide the newly elected government with a much-needed breathing space to manage the complexities of transition without the pressure and excess of public criticism (Voltmer, 2013: 32).

Analysts have observed that of all challenges, a hostile government is the biggest obstacle to media carrying out its watchdog function, among others, in emerging democracies (Spiess, 2011: 7). The hostility can manifest through implicit or explicit censorship, blocking access to public information, instrumentalisation through advertising pressures, repressive legal frameworks, violation of liberal laws or, where press offences are decriminalised, the use of criminal or civil libel suits (Spiess, 2011: 7). At any time during unfolding of the democratisation process, leaders with autocratic inclinations often seek to keep the watchdog asleep, often through softer approaches like litigation, reduction of government

sponsorship or advertising, and through policy amendments. The government might also disable a tangible expression in the public sphere by not developing empowering enough policies and legislation for media institutions (ibid). However, in some 'democracies' the media is suppressed through hard approaches like censorship, intimidation, and sometimes death of journalists (Spiess, 2011: 7).

The general trends of media in transition in Africa is largely not positive. Apart from a general lack of media freedom as discussed in sections 2.10, Wisdom Tettey has remarked that the optimism that swept through Africa during democratisation died early and the new democracies became the enemies of the press (Tettey, 2001: 7) – an observation that still rings true. Jimmy Ocitti (1999) has observed post-democratisation media problems in Africa ranging from unfavourable media and censorship laws, jailing of journalists, closing of media outlets and in extreme cases, murder of media practitioners. Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz adds that some of the liberal laws passed during transition have now been repealed and replaced with draconian versions including secrecy laws aimed at limiting the release of information (Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, 2018: 225).

Grade Imoh (2013) shows that the mass media in northern African Islamic countries are characterised by a large dose of state intervention where the level of freedom for media practitioners is low. He makes examples of countries like Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria where media personnel face physical harassments, threats and assault by state agents (Imoh, 2013: 46). The situation in Africa south of the Sahara is not different. In weak democracies such as Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda, the mass media reflect the environment within which they operate and tend to align with the dominant political groups who may use their political standing to enable certain media operations "in exchange for media support and patronage to sustain the ruling groups ideologies, interests or hold on to power" (Imoh, 2013: 46). Even in the relatively peaceful country closer to home, analysts got alarmed when as early as 1998, Namibia's

PSB dropped the word “autonomous” from its mission statement (Davidson, 1998: 54).

In addition to the above, many analysts decry the lack of transformative power of the once-lauded increase in media pluralism in Africa which effectively brought an end to most state-run monopolies (Bourgault, 1995: 208–209), resulting in more diverse media environments (Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, 2018: 225). Davidson correctly argues that despite the presence of ‘diverse’ private media outlets, what is needed in Africa is true public service broadcasting (Davidson, 1998: 54) – a point that is still valid today. He laments the wrong approach by the international donor community which has concentrated on pressing for the legalisation of private broadcasters as a means of ensuring pluralism (Davidson, 1998: 56).

In Arab democracies, the failure of the media to maintain the democratic spirit and encouragement of democratic culture has been blamed for the failure of democratisation. In his analysis of this failure, Marc Lynch argues that Arab media played a destructive role during the attempted Arab Spring transitions for three major reasons: “political capture, the marketing of fear, and polarization” (Lynch, 2015: 91). First, soon after the breaking of the Arab Spring, the media were politically ‘captured’ by states, political movements, or old elites. He mentions the transnational satellite television stations such as Al Jazeera, which had once served as a virtual Arab public sphere, as having surrendered to partisan actors supporting the interests of their state patrons and local proxies (Lynch, 2015: 91). The Arab Spring was characterised by widespread violence (Heydemann, 2012: 25) as a result of states’ armed resistance to democratic change. So, the marketing of fear, which Lynch states as the second reason, was used to heighten fears amongst members of the public. This the media did by “publicising worrisome information, ideas, and rumours as well as by encouraging slices of the public to self-segregate into echo chambers where only such polarising information tended to circulate” (Lynch, 2015: 91).

Citing Egypt as an example, Lynch observes that the opportunity for the restoration of authoritarianism was created by “media coverage of politicized court rulings, poorly designed and endlessly delayed constitutional talks, and spiralling existential divides between Islamists and their enemies” (Lynch, 2015: 91). Lynch goes on to say that the abovementioned political capture and institutional uncertainty resulted in extreme polarization. Egyptian media outlets, he says, addressed themselves to a distinctive political niche and catered to that constituency to the exclusion of others. For instance, Islamists watched one set of television stations and Twitter feeds, while anti-Islamists watched an entirely different set (Lynch, 2015: 91). The case of Lebanon also paints similarly captured media albeit with own idiosyncrasies. In spite of high number of television channels per capital (40 channels for a population of 3.5 million), the Lebanese democracy would seem poised to benefit from diversity (Bogart, 1998: 6). However, Bogart observes that the channels were all complicit to the Syrian government which had occupied Lebanon since 1976. Therefore, the sheer numbers of media outlets were not indicative of freedom (ibid). Even after occupation, May Fawaz-Huber (2013) observes that television stations in the new transitionary democracy have not always been transparent on the question of ownership – full disclosure on shares and foreign ownership are hard to trace (2013: 88). She calls this “invisible money" or “political money,” (ibid) from countries like including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Syria, Egypt, the PLO, Libya, Iran, European countries and the United States (ibid), in order to ‘buy’ some influence, thus compromising on democratic citizenship in the country.

Despite some troublesome relationship between the government and the press, entertainment media seems to have been neglected by both pro-democratic forces and dictatorships. Like there are issues of objectivity and subjectivity in journalism, so are they in popular entertainment media. The choice of stories, the decision on which character becomes the hero and the other becomes the villain, the setting and narrative structure are choices that make the often claimed pure, ‘apolitical’ entertainment stories sites of political contestation. Below are some of the

examples where entertainment media have crossed the political line both in their 'commentary' about mainstream formal politics or broader politics of citizenship.

The case of Avatar, the biggest box office success of all times, makes for an interesting reading of social commentary despite its high entertainment value. Nieguth argues that the film provides a critique of capitalism, militarism and colonialism (Nieguth, 2015: 182) in light of increasing desire to look at possible planets that can support life outside of the planet earth. Avatar shows that much as humans are weary of a possible, mightier civilization out there, they also have inclinations to oppress any weaker civilization that they might find. According to Nieguth, RDA (the exploration corporation) and some of its key personnel are portrayed in Avatar as self-interested, violent and ecologically destructive, while painting Na'vi society as community-minded, peaceful, and attuned to its natural environment (Nieguth, 2015: 182). At the same time, the film transports a regressive message by showing the plot's reliance on white saviour figure who leads the indigenous population to victory over the forces of colonialism (Nieguth, 2015: 182). Wright and Wright describe *Doctor Who*, the chief protagonist in the longest running popular science fiction series of the same name, as a social activist (2015: 11). He has observed stories overtly addressing anti-totalitarianism, presence of progressive social messages, and educative political parallels (ibid). Examples of popular roles are endless. Brian Cogan and Tony Kelso (2009) have provided a comprehensive review of how popular media has been used for political purposes in America. From movies and television series to radio and popular music. Mark Wheeler (2012) uses the case of Barack Obama's self-definition as a celebrity politician to illustrate the importance of celebrity performance politics in engaging the abandoned electorate, thus providing a new alternative way for political engagement. He joins scholars like, Liesbet van Zoonen, John Corner, Dick Pels and John Street to put an argument forward for a democratic worth in celebrity politics (2012: 408). These strengthen the case for the political significance of entertainment texts in engaging the citizen.

3.5 The responsibility of PSB

After the collapse of apartheid, attempts were made to transform the SABC from a state broadcaster into a true public service broadcaster (Sparks, 2009: 198). Ruth Teer-Tomaselli highlights the normative notions of the public service broadcaster as one that privileges the "public interest and the public good" (2008:75), and as such will "aim to provide relevant information, balance or fairness on controversial and political issues, and diversity of programmes and services" (2008:75). The dual objective of public service broadcasting, according to Patrick O'Neil (1998) is to provide citizens with information to make informed political choices, as well as to serve as feedback mechanism for politicians to take stock of the views of the public (1998:3). Although he poses these points as questions, Monroe Price and Marc Raboy mention at least the following three factors that differentiate PSB from other types of broadcasting: diversity – through inclusion and addressing minority needs and interests (cultural, ethnic, national and other substrata); an obligation to provide information for citizenship; and provision of a means to encourage creativity and production by its citizens (Price & Raboy, 2011: 20). They argue that PSB content must offer national programming that audiences can identify with, because these programmes are best placed to facilitate the localised "expression of ideas, opinions and values" (ibid: 23). It must also provide enlightening information which enable audiences to form the fairest possible idea of events. This, they argue enriches democratic life (ibid).

In addition, PSB content must provide general interest and service programming that add diversity and cover broad scope of public interest areas such as health, public announcements and other development needs. This they say, is important because for PSB, information is not restricted to newscasts and public affairs programs (Price & Raboy, 2011: 22). Lastly PSB must broadcast programmes that make a lasting impression by creatively leaving their mark. In this category, drama is an example of a genre that provides audiences with the opportunity to deal with contemporary matters of interest to people (ibid). The authors make these points to emphasize the responsibility of PSB that makes it different to commercial and

private media. In delivering this public service, the approach does not have to be didactic resulting in the loss of entertainment value, because television should not be treated as a series of ‘night courses’ (ibid).

The digital era has prompted a review of not only the role of PBS, but how the new digital platforms create opportunities too. For example, The Council of Europe has, for the past 10 years reconsidered the role of PSB in light of digital transformation. It has as continued to recognise PSB (now called public service media, or PSM, due to wider applications afforded by digital platforms) as strategic towards widening democratic participation. Beyond normative obligations such as informative, representation, and being a ‘forum’ for the people, The Council for Europe seems to place the participatory obligation as being of paramount importance in widening individual involvement in democracy (Council of Europe, 2009: 7). Initiatives such as the BBC’s Digital Democracy project has been hailed as an example of the fruits of digital dividend for public service media (2009: 44). While traditional television around the world is still the most popular form of viewing and expected to remain as one of preferred modes in the foreseeable future (Ofcom, 2019: 1), competition has increased due to the rapid growth of well-funded on-demand broadcasters with global reach, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video (Ofcom, 2009: 2).

Proponents of public service media see these as opportunities rather than threats to PSB or PSM. For example, José van Dijck and Thomas Poell see the social media not only as a challenge, but an opportunity to attract younger audiences (and makers) to PSB (2015: 151). Mary Debrett argues that digital innovation offers the promise of re-legitimizing the role of PSB through its new goal – “to connect” – an addition to the Reithian trilogy of ‘inform, educate and entertain’ (2015: 558). Alexander Dhoest & Marleen te Walvaart (2018) also observe how digitization transformed PSB in Belgium to PSM by affording multiple channels for more targeted audiences. Making an example of programmes on *Ketnet* - a flagship channel of Flemish PSM targeting young media users – they demonstrate not only

how *Ketnet* provides more targeted choices for kids, but how participation is encouraged through digital platforms such as an elaborate website, two proprietary apps as well as accounts on social media including Facebook and Instagram (2018: 245). In South Africa, the SABC has not been as fast in adopting digital – largely due to its own financial difficulties in recent years which have made it impossible for the public broadcaster to invest in innovation and adoption of new technologies. The government's failure to implement digital migration, which is discussed in Chapter 7, has not helped the SABC either. The SABC has, however been innovative in the face of adversity. Even though they have not fully changed to digital, the SABC have used independent third-party social media apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter to enhance viewer experience and engagement. Episodes of their popular soaps like *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* are also available on third-party video-on-demand platforms such as *You Tube* and *VIU*.

The African PSB's vulnerability to state control and partisan manipulation, as observed by Fombad (2002: 658), seems to still persist in spite of efforts to deepen democracy (Millanga, 2014: 15). In Africa, this is particularly problematic because traditional media like television and radio still have the largest footprint (Wasserman, 2018). The fast penetration of smart mobile devices in Africa is, however, increasing the consumption of digital non-linear media. According to ICASA, the penetration of mobile devices in South Africa was at 92% as at September 2019 (The State of ICT Sector, 2020). Be this as it may, the large costs associated with data to access broadband content is still a factor which aggravates the digital divide in favour of high-income consumers (Hawthorne & Grzybowski, 2019: 3). This condition makes traditional radio and television a viable option for the majority lower income groups. Even though some analysts think that between Southern African countries, South Africa exerts the least state control over the PSM (Fombad, 2002: 658), political control by the ANC, the ruling party, is still deeply entrenched (Ciaglia, 2017: 829).

It would seem like much of the literature on public service broadcasting focuses on policy, funding and political dynamics and very little on the content of PSB. Content discussion in this literature happens at normative level, where PSB must deliver on diversity, information and entertainment. As has been mentioned by many authors, Habermasian theory of the public sphere has been used in progressive media policy rationale, including PSB for a democratic rationale for PSB (Dahlgren, 1995: 13). In doing so, the cultural and affective aspects of PSB content are normally overlooked in favour of the political and rational aspects. For example, the Open Society Foundation's Digital Media Report (Berger & Masala, 2013) is South Africa's Country Report that provides policy recommendations for digital media going forward. Its content discussion is only journalism despite the idea of digital media implying all media, including popular entertainment media. Media Monitoring Africa has been the champion for media justice for years, and as such got involved in lobbying in defence of the SABC as PSB in the face of political interference. Their focus is also biased towards news and journalism with very little (if any) monitoring on non-news content. Various theses and dissertations written on the SABC as PSB also tend to be journalism and policy issues focused. Examples are theses by Kate Skinner (2017), Glenda Daniels (2010) and Limakatso Qhobosheane (2018). Recent books include Foeta Krige's *The SABC8* (2019). In these writings, the role of popular culture in PSB is given a passive mention at best.

3.6 On television soap operas

Among the many genres available on PSB platforms, soap opera ranks amongst the most popular. Even though the genre is in decline in its country origin, the United States (Harrington, 2016: 112), soap operas have been growing in popularity in South Africa. Each of the three SABC channels have soaps of their own while etv and M-MNet's Mzansi and KykNET channels have increased the number of soaps on their schedules. In South Africa, therefore, soap operas are the staple diet for audiences and networks alike. They deliver loyal, mass audiences for the networks, and in turn networks, including PSB in some

democracies, sell these audiences to advertisers. Soaps deliver dramatised entertainment for audiences, and rely on regular audiences, with long-storylines and plots that never reach resolutions in the long run. Because of their high entertainment value, soap operas are seen as a means of escapism and offering very little public value. However, some scholars have argued that as a form of popular culture, soap opera genre is one of the valuable resources in the performance of cultural citizenship (Müller & Hermes, 2010: 194). McGuigan, for example, has argued that soap opera like Yorkshire TV's *Emmerdale* can provide a vicarious sense of urban community for the lonely, physically or mentally isolated viewer (McGuigan, 2005: 433). That way, it provides a sense of belonging to, and inclusion into some kind of citizenship. In Brazil, Thomas Tufte has explored the role of telenovelas as an articulator of cultural change, and has asserted that they have provided an incentive for social dialogue and the promotion of social action in some cases (Tufte, 2003: 1).

One of the defining characteristics of soap opera is 'melodrama'. Melodrama can be defined as a strategy to bring emphasis to aspects of the story or act in order to bring about a certain response in audiences. It results in dramatic weight, heightened affect and seriousness of tone (Bayman, 2013: 82). The strategy of melodramatic elements is to appeal to the affective, emotional aspects of audience reaction. Jostein Gripsrud (2002: 12) argues that this is not arbitrary as it has its foundations in the core of morality during the start of the modern period. From this point of view, melodrama is the soap opera's strategy of limiting interpretations. It is an attempt to use the emotional connection to determine the kinds of readings and appropriations that viewers must make.

Gripsrud takes Brook's interpretation of melodrama as 'sense-making system' (1992: 84) in the desacralized modern society where God was no longer the ultimate meaning, or 'signified', of every phenomenon (1992: 84). God, he argues, was replaced by the individual, in whom the struggles of good and evil are inhabited and personalised. In classical melodrama, therefore, the cast consists of

individuals “representing certain moral values or forces, supposedly fighting underneath the surface of all of us, and underlying developments of life and society at large” (ibid: 87). In this, melodrama lays a claim to representation to core universal values that define all of us. Gripsrud also notes that the use of dramatic stage effects like volcanoes and thunderstorms was intended to not only be spectacular and sensational, but to also increase the pedagogical effect. It was therefore “a pedagogical drama intended to teach the audience a lesson” (ibid: 87). He argues that, in its employment of melodramatic effects, the popular media also attempts to teach the audience a lesson on what the world is really about – the emotions of love, hate, grief, joy, lust and disgust – which are shared by all human beings regardless of social positions. Claims to general morality, such as the saying ‘crime does not pay’, ‘betrayal is betrayal’,’ do unto others…’ (1992: 88).

To add anecdotal depth to this section, a brief discussion of select soap operas in different regions is conducted. The most popular programme on British television, *Coronation Street*, produced by ITV since 1960, highlighted the problems and sensibilities of women in everyday life. McGuigan’s question of whether *Coronation Street* was a case of cultural public sphere (McGuigan, 2005: 432) was rhetorical and did not necessarily need answering. This long-running popular British soap opera was in 2019 lauded for tackling the issue of modern slavery in their storylines. The BBC soap *East Enders* had tackled the same issue in their earlier storylines. The UK being home to 139,000 ‘modern slaves’ the soaps worked with NGO’s like The Salvation Army to develop the storylines aimed at helping victims and raising public awareness for the scourge that happens in plain sight (UK Soap Opera *Coronation Street*…, 2019). *Coronation Street* is not new to public education plotlines. In 2017, the soap focused on the theme of child sexual exploitation (CSE) which was developed in consultation with survivors of CSE and the NGO NSPCC (Hodson, 2018: 81). In fact, Lesley Henderson writes that the British soap landscape has seen increased attention to controversial, social-issue storylines like inclusion of “marginalized groups, dealing intermittently with 'racist attacks' and portraying gay and lesbian relationships” (Henderson, 2002: 21). She

argues that these issues are the sites of struggle by different social groups as they watch and monitor levels of representation of various social subject positions (ibid).

The study by Matthew D. Trujillo and Elizabeth Levy Paluck revealed the potency of soap operas in influencing social behavior. When faced with the possibility of a mass boycott by Latino participants in the 2010 US Census due to a lack of trust in the government, the Spanish television network, Telemundo, stepped in. They used a popular telenovela, *M´as Sabe El Diablo* (The Devil Knows Best) to integrate stories favouring the census into the TV show. Trujilo and Paluck found that viewers affinity for fictional characters in the telenovela helped viewers to develop positive attitudes and affect towards the census and the US government (Trujilo & Paluck, 2011: 5).

Sina Eskandari has noted that the *El Capo* telenovela, which has gone to air since 2009 via Fox Tele-Colombia network, has been used to positively change attitudes of civilians on the ground. The telenovela is a response to the social condition in Columbia where thieves, smugglers, and corrupt police agents and government administrators commit crime with impunity (Eskandari, 2017: 110). The culprits in *El Capo* are identified and made to face justice on television. Eskandari makes an example of a character Velandia who plays the role of a good cop. Velandia is always battling the urge to take the law into his own hands and revenge against his own personal enemies. But each time he is tempted, he remembers the law, exercises self-restraint and follows the police code of conduct. With this character, the telenovela is trying to reverse the prevailing physical violence that has infested the streets of Colombia (ibid).

Turkey, one of the Third Wave democracies in Eastern Europe, has developed into one of the biggest soap opera producers, with over 100 soap operas being exported globally (Çevik, 2014: 92). Turkey's national produce of telenovela's is, like the case of the BBC, now being sold to other national broadcasters in the region and around the globe. Interestingly, the country is being cited as one of the

once-consolidated democracies that have receded to autocracy under the twenty-year rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Kirişci & Sloat, 2019). Senem Çevik argues that Turkey's television export, especially Middle East-wide popular soap operas such as *Forbidden Love*, *Magnificent Century* and *Noor*, as the country's platforms for public diplomacy across the region. These soaps' appeals are based on the high production values with settings in affluent areas of the country as well as a unique way of storytelling. While not radical in their challenge of stereotypes in the Middle East, the soaps portray gender roles in a manner not usually experienced in the region. Çevik cites men's (non-sexual) open expression of their love and affection for their women by, for example, reciting romantic poetry for them and giving them flowers and other gifts, as well as avoidance of physical violence against women, as some of the reasons Turkish soaps are so popular (Çevik, 2014: 98). Other reasons for the popularity is the way the soaps balance tradition and modernity, as well as rooting the soaps in Muslim values and religion. This, she says, has the effect of endearing the country to its neighbours and their citizens by building the country's reputation. This strategy to cultural diplomacy result is the strengthening of Turkey's 'soft power' in the region (ibid: 100).

The two soap operas of interest to this study, *7de Laan* and *Muvhango*, have previously been subjects of critical studies for their various social impacts as media texts. Viola Milton notes that the co-existence of different cultures is uncomplicated (Milton in van der Merwe, 2012: 37) and Hannelie Marx-Knoetze remarks that the more representative cast does little to address the absence of any real discourse on difference (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 32). She contends that *7de Laan* has created a silo community that restricts its membership to a select few. Marx-Knoetze notes the characteristics of such community as follows:

> All the action is centralised in these unified, closed communities and all the characters are depicted as sharing similar ideals related to conservative middle-class values and the nuclear family. Characters participate in the same cultural practices and rarely venture outside the closed space of the community (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 32).

She calls this “the homogenous inner-circle” (ibid) and further adds that, in *7de Laan*, the idea of “whiteness” is the organising principle behind this community.

> In relation to power and belonging, this article posits that whiteness functions as an organising principle in the narratives and nature of the imagined communities constructed in *7de Laan* (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 24).

Viola Milton (2015: 4) points to the fact that almost all the coloured females in *7de Laan* are portrayed as the wise, motherly type. For this observation, Marx makes an example of Charmaine in *7de Laan* (Marx, 2007: 111). Coloured characters, according to Milton, are also portrayed as unwed mothers left by the fathers of their children to be single parents. For this observation, Marx makes an example of both Vanessa and Felicity (ibid). According to Milton, there seems to be not enough programmes representing rounded coloured characters on television, and *7de Laan* is no exception (in Marx, 2007: 111).

Unlike *7de Laan*, there seems to be a shortage of scholarly work on *Muvhango*. In 2008, Rosalie Finlayson, Sarah J.C. Slabbert and Iske van den Berg studied *Muvhango* as one of three case studies to look at multilingualism as being useful for not only enabling the SABC to fulfil its mandate as PSB, but an opportunity to impart knowledge (or education) while amassing critical audience numbers for commercial viability (2008: 212). The abovementioned existing research on *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* provides useful leads and will be integrated in the analyses of the two soap operas in the study.

3.7 Conclusion

Although not exhaustive, this review was a scan of the field of entertainment media, placing it within the context of democratic consolidation. It has revealed a wealth of cases where entertainment media’s potential role in democratic transition and/or consolidation has been demonstrated. The rich literature in entertainment education, media for peace and development communication, among others, demonstrate entertainment media’s potential for supporting and deepening democracy in the broader sense, thus contributing to consolidation. The review

has found works on cultural citizenship especially useful in providing the bridge between popular culture and democratic consolidation. The rich literature in this area has shown the political potential of popular cultural texts ranging from Hollywood movies to popular daily soap operas. Examples of the British soap operas *East Enders* and *Coronation Street* have shown that just because they fall within the genre of 'soap opera' does not mean they have to follow the sanitised storylines characteristic of American soaps which steer clear of controversial social issues. Examples in this vein extend into third world democracies in Africa, Middle East and Latin America. Finally, E-E examples in South Africa, the rest of Africa, the Middle East and Latin America have shown how scripted entertainment, exemplified by dramas, telenovelas and soap operas have been used for positive social interventions such as health, (in)formal education, general social justice and the promotion of democracy.

When it comes to the democratising roles of popular television in some of the third wave democracies, there have been concerning instances of media outlets being complicit with the regime of the day. The media, both private and state (or PSB) have been blamed for stalling democracy in the Arab Spring countries and being the culprit of a regression to authoritarianism in Africa. This coupled with the fact of the media depending on government's approval to practise cultural citizenship, put the fate of democratisation in the hands of the ruling elites who may or may not favour the strengthening or consolidation of democracy.

Based on the foregoing, an important question thus is - perhaps better articulated by Schmitt-Beck and Voltmer (2007: 76) – whether and in what ways the media is supportive of a political culture that is conducive of democracy. This study explores this question by looking at the specific role played by entertainment media in South Africa's attempts to consolidate its democracy.

4 Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, two theories are introduced in an attempt to systematize the way of thinking about the complex issues raised. The theories include McGuigan's cultural public sphere and Christians et al.'s normative theories of the media.

When evaluating the media's role in democracy, *normative theories* are important because democracy itself has an idealist, normative dimension. Like the ideal of democracy, normative theories of the media serve as the ideal of how the media are supposed to be operated and controlled (Baran & Davis, 1995: 75). Of the broad spectrum of normative theories outlined by Christians et al. (2009), the combination of collaborative and facilitative roles of the media are of interest to this study. The study argues for the importance of entertainment television content in democracy in part because this content is not impotent and deceptive as feared by sceptics of popular culture such as Postman (1985) and Adorno and Hockheimer (2006). Instead, entertainment television content can serve as "facilitators of powerful public pedagogy" (Kellner & Share, 2007: 3). Because the study delves into issues pertaining to the relationship between democracy and popular television entertainment content, Habermas' theory of the public sphere, with a particular focus on later revisions on the 'cultural sphere' or cultural public sphere (McGuigan, 2005) become germane. The study deploys cultural studies as a broader paradigm for the analysis of popular culture, in this case, television text. Cultural studies paradigm is useful because it regards popular culture as a site for political and ideological struggle (Fiske, 1987: 256). In so doing, it places culture at the centre of politics, and makes it an important stakeholder in democracy and its consolidation. It is hoped that this framework will create a comfortable precursor for the envisaged methodology – Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, whose roots can also be traced to critical and cultural studies. This way, the study consistently draws from the same discursive and analytical tools to make sense of the SABC's role in democratic consolidation in South Africa.

4.2 Cultural Studies as the analytical paradigm

The field of cultural studies has for years taken a stance as a theory in pursuit of social equality (Frazer, 1993: 530) and in so doing it has positioned itself as a 'democratic' theory. In its consideration of the 'role' of popular cultural text (e.g., soap opera) in society, the recurring theme is that popular culture is a site of political contestation, a sort of "negotiation of identities for the play of power" (Dolby, 2006: 33). It is "the struggle over the norms, practices, meanings and identities (Müller & Hermes, 2010: 194). In this vein, storylines and themes in soap operas are seen as "sites of struggle" by different social groups (Henderson, 2002: 21).

Cultural studies seeks to explain the workings of communicative text, and how meaning is produced and contested within this space. Apart from its explanatory power, it possesses a wealth of tools for the critical analysis of popular cultural texts, such as television. Cultural studies defines culture not as an aesthetic form, but as "political" (Fiske, 1987a: 254) – because culture cannot be imagined outside of power relationships that form and inform them (Lewis, 2002: 34). The turfs of this power struggle include class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, race, etc. (Fiske, 1987a: 255; Baker, 2005: 53). From this perspective, Baker argues that cultural studies embraces a "mix of values that centre on a democratic tradition" (Baker, 2005: 52).

It is necessary here to position the cultural studies paradigm within the framework of democratic consolidation. Even though it has by some been criticized for being elitist (Agger, 1992: 188; Couldry, 2010: 78) cultural studies has been lauded for critically revealing the workings of power and its ideology in the service of the powerful (Van Dijk, 1993: 250). In this vein, it can be argued to have a legitimate claim as a democratising agent.

The strand of cultural studies called upon here is the "democratic strand" (Lumby, 2003: 224). This strand has the same theoretical foundations as the 'struggle' strand but differs (and does not stand opposed) in both the end goals and analytical

focus and emphasis. In terms of its end goals, it is less concerned with subversion of power, but concerns itself with emancipation and production capability of cultural systems that assist with the extension of cultural citizenship (Hartley, 2003: 33). In terms of its analytical focus, it does not only consider popular culture, but also other kinds, including the so-called high art as well as the creative industries. It is interested in the democratizing attributes in text, and as such it is not exclusively fascinated by cultural experience that is not 'spectacular' or 'resistant' (Couldry, 2010: 78). In this view, Nick Stevenson argues that the "meanings of 'high' or indeed 'popular' culture are not fixed in stone but require open criticism by members of the community (2010: 283). So, instead of understanding popular culture in polemical ways (e.g., relations of domination and subordination), scholars have deemed it more useful to understand it as a site of struggle and a place for negotiation of race, gender, nation and other identities for the contestation of power (Dolby: 2006: 33).

4.2.1 A selection of cultural studies concepts

A selection of cultural studies analytical concepts, which are used often in the discussion of popular cultural text in this study, are discussed below – concepts such as text, context, subject, representation, ideology and hegemony.

A text in cultural studies is any cultural form available for scholastic analysis: this could be an event, a painting, architecture, television programme or music. Cultural studies rejected Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist formulation of text as consisting of a stable relationship between the signifier (what one sees) and the signified (meaning derived from it). Television, in particular, is multimodal - for it communicates in more than one mode (sign systems) at the same time, like sound, visuals and other cinematic codes.

It is Barthes' second order semiotics, or "myth", that enables the reader to connect a sign to its social association (Barthes, 1998: 81), such that a sign can mean one thing in one social context, but something else in another context. However, it is the 'postructuralist turn' which saw the sign as being in a state of endless deference

of meaning - Derrida's différance (Hall in Rivkin and Ryan, 2002: 709). The postructuralist turn in cultural studies is criticised for seeing everything "merely as discourse" (Strinati, 1995: 252) – a view this study does not align itself with.

Cultural studies has also brought to the fore Bakhtin and Kristeva's ideas of intertextuality – the idea that texts are not original but articulated by texts that preceded them. This it does by reprocessing these texts, commenting on, developing, criticizing, making pastiche, parodying them, and so forth" (Juvan, 2008: 7). In this view, therefore, text is always a mosaic of citations (Juvan, 2008: 3). At the same time, it is an author-centric way used by producers to draw on pre-existing knowledge of audiences to construct or encode meaning. Intertextuality is therefore what both authors and audiences do (Ott & Walter, 2000: 430).

This influence is evident in Kristeva's later writings, which debunks the idea of structural semiotician's "Author-God" in favour of the notion of the "active audience" (Ott & Walter, 2000: 429). Active audience, according to John Fiske, consciously or unconsciously use their vast knowledge of cultural codes learned from other texts to read a particular text (ibid). Because individuals are not homogenous, and do not necessarily apply the same cultural codes on the same text at the same time, reading of texts become polysemous – where different readers produce different meanings from the same text (see Fiske, 1987; Payne, 1996: 4).

FB Anderson makes use of the character of Thiza in *Yizo Yizo* - a 23-year-old ex-combatant who suffers panic attacks due to his traumatic past. Anderson argues that Thiza's paintings, which depict incidents of political violence, represent political memory as they make an intertextual link with the freedom struggle, and the sacrifices (including that of education) of township youth (Anderson, 2004: 219). Musa Ndlovu and René Smith focus their study on how *Yizo Yizo's* soundtrack was an intertextual strategy to maximise the series' educational impact. For example, how real kwaito artists were brought into the series for resonance and enforcement of the series authenticity of township culture (Ndlovu & Smith 2011: 6).

Cultural studies borrowed Louis Althusser's notion of individuals as social subjects who are interpellated into various social positions by the ideological state apparatus (Fiske, 1998: 238). Althusser explains that it is through the process of interpellation that ideology works (1971: 44). It works through hailing (ibid), where individuals' very sense of identity is constructed. In other words, "ideology asks us to recognise and position ourselves within its terms of reference" (White, 1992: 169).

Representation is another concept that cultural studies uses in its analysis of texts. Social representation refers to the ways in which different groups portray themselves in the media (Boyd-Barrett, 2002: 39). Stuart Hall maintained that the media's representational role involved "active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping. It is not merely the transmitting of an already existing meaning, but the more active labour of making things happen…" (Hall, 1982: 64). It refers to the ways in which both the powerful and the marginalized portray themselves in the media either to legitimize power positions or to portray certain social group positions as natural – as the way things have to be (Boyd-Barrett, 2002: 39). Hall (1982: 64) argued therefore that media not only reproduced or reflected reality but defined it. Cultural studies views representation in the media as being political for it is an act of power legitimation and an act of challenge to this power. In a collaborative view of the media's role in society, the media attempts to promote virtues like gender equality, nation building, democracy building, etc.

Cultural studies regards the meaning or message encoded in texts to be ideological. However, it rejects Marx's definition of ideology as false consciousness (Fiske, 1987a: 256) generated by the ruling class (Grossberg & Nelson, 1988: 9). It recognises the presence of counter-ideology generated from below (Payne, 1997: 3), thereby opening the dominant ideology to constant challenge and resistance (Dahlgren, 1997: 55). Mimi White explains that within the context of television, one of the ways through which dominant interests are ideologically served is through a restriction of competing voices and counter-ideologies (1992: 167). Hall maintains that the social can never exist outside the semiotic, and social relations only exist within their ideological representations or experiences (Hall,

1996: 24-25). From this perspective, the media are ideological, and are conduits for the facilitation of the imaginary, cultural world (Rivkin and Ryan 1998: 238) – the meaning of which is only possible through ideology. Ideology, then, is not the monopoly of the powerful, but a site of struggle between social groups (Fiske, 1987a: 256).

Closely related to ideology, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony is a description of ways in which the dominated give consent to the dominant (Habib, 1997: 228). The dominant groups become hegemonic by transcending narrow definitions of economic interest in order to take on the concerns of subordinate groups (Stevenson, 2010: 276). The concept of hegemony brings to light the processes by which the dominated gives a willing consent to the dominant. To Gramsci, this process is mediated by a layer of "intellectuals" situated within social superstructure. This, he argues, is in direct contrast to the state, who exercises direct rule and coercion through legal and repressive processes. Gramsci believed that it was this mass of civic society intellectuals, consisting of "a hierarchy of original thinkers and scientists at the apex to administrators and propagators of received class wisdom at the bottom" (Habib, 1997: 228) that needed to be mobilised in order to bring about social revolution.

Like the concept of social representation above, encoding involves media organisations' structuring of text in a manner that maximises a preferred 'reading' by audiences. However, Hall maintains that "there is no necessary correspondence between encoding and decoding …the former can only attempt to pre-fer, but cannot prescribe the latter" (Hall, 1993: 515). On the decoding side, Hall identifies three possible "reading positions" from which meaning in texts can be constructed. In his seminal Encoding/Decoding essay, he corroborates this by demonstrating how different readers can read from dominant, indifferent/neutral, and oppositional reading positions (1992: 515).

4.3 Normative theories of the media

Normative theories of the media are useful in acting as the standards by which to assess the media's extent of contribution to democracy. Normative theories are

important in this study because, as argued in the beginning, the democratic ideal is normative by nature. As such the work of Clifford Christians, Theodore Glasser, Dennis McQuail, Kaarle Nordenstreng and Robert White (2009) is of pivotal significance here. Christians, et al. (2009) offer a revisionist critique of the original Four Theories of the Press (1956) by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (Siebert, et al., 1956). The original text by Siebert and his colleagues sought to create a typology that describes and explains all the press systems across the globe. In short, the four theories which they formulated include Authoritarian, Soviet-Communist, Libertarian, and Social Responsibility theories. Below, a brief outline of the theories is attempted.

Authoritarian media theory accounts for the non-democratic media systems (Benson, 2008: 2592), and states that the media exist to serve the government in power and are forbidden to criticise the government or its functionaries (McQuail 1987: 111). According to Folarin (1998: 25), the instruments of the authoritarian control of the media include repressive legislation decrees, heavy taxation, state control of staffing and production inputs, censorship, supervision of operating licenses, publication or transmission. Another nondemocratic theory, *Soviet Communist* media theory, came out of the socio-political context of the Soviet bloc. This theory contends that Western media are not as free as they claim because they are under the control of economic interests, especially capitalism. It proposes an alternative paradigm that is free from profit motive. However, one of the criticisms of this theory was that the media in 'capitalist-free' Soviet Union was controlled by the special elite interest, especially those very close to government elites in Soviet society.

Taking from liberal democracy's advocacy for the rights of the individual, free market (-place of ideas) and minimal or zero interference from the state, *libertarian* media theory advocates for a free press independent of state control (Benson, 2008: 2593). It argues that ideas must be traded freely amongst citizens because the best ideas will prevail and be 'bought' (Barat & Davis, 1995: 83) through

rationality and processed by all free people (Grossberg & Nelson 1998: 376). Generally associated with democracy, *social responsibility* media theory is said to be the "mainstream counterpoint" to libertarian approach (ibid) and came as a response to the absolute and unchecked entrepreneurial freedom of the press and sought to balance this freedom with responsibility (Christians, et al., 2009: 24). At a minimum this approach holds the media themselves to account through self-regulation, or on the other extreme to embrace media "subsidies and laws to ensure diversity or innovation, as well as the founding of publicly owned media, especially public service media" (Christians, et al., 2009: 24).

The main criticism of the Four Theories is that Siebert, et al. (1956) actually formulated one theory, not four. This one theory, which Christians, et al. (2009) agree with, is that "the press always takes the form and coloration of the structures within which it operates" (Siebert, et al. cited in Folarin 1998: 24). Therefore, Christians, et al. (2009) contend that the four "theories" were actually examples explaining how this one theory worked. The other criticism against these was that the roles of the media in each country are too diverse that a general assessment based on just four theories is not possible (Christians, et al.., 2009: 239). Also, by seeking to objectively describe the reality of the media systems as they were, The Four Theories were criticised for acting as "affirmative instruments to strengthen the prevailing ideology" (2009: ix), thereby losing their normative appeal. In response, Christians, et al. (2009) sought to add the definition of the media's role in society through the prism of the ideal and the normative too (2009: vii). This social ideal, admitted Nordenstreng, was biased towards the prevalence of maximum justice in each democracy (1997: 107). In other words, the media are to act as emancipatory instruments against a prevailing (oppressive) ideology, not its reinforcers (ibid).

4.3.1 Normative roles of the media

At the back of the above discussions of normative theories of the media, it is important to now discuss the normative roles of the media. In his revision of the

Four Theories, Nordenstreng (2006) attempts to strike a correlation between normative media theory (or as he puts it, “traditions”), democracy types, and media roles. Following after Nordenstreng in the same publication, Denis McQuail explains the different normative media roles as monitorial, facilitative, collaborative and radical (2006: 55). Of the four role types, the study deems as relevant two normative roles of the media – facilitative and collaborative.

Normative traditions (theory)	Models of democracy	Roles of the media
Libertarian	Administrative (pluralist)	Facilitative
Social responsibility	Deliberative	Collaborative

Table 1: Nordenstreng’ s typology of media roles in democracies (summarized), 2006: 38

Nordenstreng connects libertarian theory of the media to administrative model of democracy. He believes that the media in this situation play a facilitative role. He further draws a correlation between social responsibility theory of the media to deliberative form of democracy. In this situation, he suggests, the media plays a collaborative role. These roles enhance the normative theoretical idea not only of freedom, but with responsibility too.

4.3.1.1 Facilitative role

According to McQuail, facilitative media refer to the media that aids democratic activity in the wider public sphere of civil society by supporting community formation and citizen participation. He says that this role is that of provision of the means of communication between citizens and government, meets the needs of individual citizens and the wider society and is not typically driven primarily by profit (McQuail, 2006: 56). It allows for the formation of a multiplicity of media platforms catering for the needs and interests of different communities. In aligning with the pluralist spirit of administrative democracy, this role of the media is platform based, and not necessarily content based. It assumes that provision of different platforms will result in the generation of diverse content that addresses the needs of different communities.

4.3.1.2 Collaborative role

McQuail says that the collaborative role of the media prioritizes the wider needs of society beyond profit or even journalistic purpose. It requires cooperation of the media with other external agencies, sometime even the government, to fulfil the objective of the common good. He observes that this role of the media is often warranted in developing countries where broader societal needs are heightened, or in times of natural or other disaster (such as war) and threat in any society. He also mentions patriotism and other cultural and social identifications are factors that provide the impulse to collaboration (McQuail, 2006: 56). The collaborative role is not to be conflated with being in cahoots with the government, regardless of whether the government has democratic or illiberal orientations. It is not to be interpreted to mean "to protect and safeguard the interests of those in power" (El Issawi & Cammaerts, 2016: 550). It is about promoting the national values often already communicated in the democratic constitution and captured in the promulgation of laws that paved the way for the establishment of the public broadcasting service.

The two roles discussed above go in line with how public broadcasters are conceptualized around the world. They are facilitative in the sense of providing a diverse, funded platform for various communities and interests that make up the 'public'. Public service broadcasting also functions collaboratively as it reflects diverse views in its news content and represents diverse cultures and ways of life in its entertainment content. It facilitates this dialogue between the public and the government with a view of achieving a broadly agreed-to national goal. Such a goal is a democratic one, and includes functions such as nation-building, peace building, promotion of diversity, economic participation, gender equality or education.

In practice, however, what do different normative roles translate into? To answer this question, a few examples of media roles are provided below:

- Promote a culture of accountability and good governance

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the critical success factors for a consolidated democracy is good governance. This means that the ruling elites must be accountable and transparent with the responsibility that the public has entrusted with them. Within the journalistic role of the media, this function of the media is largely categorized as 'monitorial'.

For the media role as a watchdog, Voltmer states the following functions:

- To hold government officials to account by acting as a "watchdog" that brings misuses of power or policy failures to the knowledge of the public
- Revealing abuses of state authority and defending the democratic rights of citizens (Voltmer, 2013: 26)

However, as seen from various cases, watchdog journalism, a form of investigative journalism (Coronel, 2009:3), can take the form of 'attack dog' journalism (Voltmer, 2005:9) characterised by excessive criticism by unprofessional and "unethical watchdog journalists," which "can erode trust in the media, thereby undermining a vital ingredient for a well-informed citizenry" (Spiess, 2011: 5). Sheila Coronel conceptualises watchdog journalism as a reporting that serves "the exposure of wrongdoing in the public interest" (2009: 3). Watchdog journalism can help establish a culture of constructive criticism by criticizing autocrats (Spiess, 2011: 6). Coronel adds that watchdogs can also expose electoral malpractice during the first democratic elections, by barking against "die-hard authoritarian habits, thereby contributing to the smooth handover of power among democratically elected governments" (Coronel, 2009: 3).

However, watchdog mostly expose wrongdoing after the fact by strongly pointing fingers of blame and recommending corrective measures or punishment for those responsible. A broader and more positive watchdog function beyond 'exposure of wrongdoing,' can be accommodated by other television genres other than hard news and serious current affairs programmes, which are the realms of traditional journalism. Genres such as drama, for example, can reflect on what the leaders

are doing, and can help provide a ‘critique’ in the form of a mirror reflecting the nation to itself through storytelling. This can carry both negative (discouraging an undesirable behaviour) or positive one (by encouraging a more democratic behaviour) of leaders. For example, by showing a scrupulous and incorruptible public official, entertainment programming can serve as an example of how the elites must handle public responsibility, thereby encouraging good behaviour.

Similarly, drama can use the poetic license of operating outside of objective facts to show the consequences of bad behaviour such as accepting a bribe, for example. In South Africa, a drama that comes to mind is *Yizo Yizo*. This television series was an attempt to show the realism of township school conditions with the hope that an honest self-reflection would assist change for the better. It sought to show that even dysfunctional schools can be changed, and that outcomes-based education can be implemented in under-resourced schools (Barnett, 2002: 99). The controversy of the series created a lot of debate, which was good for a national reflection on educational system. However, depiction of same-sex intercourse, affairs between teachers and learners, and general violence both in and out of school created attracted a lot of criticism to a point that the ruling ANC called for the series to be discontinued. Instead of improving on the negatives of the series as recommended (Ndlovu & Pitout, 2001: 26), the government and the SABC decided to discontinue the series because it depicted the township public schools in bad light, and government as having failed to do their job (Interview, 14 August 2019). *Yizo Yizo* shows that even non-journalistic television genres can play a watch dog role. It was an entertainment description of media role as the Fourth Estate (Amodu, Usaini, & Ige, 2014.).

- To promote democracy (Democratisation through the media)

Some media scholars have argued that in the promotion of democracy, one of the media’s roles is the creation of the public sphere (Becker, 2004). The general role of the media in a democracy is to assist in creating an environment conducive to democracy (Obasanjo and Mobogunje, 1992:133). In promoting democracy, the

media themselves have to first play the facilitative role of providing a platform for different voices, both official and alternative, to mobilize support for their cause (Voltmer, 2013: 26). It is argued here that without a diversified forum for plurality of voices, democracy stands a little chance of success. The issue of democratic communications has in part emanated from the debate over the New Information and Order and the Unesco study of communications (The MacBride Report, 1980). (Wasko, 1992: 7). The concept of democratic communication is two-fold – involving participation in media as well as in society. In other words, the concept involves democratisation of the media as well as democratisation through the media, (Wasko, 1992: 7).

In helping to consolidate democracy, the media can play a role of "promoting free choice of leadership, respect for the rule of laws, by both the rulers and the ruled, social justice and equity as well as respect for human rights" (Obasanjo and Mobogunje 1992:133). Another important role of the mass media in a democracy is "to assist in the entrenchment of a political culture that allows for free and orderly succession, especially of civilian-to-civilian administration" (Grade Imoh, 2013: 44)

- To build peace

Literature review conducted has not come across a case of a fully consolidated democracy that is embroiled in violent disputes. It is therefore safe to assert that a democracy marred in violence cannot consolidate (Buqa, 2015: 1). Peacebuiding function of the media is of particular interest in this study because South Africa's democracy was predicated on peace and harmony between races, which were kept in conflict for more than a century through due to segregationist policies of apartheid. As such, one of the roles of the media is to encourage peaceful co-existence within a transition, especially in a country that has a history of violence. In such a context, the role of the media is to consistently and proactively assist communities and societies deal with conflict without resorting to violence (Oatley, 2011:9).

Although it is here referred to as ‘Peace Communication’ (Blake, 1998), some scholars refer to such media as ‘peace media’ (Bratić, 2006: 1) while others loosely refer to this practice as ‘media peace building’ (Howard, 2003), or ‘media and conflict resolution’ (Gilboa, 2009: 455). In Africa’s contemporary history, Peace Communication has been motivated by an incident of genocide in Rwanda, and in Europe, the case of Bosnian genocide is an example. In both cases, the media have been fingered as one of the key culprits fuelling armed conflict (Hulsfhof, 2009: 2). Since then, there has been a more systematic media involvement in conflict resolution efforts. Using some of the approaches of development communication, interventions include audience segmentation to target specific communities or groups; setting up of entire stations, such as Radio Gal Kayo in Somalia to provide an alternative to radio stations controlled by the warlords; the creation of content within an existing TV station, such as a locally adapted Takalani Sesame in Israel and Palestine (see Shochat, 2001); and public awareness campaigns such as the use of agency McCann-Eriksson to promote peace in Northern Ireland (Bratić, 2006).

Within the context of television, Peace Communication can generally be divided into three categories: information (Bratić, 2006:160) or factual programming, or what Dahlgren (2013: 533) refers to as “journalistic genres”; entertainment programming (Bratić, 2006:160), Dahlgren, 2013: 534) and advertising and campaigning (Bratić, 2006:160). As mentioned earlier, this study restricts itself to non-journalistic content only. Television entertainment programmes, specifically popular genres like drama, variety shows, soap opera and magazine programmes can be used to convey messages of peace. Peace-oriented messages are often embedded within entertainment programmes reflecting everyday lives (Bratić, 2006: 85). A number of NGO’s (e.g., Swisspeace and Search for Common Ground) are active in this approach and have produced manuals, handbooks and seminar papers promoting this practice. It is argued that these programmes do not have to deal with debates concerning objectivity, as they can be biased towards a cause of peace without losing credibility (Bratić, 2006: 174).

4.4 The Habermasian public sphere

The study recognises the contribution of theorist Jurgen Habermas in the formulation of the theory of the public sphere. The theory argues that the public sphere consists of both the cultural and political aspects (McGuigan, 2005: 435), and concurs with scholars' who argue for the political importance of culture in the public sphere. James Curran defines the public sphere as follows:

> According to classical liberal theory, the public sphere (or public forum) is the space between government and society in which private individuals exercise formal and informal control over the state: formal control though the election of governments and informal through the pressures of public opinion. The media are central to this process … The media are thus the principal institutions of the public sphere or, in the rhetoric of the twentieth century liberalism, "the fourth estate of the realm" (Curran, 1991. 29).

The public sphere represents a democratic space, because every participant enjoys equality or "participatory parity" (Fraser, 1993: 524) across gender, sex, race, religion or creed. It is a democratising space because by acting as a platform for social discourse, it seeks to address social inequalities. The public sphere theory has provided a set of ideals on which to base the philosophy behind public service broadcasting in many developed and developing countries. Although discussed in depth below, the theory of the public sphere is a normative theory which continues to be debated to date. As Marijana Grbeša remarks:

> The public sphere is an ideal model that has probably never existed (…) This normative ideal of an independent social space where private citizens join in a rational-critical debate to discuss matters of common interest has been scrutinized as a working model. Doubts has been raised about its singular and homogenous nature, rationality of arguments, quality of discourse and the probability that debate will reach a consensus (Grbeša, 2013: 119).

It is not the intention of this thesis to offer a resolution of different arguments on the public sphere theory, but rather, to argue for its continued usefulness, by particularly highlighting its cultural aspects, in the normative study of the media in the area of democratic consolidation. Like many scholars reviewed above,

Habermas contests classical Marxist explanation of social relations, and contests theories advanced by his own contemporaries in the Frankfurt School. He deviated from the Frankfurt School in his rejection of Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of "instrumental reason" (Teigas, 1997: 232) which essentially serves the capitalist interest; as well as individual helplessness in the wake of ubiquitous culture industry (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993: 41). Instead, he believed that true reason existed in the pursuit of emancipatory interest. He referred to "communicative rationality" (in which he ties his Theory of Communicative Action) as unrestricted, unconstrained exchange of argument and speech in which reason and rationality prevail making it possible for participants to reach mutual consensus – where disagreements are resolved without the use of violence or force (Teigas, 1997: 232; Hamelink, 1995: 29). Admittedly, Habermas's theory seems idealistic and utopian, but as Bennett and Entman note, it serves as "construct against which different real-world approximations can be evaluated" (2001: 3).

For the ideal speech situation to prevail, Habermas argued in another publication (1989) for the creation of the public sphere, which in his writing is represented by salons, or *Tischgesellschaften* and coffee houses. These public spheres enabled social intercourse that disregarded social status and recognised equality among participants; and they sought to problematise social issues that until then had not been questioned (Habermas, 1989: 36); and that everyone had to be able [sic] to participate (ibid: 37). Although these spheres, by Habermas's admission, were generally bourgeois in their character (ibid: 35), their inaccessibility to "public at large" made emancipatory reason inaccessible to these publics. Availability of reason to this public, he asserted, "was a threat to any and all relations of domination" (ibid). By contrast, greater social equality meant availability of reason through the public sphere to all population. Today the media are, as Dahlgren asserts, "the chief institutions of the public sphere" (1995: 8). Habermas's ideas are relevant to democratic consolidation in that they centralise communication to social equality and by extension, to democracy - and they also put the agency of

communication and reason in the hands of ordinary people. This is the reason his public sphere ideal is relevant to this study.

However, Habermas was emphatic on the 'political' public sphere, to the point of downplaying the 'cultural' or literary public sphere. As many revisionist scholars have argued, to ignore as politically insignificant the 'cultural' aspects of society pose serious problems. Jostein Gripsrud points to censorship and strict control of the media and the arts in illiberal democracies as examples of potency of culture in politics (2008: 199). John Street notes that entertainment content comprises majority of content on television (2001:61), while Peter Dahlgren observes that the cultural is much broader in reach than the political (Dahlgren, 2013: 528). Gripsrud argues that this 'cultural' content that is not explicitly deliberating, therefore, cannot be irrelevant to the process of democratic deliberation (Gripsrud, 2008: 203). Joke Hermes and Peter Dahlgren also add that a decline in participation in formal democracy does not mean 'ordinary' people are less interested in social life. Rather, they argue, that politics has now taken a broader meaning and significance, and that popular media provide the forums of reflection in this regard (2006: 260). Gripsrud argues that the political projects such as the European Union or the construction of post-apartheid South Africa have a broad dependency on culture to succeed. He argues that cultural artefacts and activities can influence public opinion, and that political democracy is tied to social and cultural conditions and concludes that "democracy is in itself a cultural form" (2008: 197).

Habermas has also been criticised for his preference of textual and verbal forms over the visual. Tara Buehner and Eric Sommerfeldt (2013) observe that texts which Habermas referenced – which are the newspapers of his time – were largely textual without any photographs. This way, they argue, he endorsed "the bourgeois ideal" (2013: 3). In contrast, the authors mention the presence of visually rich texts like magazines which attracted a wider audience but was not considered in his concept of the public sphere. This, they infer, was not accidental because Habermas referred to the magazine consuming public as "leisure-seeking,

consuming culture group which no longer trusted the power of the printed word" (ibid: 5).

4.5 The cultural public sphere

In his seminal work on the idea of the cultural public sphere, Jim McGuigan argues for the inherent existence of both the cultural and the political in the concept of the public sphere. He laments Habermas's relegation of the cultural to the 'system' – the domain of absence of critical thought in which the masses are prone to capital's instrumental reason. The political, on the other hand, belonged to the domain of the 'lifeworld' where matters of critical political importance are deliberated on. In his argument for the elevation of the cultural to at least the same importance as the political, McGuigan proposes the term cultural public sphere. He defines it as follows:

> The concept of cultural public sphere refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication (McGuigan, 2005: 435).

He argues that the affective means of communication available in the cultural public sphere provides a platform through which people can think about their own lifeworld situations. The sharing of emotions, pleasures and pains "through willing suspension of disbelief" (McGuigan, 2005: 435) in a soap opera, for example, enables the viewer to talk and argue with friends and relatives about what characters should and should not do (ibid). This provides a vehicle for imagination, thought and feelings that enable the viewer to "negotiate their way in and through systems that may seem beyond anyone's control on the terrain of everyday life" (McGuigan, 2005: 435). In his examples and application of his theory, McGuigan argues that no representational form is entirely cognitive and rational, including news (ibid: 434).

Instead of assigning the political role of the cultural public sphere as just 'alternative', Liesbet Van Zoonen (2005) demonstrates that popular culture can

and does play a role in mainstream politics. Where prior scholarship on media and popular culture has seen the role of entertainment as having an indirect influence on politics at best (Gripsrud, 2008: 203), or deceptive at worst (Adorno & Hockheimer 2006; Postman, 1985), Van Zoonen asserts that entertainment has direct influence on mainstream politics too – and in fact argues that it can play a meaningful role of fostering active citizenship and enhancing democracy. Van Zoonen dismisses as insignificant the distinction between cognitive and affective modes and argues instead that entertainment such as soap operas and soft news can serve as alternative ways to make sense of politics. These, she says, they use to "express their understanding, reflection, judgement, and utopian visions of politics and politicians" (2005: 18). He argues further that the whole array of television genres across fact and fiction programming combines affective and cognitive elements in various mixtures (paraphrased from McGuigan, 2005: 435).

McGuigan defines three stances on the politics of cultural public sphere. The first is that cultural public sphere is seen as an agent of uncritical populism. In this stance, consumer capitalism is regarded as culturally democratic in that plurality of commodities provides consumer choice. The consumer is considered active as opposed to the passive subject of manipulative commodity culture and mediated experience (McGuigan, 2005: 436). It is a product of uncritical populism (Strinati, 1995: 255) in cultural studies of which postmodernism became a prominent component. In this deconstructivist postmodernist view, the "real conditions of existence" of the objective world does not exist, and real social relations simply dissipate into 'discourse' (Strinati, 1995: 255).

Text is polysemous and open to multiple interpretations based on the recipient's reading position (Hall, 1993), leading to the 'death of the author' (Barthes, 1977). It is an appreciation of what exists and how it works without doing much to change it. This way uncritical populist view leaves the capitalist political status quo unchanged, and arguably inadvertently reinforces rather than challenges it. With its anti-globalisation and anti-capitalism stance, the radical subversion view is the

"polemic opposite of uncritical populism" (ibid: 437). McGuigan describes this stance as a kind of semiological warfare associated with disruption and anarchy at the signification level[17], and seeks to offer total transformation (ibid: 438). Critical intervention stance locates itself somewhere in-between the two opposing views "producing a genuinely critical and potentially popular stance" (ibid). In describing this stance, McGuigan makes an example of populism of television as it remains central to everyday life. In spite of this medium being penetrated by commercial populism, including public service broadcasting, he still lauds it for affording a space for critical debate (ibid: 439). His examples are the *BBC*'s Red Nose Day charity event which seeks to raise funds for the less fortunate, or The Day Britain Stopped – a hypothetical imagination of a disastrous chain reaction caused by the failure of Britain's worn-out transport system (ibid). McGuigan's three scenarios inspire the central research question of this study – *what is the stance and significance of the SABC's content in the South African cultural public sphere?*

4.6 Democratic consolidation and cultural citizenship

Before the application of cultural studies theory to studies of democracy and citizenship, citizenship was generally defined from the perspective of political theory. In this sense, democratic citizenship provides a sense of membership in a political democracy (Heywood 1994: 155). This largely administrative definition was inspired by British sociologist T.H. Marshall. Marshall defines citizenship as being composed out of civil citizenship, some-times termed with equal justice, economic citizenship, and addresses the individual's right to participate in the economy as a free producer and consumer. Political citizenship centres on rights and obligations to participate in the political decision-making process such as in a parliamentary democracy where the rights to vote and to be elected are at the core

[17] McGuigan makes an example of Culture Jam movement in America. The movement sought to produce culturally subversive messaging (subvertisements), but not likely to take over control would not take over communications media in the US (McGuigan, 2005: 438).

(Klaus & Lünenborg, 2012: 199). Marshall's conceptualisation of citizenship has been refined, amongst others, by introducing the social welfare state as the sphere for the realisation of citizenship in modern societies, and also a challenge of feminists against citizenship bias towards the male heads of families (ibid). Bart Cammaerts also notes that the expansion also evolved towards the inclusion of ethnic minorities (2007: 1).

Marshall's definition seems on paper, like the anchor point on which the ideal of democratic citizenship rests. However, in practice, as Jean Beaman observes, the equal rights status in the United Kingdom during Marshall's time was to only be enjoyed by "heterosexual while males in England" (Beaman, 2016: 849). Beaman further mentions that this conception of citizenship does not acknowledge how one could possess these rights and still be marginalised (2016: 849). In support of his argument, Beaman cites the case of racial and ethnic minorities – namely Asian Americans and Latinos – as outsiders in their wider communities who are politically inactive within their polity (2016: 853). Another example of marginalisation in the United States involves racism and brutality against black citizens by the police – a phenomenon which gave rise to Black Lives Matter movement (Bordonaro & Willits, 2018: 104). South Africa is another example of a context in which rights have not translated into equal citizenship. Garman, Milton and Wasserman (2013) observe that although all citizens have democratic rights as guaranteed in the constitution and can participate in formal political processes such as elections, 'real' citizenship that makes all the difference still eludes them. The authors cite examples of economic inequalities which prevent millions of South Africans from reaping the benefits of democratisation such as improved living conditions and prospects (2013: 407). The above cases show that even though they are afforded legal citizenship, some social groups are denied full societal inclusion and that citizenship is not a sufficient condition for societal acceptance and belonging, particularly for marginalised groups (Beaman, 2016: 853).

The case for ‘cultural citizenship’ is based on the idea that citizens’ political engagement goes beyond concerns with formal administrative politics associated with elections and political office-bearers (Hermes, 2006: 33; Cammaerts, 2017: 1; Stevenson, 2010: 276). If democratic consolidation is the creation and sustenance of a political ‘culture’, then democratic citizenship has to not only concern the relationship between citizens and the political government, but with ‘society’ in a wider sense (Hermes, 1998: 160). This wider sense, which refers to the “cumulative whole of politically relevant options” (from Nieguth & Wilton, 2015: 5), is the cultural dimension of citizenship. If the process of democratic consolidation involves entrenchment of a democratic culture that is essential for the survival and sustainability of democracy, then popular culture is an important arena where ordinary people find political expression on a daily basis. In this vein, popular cultural media like television are ‘transmodern’ teachers” (Dahlgren & Hermes, 2006: 260) from which people learn to think about both identity and difference. Audiences refer to these uses of popular culture in their appreciation of crime fiction, football or popular television series” (ibid).

It is for this reason that some cultural sociologists have insisted on the inclusion of the ‘cultural’ in the membership of citizenship. Jan Pakulski’s definition of cultural citizenship as cultural ‘rights’ gives credence to this sentiment:

> … the right to symbolic presence and visibility (versus marginalization); the right to dignifying representation (versus stigmatization); and the right to propagation of identity and maintenance (from Beaman: 2016: 853).

Joke Hermes argues that above legal status, membership to cultural citizenship, it is also a responsibility – duties and expectation that citizens be active in society (Hermes, 2006: 33). Cammaerts adds that the ‘obligations’ also include “informing oneself” (Cammaerts, 2007: 1). For Nick Stevenson, the responsibility extends to respect of cultural practices of those “who need to be visible, to be heard, and to belong” (Stevenson, 2010: 276). It is the marginalised who are often “stereotyped and rendered invisible” (ibid). Cultural citizenship, therefore, challenges the stigmatisation and marginalisation of different populations and advocates for the

full membership in the nation-state (Beaman, 2016: 853). The cultural rights mentioned above give expression to a healthy, democratic political culture. It is only through cultural citizenship that a true sense of belonging can be realised. However, as Garman, Milton and Wasserman (2013) assert, 'belonging' is not a passive state of being:

> For citizens to experience a sense of belonging, they need to believe they have a role to play or some sense of place within society, and that they have a voice which will be heard by those in power. In a fledgling democracy, when much is still being negotiated, the belief that an individual's participation is of value and that contributions may not only be voiced but will also be listened to, can make a significant difference these aspects are crucial to restoring the dignity and self-worth to those who were previously excluded, and can also serve to establish trust in the democratic political system (2013: 207).

This belonging is cultural citizenship - a description of citizenship in cultural terms. Cultural citizenship is discussed below as additional key ingredient of a successful democracy. In making the case for the centrality of symbolic justice in democracies, Toby Miller points at the presence of constitutional guarantees on culture, with Switzerland as the first democracy to adopt in 1874 (2007: 51). He points to the cultural provision in charters of constitutions like South Africa, Mexico, Brazil, Portugal, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru and Spain (ibid). These, he says are to address concerns with language, heritage, religion, and identity as responses to histories structured in dominance through cultural power (ibid). To extend Miller's point, most of these provisions expand to the role of the media in society in order to ensure that symbolic or cultural justice is afforded to all citizens. This is the reason, argues Gripsrud, "that certain ethnic and linguistic minorities have been granted broadcast programmes in the dominant national channels". He says this gesture is a 'symbolic recognition' that these minorities are citizens on equal terms with the majority population (Gripsrud, 2002: 12).

Gripsrud argues that this legal or constitutional protection is aimed at aspects of culture that were never a choice for citizens. To illustrate his point, he makes an example of a human body, which embodies social identities like race, gender,

sexual orientation, etc., as the things that are “given to us” (2002: 13), as opposed to geographical location, sport fan club membership and profession which are choices that people opt into. Because these are naturally given traits which cannot be separated from the self, there is a need for a sort of legal protection against unjust or hateful representation in the media (ibid). In the South African context, David Marshall Smith makes a similar point – that “race is an un-chosen identity; like other social-environmental contingencies as accidents of birth, it should carry no moral credit or penalty, and should have no independent bearing on living standards” (2005: 52).

Ingunn Hagen (1992: 17) argues that without an attentive and active citizenry, accountable government is unlikely to be achieved, and democracy would remain shallow. Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz has warned that active participation is crucial in early stages of political transition because elites who have not accepted democracy as ‘‘the only game in town” (Linz & Stepan, 1996) will exploit mass inactivity to construct authoritarian enclaves - and inactive citizens might not support democratic institutions, which might be essential for regime consolidation (Conroy-Krutz, 2018: 224). Müller & Hermes refer to this active participation as the “performance” of cultural citizenship (2010: 194). The performance of cultural citizenship is important for the healthy functioning of any democracy. It is a symbolic acknowledgement of social groups as ‘belonging’ to a particular nation – in other words, as being citizens. According to them, cultural citizenship is a process of continuous performance, rather than fixed legal rules. The performance will help keep democracy in constant check and help commit any nation to what Raymond Williams terms ‘the long revolution’ – the “idea of the good society that seeks to describe the gradual evolution of an educated and participatory democracy” (Stevenson, 2010: 275).

However, the performance of cultural citizenship involves a sense of struggle, resistance, and negotiations over the terms of citizenship. The reason is that symbolic power, which evokes issues of identity, representation, reflexivity and

symbolic construction, comes to the fore, and becomes the focus of contestations and resistance (Garman, Milton & Wasserman, 2013: 407). This observation gives credence to Stevenson's assertion above, because "the voices of those most affected by contemporary forms of oppression and exclusion need to be heard" (ibid). For Aihwa Ong, cultural citizenship is placed within this negotiated tension as "a process of self-making and being-made in relation to nation-states and transnational processes" (Ong, 1996: 737). It is for the centrality of this contestation that Müller & Hermes (2010) refer to cultural citizenship, which draws from cultural studies, as "the struggle over the norms, practices, meanings, and identities through which groups and individuals are socially included and excluded in society" (Müller & Hermes, 2010: 194). It is a description of politics of exclusion and inclusion and the negotiation of cultural difference; the setting of boundaries as to who is in or out. In so doing, this process constructs the identities of all involved (Cammaerts, 2007: 3). In short, it involves "the negotiation of the role of cultural difference in everyday life" (Müller & Hermes, 2010: 194).

Therefore, cultural studies, discussed earlier, provides a conceptual framework through which the linkages between culture and nature of social power relations are ideologically embedded (Nieguth & Wilton, 2015: 9). From this perspective Nieguth and Wilton argue that understanding popular culture matters greatly to understanding politics (ibid). From the discussions above, therefore, cultural citizenship is the alternative way in which citizens engage in politics on a daily basis.

As discussed above, the affordance of rights does not translate into equal citizenship. The reason is, among others, that the spheres for the expression and practice of democratic citizenship have been limited to voting and other kinds of formal politics. In fact, various studies have shown that ordinary citizens are, most times, not interested in mainstream politics. Colin Sparks, for example (in Morley 2002: 139), notes that people are much more interested in sport and entertainment and sexual scandal than in politics because of its isolation from the real lives of the

mass of the population. In this sense, cultural citizenship enables the contest, negotiation and enjoyment of democratic citizenship in a broader sense for everyone – including the marginalised groups at the periphery of the nominal centre. It also provides alternative means for the expression and practice of democratic citizenship beyond the formal administrative ones.

As a form of 'mass' media, television is the best example of a terrain in which democratic citizenship is practiced. Elizabeth Klaus and Margreth Lünenborg concur, citing Graham Murdock's description of television as "the principal stock exchange of public discourse" and Jostein Gripsrud's description as the "primary source of common knowledge…a widely shared pool of information and perspectives from which people shape their conceptions of self, world and citizenship" 2012: 204). Beyond television, there has been a proliferation of digital media which has transformed how audiences consume content. Largely assisted by the proliferation of (smart) mobile telephony (Wasserman, 2011: 151), Africa broadly, and South Africa specifically, have not remained behind. As a result, as Mano (2017: 3) notes, there has been an increased presence of global broadcasters, mobile phone corporations and social media platforms in Africa. Herman Wasserman observes that the official high penetration numbers do not tell the full story as handsets and subscriptions are often shared (Wasserman, 2011: 151). In Africa where infrastructure is a challenge, he argues, "mobile phones are considered ideal vehicles for the deepening of democracy because they enable users to leapfrog fixed-line infrastructure" (ibid: 148). Sarah Nuttall notes that these platforms, the proliferation of which have coincided with the political transition to democracy, have seen the widespread emergence of internet culture as a major new public intellectual space (Nuttall, 2006: 265). Nuttall further observes that digital technologies have enabled audiences or users to create their own media or creatively adapt existing texts. This has shifted a balance of power between producers and consumers – leading to some analysts even proclaiming the emergence of the new kind of audience – the prosumer, the 'former audience', etc. (ibid). However, Wendy Willems and Winston Mano stress the continued

relevance of text-driven research approaches such as reception analysis and virtual ethnography in the wake of internet media. They argue that even though they produce, upload, blog, or tweet but also read, view and listen to the web, making sense of a range of media, including written text, sound, photos, and film, media users remain audiences while using digital media (Willems & Mano, 2017: 8).

In conclusion, it has been argued that cultural citizenship is the enabler of democracy and democratic consolation or deepening because it goes beyond formal and often physical boundaries of citizenship. In arguing for the 'cultural' as the entry point to citizenship, Joke Hermes points to the political potential within the heart of popular culture (Hermes, 1998: 159). She contends for the redefinition of citizenship to include sets of practices that constitute individuals as competent members of a community. In empowering the citizen and building these competencies, popular culture has been found by some scholars to have the potency of creating an active political culture. It strengthens individual's and social groups' commitment to the common good (or public interest) – which makes it the basic prerequisite of a functioning democratic system (Hermes, 1998: 158). It also enables the performance of citizenship in alternative arenas beyond the traditional ones – thereby broadening political participation beyond traditional involvement such as elections. It not only conceives of the public sphere as political, but as cultural; not in singular, but in plural terms. Cultural citizenship expands political participation into what Nick Stevenson terms the attainment of a general good society – not just the 'right' society (Stevenson, 2010: 275).

4.7 Conclusion

The exploration of a theoretical framework for the study of the impact of entertainment programming on democratic consolidation upon which this study focuses has led to an acknowledgement of two theories in media studies, namely normative theories of the media and the theory of the (cultural) public sphere. It is argued that two normative theories – libertarian and social responsibility theories

are relevant for this study because they are, in a way, two sides of the same coin. While the former professes freedom, which is essential for democracy, the other emphasises responsibility, especially in the light of the absolute and unchecked entrepreneurial freedom of the press (Christians, et al., 2009: 24). In terms of the roles, collaborative and facilitative roles are deemed to fit within the matrix.

Cultural studies has been discussed as an analytical paradigm, for it is a field that has provided the analytical language used in the study of popular culture for a long time. The argument here is that aspirant consolidated democracies, including South Africa, have to be anchored on the balance of freedom and responsibility – what the thesis argues to be an important ingredient for the success of democracies of the Third Wave. It aligns with Gripsrud's argument emphasising the critical interdependence between the political and cultural aspects of democracy, to the extent of asserting that "democracy is in itself a cultural form" (Gripsrud, 2008: 200).

In addition to the normative theories of the media, it has been deemed important to explore the theory of the public sphere as it pertains to culture or specifically television entertainment. McGuigan observes that the original Habermasian theory of the public sphere[18] has both the cultural and political aspects (2005: 430). He rightfully argued for the elevation of the cultural public sphere which Habermas seemed to have relegated to the 'system' – the domain devoid of rational and critical thought. The other important contributions to this 'cultural citizenship' debate are John Street, Peter Dahlgren and Liesbet van Zoonen from which the importance of entertainment media in creating active citizenship, or the development of the (cultural) public sphere, has been raised.

[18] As articulated in Habermas, J. 1989. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an enquiry into a category of bourgeois society (Trans. By Thomas Burger). London: Polity Press

Finally, if the public sphere theory pertains to the ideal of a democratic space or facility of public deliberation, then cultural studies seeks to understand the workings of this space. It reveals how power relations work, the nature of media messages, ideology at work, etc. It is a rich body of work providing access to decades of theory and research on how cultural works impact politics and social relations, and provides the analytical tools for the understanding of social impact of cultural texts such as television. Though in this section cultural studies is being discussed as a theoretical paradigm, it is also a rich analytical tool for decoding meaning and power relations in media texts. It is thus not surprising that analytical concepts from cultural studies are going to be used prominently – as shown in the next chapter on methodology.

5 Methodology

5.1 Methodological consideration

This study employs the multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) which is borne out of the realisation that text is complex, with some, like television, being multimodal. This complexity of text is perhaps best explained by Robert Deming:

> … no single, privileged, 'original' [sic] text exists. Only an incredible heterogeneity of texts exists, even when we are dealing with a specific program… (Deming, 1985: 32).

This shows that the cultural text is a product of discourse and has no single author traceable to a specific individual or agency. The task is to analyse how and to what extent normative democratic values are (mis)represented in the selected case studies. As mentioned elsewhere, soap opera uses melodramatic strategies to emotionally engage with its viewers. To decode meaning in soaps, therefore, the study identifies semiotic means used to encode the preferred reading of democracy in the texts analysed. This involves an understanding of the nature of a particular text for analysis and the circumstances under which the text had been produced and consumed. Because of its multimodality and a strong emphasis on the (critical) social, it is argued below that MCDA is the method suitable for this study. A relatively new methodology in media studies, MCDA has evolved from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which was rooted in linguistic theory and approaches, and criticised for seeing all research "through a single theory of language" (Ledin & Machin, 2018: 63).

MCDA still retains some of CDA's original aspects. Both are anchored in critical theory – they resist studying text in isolation by moving away from descriptions and interpretations. Instead, it seeks to explain the relationship between discourse and broader social structures (Djonov & Zhao, 2014: 6). Both CDA and MCDA therefore regard text as socially constructed - as both shaping and shaped by society (ibid: 7). By being 'critical' they both seek to unravel or "denaturalise" (McKerrell & Way, 2017) ideological forces embedded in text, and reveal power

struggles and conflict in and through discourse (Ledin & Machin, 2018: 60). This attests to their roots in cultural and critical theory, which was explored fully in the previous chapter. Emilia Djonov and Sumin Zhao add that these methods seek to contribute to social change by providing both "negative critique… of how societies produce and perpetuate social wrongs, and positive critique… of how people seek to remedy or mitigate them, and identification of further possibilities for righting them" (2014: 6). Due to this study's concern about possible reversibility of democracy in South Africa, it is equally aligned to the aim of social change.

While the importance of social practice cannot be over-emphasised, MCDA has also inherited CDA's serious regard for discursive practice. Discursive practice is a description of the context and the circumstances impacting the production of text. Discursive practices such as the professional norms, institutional dynamics, technology and personnel dynamics are indispensable for understanding how text ultimately assumes its form. Television text is one such complex multimodal medium that is produced by groups of teams – of which there is no single mind residing in one individual enjoying monopoly of production. These discursive practices are not value-free professional means of production, but may have major ideological outcomes such as producing and reproducing unequal power relations in society (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258). It serves as a bridge to close the chasm between text and social practices, which are often poles apart - between which it is a challenge to draw useful correlations. In this study, discursive practices within the SABC (for example, how lack of financial resources impact on editorial decisions) provide the means to understand how a particular text (e.g. programmes with commercially-influenced storylines) have had implications on social practices (e.g. representation of some aspects of democracy and omission of others). It is argued here that few other methods provide an approach with such emphasis on discursive practice, without which a study such as this one loses meaningfulness.

By moving away from text only as language, and adding other modes of communication (body language, images, colour, camera techniques, editing, etc), MCDA differentiates itself from CDA in fundamental ways. By the idea of multimodality, MCDA replaces linguistic text with the concept of 'semiotic resources'. According to Theo van Leeuwen, semiotic resources are 'signifiers' found in texts which serve as "resources for making meaning" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). He uses the term 'resource' to move away from structuralism's assumption of a fixed meaning of a sign. Semiotic resources are "actions and artefacts we use to communicate" (ibid). These resources work together to produce meaning. For the proponents of MCDA, it is important to understand how these elements work together. Scholars from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) school of thought argue that all modes of representation co-existing in the text are of equal significance and importance. However, Per Ledin and David Machin (2018) argue that this approach is symptomatic of the urge to use concepts from SFL, where underlying systems are isolated with the assumption that all modes are the same. They argue that different modes of representation assume different levels of significance within different contexts. They refer to these levels of significance as "affordances" (2017: 63). These affordances, they add, are deployed in contexts for specific ideological purposes (ibid). The relationship between different semiotic resources working together also involve what Rick Iedema (2003: 41) calls "resemiotisation". He argues that when a text is removed from its original context, meaning making shifts as well. In this way, the text loses or gains new meaning depending on the context in which it is placed (sequence, semiotic resources that are placed before or after, etc). Related to this, MCDA's critical shift is in its concept of recontextualisation of social practice. Ledin and Machin (2017) explain further:

> Here discourse can be thought of as representing knowledge of what goes on in a particular social practice, ideas about why it is the way it is, who is involved and what kinds of values they hold. Discourses tell us why these scripts are reasonable ways of acting in the world (Ledin & Machin, 2017: 64).

This practice is particularly useful for this study with its focus on the analytical strategies involved in how a particular social practice (in this case, democracy) is packaged or represented within a text. This recontextualisation or "selective representation" (Ledin & Machin, 2017: 64), is done through substitutions, additions, deletions, and re-ordering of the sequences that comprise events, and can include the following kinds of elements in the text: participants, ideas, values and attitudes, activities, social relations, objects and instruments, causality, time and setting (ibid). Thus, in this study, questions can be asked about how democracy has been recontextualised with SABC2's soap operas: what action is supposed to lead to what 'obvious' or logical consequence (causality), or what social identities have been represented to what extent, in what ways and to what effect, or what social practices have been added within the text where they are usually absent in reality, or which ones have been removed. Recontextualisation can ideologically legitimate a particular selection of social practice as the way things are and ought to be. This aspect of MCDA is relevant to the study because it helps identify researchable aspects of selected social practices and how semiotic resources are being used to represent them.

Lastly, Ledin and Machin warn that MCDA tends to be overzealous in taking wide-ranging topics in one study, rather than on localised studies or one genre (2017: 63). To remedy this, this study focuses on one genre, which is television drama from one TV station (SABC2). Another strong criticism levelled against MCDA, which relates to the tunnel vision of language, is the temptation to overlook tried and tested forms of analysis that already exist in other academic fields (ibid). To remedy this, the study draws heavily from well-developed analytical concepts of film theory, narrative and cultural studies. Ledin and Machin also advise engagement with practitioners and even take ethnographic approach in order to explore the actual use of semiotic resources (ibid). Thus, interviews with SABC officials, especially those within the Content Hub responsible for the editorial oversight, are conducted.

5.2 Problem statement and research questions

The research problem is framed thus:

A multimodal critical discourse analysis of the role the SABC has played through its soap operas to contribute towards the creation of a culture conducive to a consolidated democracy in South Africa.

The review conducted in Chapters Two and Three developed the argument that, due to its proximity to government, PSB is one of the strongest indicators of democratic consolidation. The stronger the PSB institutionally, and the freer it is editorially (i.e., from state control), the more effective its role in enabling cultural citizenship and democratic enhancement. In enabling cultural citizenship by means of entertainment programmes, therefore, PSB needs to culturally represent democratic ways of life as ordinary features of daily practice (Stevenson, 2010: 276). At a high level, this study asks the same question posed by Schmitt-Beck and Voltmer (2007: 76) – *of whether and in what ways the media is supportive of a political culture that is conducive of democratic consolidation*.

The literature review has also highlighted the three ways in which entertainment media can influence democratic engagement according to Michael Carpini. The first is to cultivate a socio-political worldview which reinforces the hegemonic position of those in positions of power (2012: 11). The second way is to act as a distraction, creating politically indifferent audiences leading to the erosion of social capital (ibid). The third way is to act as an alternative source of political engagement, thus enhancing the quality of citizen participation in their political affairs. Also, McGuigan's possible three stands regarding the politics of the cultural public sphere – uncritical populism, radical subversion and critical intervention, has created an opportunity to ask the question – *which of the three stands does the SABC's entertainment content take?* Put differently, *is the SABC supportive of, indifferent to, or opposes a culture conducive of the consolidation of democracy in South Africa?*

5.2.1 Key research question

From the problem stated above, the central research question is formulated as follows: *How has the SABC used its soap operas - namely 7de Laan and Muvhango - if at all, in reflecting and promoting South Africa's democratic values?*

5.2.2 Sub-questions

The sub-questions emanating from the central question, are directed towards the socio-political context, institutional as well as content issues:

5.2.2.1 Socio-political

- Does the SABC enjoy freedom and editorial independence to serve the public without state interference?
- Does the SABC have the institutional strength to withstand possible meddling and infiltration by partisan economic and political elites?

5.2.2.2 Institutional

- Does the SABC have institutional strength (financial sustainability, accountability) to carry out its public service mandate?
- How has SABC TV's implementation of institutional policies (e.g., fair procurement of content, qualified management, etc.) help create a healthy cultural public sphere on television?

5.2.2.3 Entertainment Content

- How has SABC TV helped consolidate South Africa's democracy through their purported editorial values such as equality, independence, nation-building, diversity, human dignity, and peace?
- To what extent has the SABC's soap operas assisted to consolidate South Africa's democracy through interventions

such as the promotion of equality, diversity, nation building and peace?

- To what extent has the SABC's entertainment programming assisted citizen empowerment through accurate reflection of social reality in order to stimulate a healthy public discourse about issues of importance in a democracy?

5.3 Assumptions

The SABC has for years been engulfed in entrenched politicisation by the ruling party (Ciaglia, 2017). Therefore, at institutional level, it is expected that decision making for entertainment content would enjoy a presence of enforcers aligned to the ruling party. It is therefore assumed that direct political interference will be present in television content in general. However, direct interference is not expected in popular entertainment programming, because it is assumed here that popular entertainment content is not regarded as political in the same dimension as news and journalism content is. It is assumed that political interference will be indirect, and will mostly take the form of self-censorship by officials who try to avoid being at odds with senior SABC executives and leadership.

From content point of view, the assumption is that SABC's entertainment content will not be aimed at deliberately enhancing democratic consolidation despite the broadcaster's policy documents claiming to be doing so. The content will not align to McGuigan's critical intervention or Carpini's alternative political engagement function. Rather, the SABC's soap opera will tend to align to commercial imperatives of audience and revenue maximisation. It will align to McGuigan's uncritical populism and Carpini's distraction from political engagement. From this perspective, the assumption is that content will not seek to directly negate democracy by being overtly anti-democratic, but it will be rather indifferent to it.

5.4 Operationalisation of democratic concepts

Operationalisation is an attempt to take democratic values, which are abstract concepts, and attempt to reduce them to measurable or researchable "variables" (Du Plooy, 2002: 53). Without repeating the discussions of earlier chapters, the table below shows a summarised version of how democratic values can be mirrored in an institutional configuration and behaviour, and further into content output or text.

Democratic constructs	SABC Editorial Values	Entertainment Programming
Peace	Human dignity	Respect and non-discrimination
	Nation building	Shared experience/identity
Civil liberties	Equality	Freedom of expression.
Democratic institutions	Independence	'Risky', innovative programming
Accountability	Accountability & transparency	Fulfil everyone's audience needs
Active citizenship	Diversity	Diverse stories & plural views

Table 2: The role of entertainment media in democratic consolidation

This is admittedly imprecise and might not match all the variables directly to their corresponding democratic concepts. Forcing a perfect one-to-one correspondence will be, in Kaarle Nordenstreng's words, "to repeat one of the errors of the *Four Theories"* (2006: 38) of the press. What the study proposes is to do what Gertruida (Trudie) du Plooy refers to as "indirect measurement" (2001: 68). In this study, therefore, SABC's content is 'matched' to the country's ambition of consolidating its democracy. Specifically, the SABC's claimed editorial objectives provide a reliable bridge that link the abstract democratic concepts to the SABC's content.

5.5 Scope of research

5.5.1 Political consolidation in South Africa

The study restricts itself to the phase of consolidation in which South Africa has sought to deepen its democracy. To put it in context of the broader South African transition, other phases of transition were reforms and regime change. South Africa's political *reforms* is widely accepted to have started when President FW De Klerk's announced a decision on 2 February 1990 to unconditionally unban all political organisations, allow free political activity and release Nelson Mandela from

prison (Van Zyl Slabbert, 1991: 5). The reforms were followed by the *regime change* which saw the first democratic elections in 1994 resulting in Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected president of South Africa and the ultimate adoption of the new South African constitution in 1996 (see Bauer & Taylor 2005: 248; Habib, 1995:50).

Democratic *consolidation* concerns various efforts made to strengthen or deepen democracy. This included efforts by the state to instil a "naturalised" (Schedler, 1997:18) democratic culture beyond elections, creation of democratic institutions intended to sustain a permanent democratic state, as well as efforts to improve the quality of lives of people through reduction of unemployment, delivery of essential infrastructure and services, amongst others (Nkuhlu, 1999: 15). Consolidation, with a specific focus on the presidency of Jacob Zuma, is the core focal point of this research. Because the genre of soap opera, broadcasting from Monday to Friday, "yields a vast and ever-flowing data stream" which can present a challenge for any scholar (Harrington, 2016: 109).

5.5.2 Entertainment programming

Entertainment programmes, specifically popular genres like drama, variety shows, soap opera and magazine programmes can be used to enforce democratic culture as they go about reflecting everyday lives (Bratić, 2006: 85; Hulshof, 2009:7). Within entertainment specifically, this study focuses on the genre of soap operas.

5.5.3 Linear television

Finally, this study recognises the presence of new communication technologies which have given birth to social media and non-linear television, amongst others. These have risen dramatically to characterise the state of the world at the time of writing this thesis. However, the case study in this thesis is of a traditional television in a broadcasting institution that has not adopted non-linear television as its main mode of transmission, and in a country where broadband is not widely available to the populace as a whole. Therefore, the scope does not cover areas pertinent to the so-called 'new media.'

5.6 Units of analysis

When it comes to programme content, only the genre of soap opera drama is discussed. This enables a consistent application of analytical concepts to one phenomenon. In order to be representative of the public service content or output of SABCTV, two long-running soap operas will be chosen from SABC2. The reason for SABC2 as channel choice among others across the SABC network is that it is the channel positioned as the champion of public service. The two long running soap operas chosen from SABC2 are *Muvhango* and *7de Laan*. Their descriptions are provided in the table below.

This approach enables the research to unpack the claimed channel editorial policies against actual broadcast output. As mentioned earlier, the study reads SABC's editorial policies as being in line with the country's democratising objectives. By assessing the extent to which the two soap operas align with the SABC's general editorial policies, it can be determined whether the SABC is in support of this objective or not.

For the purposes of focus and substance, the study focuses on season 18 (broadcast in 2017/2018) in the case of *7de Laan* and season 19 (broadcast in 2018/2019) in the case of *Muvhango*. The seasons are chosen for ease of availability of material for analysis. The period also marks the later years of Jacob Zuma's administration. In that way, there was no need to scan the many years in which the drama series concerned have been in existence. The following is a summary of proposed programmes that were considered for analysis:

Programme description
Muvhango
Muvhango is a prime-time television soap opera which centers around the lives of the royal Mukwevho family led by family patriarch and village chief Azwindini Mukwevho. The series set in the fictional rural village of Thathe and the metropolis of Johannesburg juxtaposes traditional beliefs and ways of living with the challenges of modern life in the city (Source: SABC2 website).
7de Laan

7de Laan is a South African Afrikaans soap opera created by Danie Odendaal and produced by Danie Odendaal Productions. The series focuses on the lives of residents staying in and around the community of *7de Laan* (7th Avenue), in the suburb of Hillside. The programme's dialogue is primarily in Afrikaans and is subtitled in English with some English and Zulu dialogue in between. The street and shopfronts which are featured on the opening visuals, are that of Seventh Street in Melville, Johannesburg (source: The South African, 2021)

Table 3: brief descriptors of the case texts

The study did not consider it desirable to conduct analysis of each episode, shot-by-shot, across the year. Rather, semiotic resources that are more descriptive of the two soap operas in general are considered. These include but are not limited to general storyline trends, descriptions that define regular characters and cast list, regular locations and settings, the overall plotline, narrative structure and style or decor. For in-depth analysis, an episode each from the two soap operas was also chosen.

5.7 Application of MCDA

As noted at the start of this chapter, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is an attempt to systematically and adequately deal with simultaneous multiple modes of signification in a televisual text. We have also noted how MCDA's starting point is deeply rooted in the social, and how it seeks to bridge the gap between the text and discursive practice. These three aspects (social practice, discursive practice, and text) comprise the grand conceptual framework of this study. The conceptual framework fits comfortably within Norman Fairclough's CDA model and would have been adopted as it is if the study's subject of analysis was predominantly linguistic.

Fairclough's approach was deployed successfully in a doctoral dissertation by Sarah Britten, which focused on the analysis of advertisements as a way of creating the myth of the new South Africa (Britten, 2006). However, Britten had to adapt the model and make it suitable for television text. Fairclough's model consisted of "seven dimensions of text" (Jones, 2004: 47), which looked at linguistic aspects. Britten replaced these dimensions with Barthes's semiology of the second order, or semiotic myth formation, which enabled her to analyse text

beyond the confines of language (Britten, 2005: 25). Using CDA, Britten not only semiologically 'read' the South African Breweries' (SAB) beer advertisements as texts, but she also analysed the socio-political context in which they were produced. Like in Britten's work, CDA in this research is adapted from its original formulation by Wodak and Fairclough.

A brief discussion of Fairclough's model is a good starting point. As exemplified by Martin Jones (2004) below, Fairclough's formulation consists of three boxes inserted into each other. The inner box represents text. Fairclough's model was based on linguistic text, but as mentioned earlier, the central unit of analysis in the proposed study at hand is television drama.

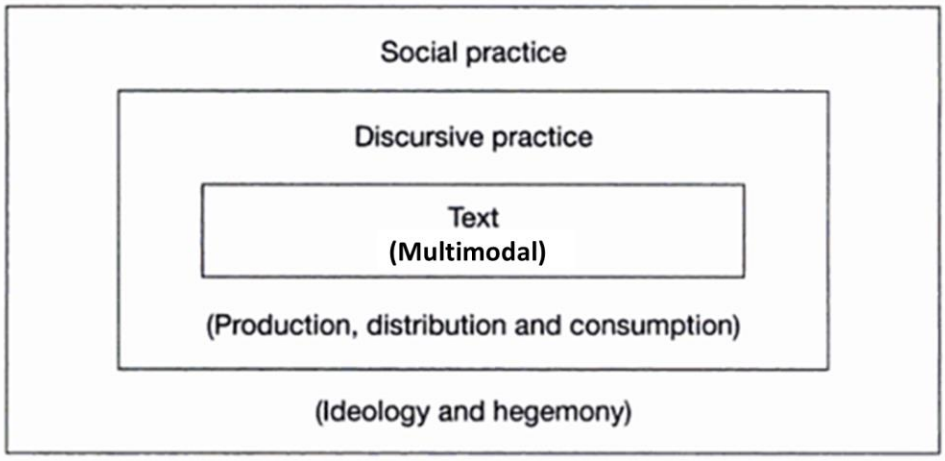

Figure 1: Adaptation of Fairclough's CDA model (adapted from Martin Jones, 2004: 47)

Fairclough's inner box is *text*. A visual text like drama is multimodal, and has linguistic, technical and visual semiotic resources that could be analysed. Therefore, instead of Britten's deployment of Barthes's second order semiology to analyse text, this study adopts multimodality. To avoid the pitfalls of still using multimodality within the linguistic episteme, the multimodal dimensions of text will be summarised by established, tried and tested filmic codes and conventions (shots, editing, etc). In this undertaking, extensive use of John Fiske's approach to television semiotics will be deployed. As Barthes built on Saussure's semiotics by creating a signification semiology, Fiske develops a method of semiologically

analysing television by identifying codes, which are made up of groups of signs. Fiske defines a code as:

> … a rule governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture (1988: 1275).

From this definition, it is possible to access meaning in texts by interpreting codes used to construct this meaning. In television, codes are borrowed from "reality" (i.e. social surroundings) and they are, according to Fiske, both representational and ideological. Examples of representational codes are *technical* ones such as camerawork, editing, lighting, setting, etc, and *conventional* ones such as character, narrative, conflict, dialogue, etc). Examples of ideological codes are the entrenched ways of organising society such as patriarchy, race, capitalism, individualism, etc.

The process of reading text produces extrapolations to issues of social representation. Social representation refers to the ways in which marginalised and powerful groups portray themselves in the media either to legitimise power positions or to portray certain social group positions as natural – as the way things have to be (Boyd-Barrett, 2002: 39). It critically seeks to reveal the workings of power and its ideology in the service of the powerful (Van Dijk, 1993: 250). In this context, ideology is seen as a struggle for meaning, and culture as a space in which this meaning is contested (Fiske 1987a: 254). Representation in the context of democratic consolidation can therefore become an instrument for the furtherance or reversal of democratic culture. In this study, 'text' will comprise of a selection of long running television soap operas.

From the perspective of television fiction, (i.e., drama and soap operas), the codes (e.g., camera, lighting, sound, etc.) as mentioned above still apply. However, they are arranged in a genre specific format in order to construct narrative according to established approaches. In soap operas specifically, narrative construction follows

“Hollywood realism” approach. This type of realism seeks to represent the world as familiar as possible in order to avoid alienating the viewer in any way. Camera movement as well as editing seek to represent the fictional world as to reality as possible. This way, the otherwise artificially constructed codes and conventions hide their fictional nature and represent themselves as ‘natural’, thereby conceling their ideological biases. Using the camera, this type of realism deploys the 180 rule and shot-reverse-shot conventions. The 180-degree rule is particularly used in studio productions where the studio floor and camera floor are separate by a straight line, the 180-degree line. A respect for this line ensures consistency in terms of objects on the left and those on the right. It also avoids a situation where cameras and other off-set objects are visible to the viewer. The shot-reverse-shot is used as a point of view shot during dialogue. In this convention, the shots are tighter (closer to the subject) and intensify the emotional tension in the scene. The multiple camera shots in the studio uses the eyeline match convention to avoid a situation where shots from different cameras are disjointed. The cameras are placed on tripods and are not handheld to ensure a balanced and stable world – a world which poses very little disturbance to the viewer.

As far as lighting is concerned, the use of key light and fill light ensures a scene that resembles lighting conditions in many living rooms, and avoids sharp shadows and heavy contrasts. The acting style is an attempt to copy American soap opera style, which has its origins in the Method Acting of Lee Strasbourg from the United States. Method Acting also has its roots in the naturalist or realist acting style developed for the theatres of Henrik Ibsen and Constantin Stanislavsky from Europe and Russia respectively. From a story-telling perspective, these narrative conventions add up together to create a metadiscourse. John Fiske observes that metadiscourse is the truth above all truths. It places the viewer in a position of all-knowingness of what is happening in the story, even if other characters in the story do not know. It gives the viewer the position to know who is telling the truth and who is hiding it, who is the good guy and who is the bad guy, who to sympathise

with and who to hate. It is this feature that ultimately carries the ideological bias of the producers or the television channel.

The process of reading a text by interpreting its codes always takes place within cultural and political contexts. In this study, this context is represented by the two outer boxes. The second box in Fairclough's model represents *discursive practice*. By this, Fairclough means all processes of production, distribution and consumption that have a bearing on the nature of text itself. Discursive practice comprises of institutional dynamics of the broadcaster which determine the shape of text. Here, this study discusses factors such as editorial policies, commissioning procedures, political interference, self-censorship, financial models, personnel dynamics, etc., that ultimately impact on production. The source of data for this part of the analysis is interviews of policy papers, annual reports, internet and newspaper reports, among others. Interviews with past and present personnel at the SABC provide insights into some of the dynamics at play when certain specific texts were created.

Fairclough's third and outermost box refers to *social practice*. The specific aspect of social practice is South Africa's democracy and its consolidation. The interest in the SABC assumes that the public broadcasting service was established in pursuit of the broader 'public interest', which extends to the pursuit of the democratic ideal. Within the context of media studies, the social practice is discussed critically by applying the concepts of critical or cultural studies. The key concepts of ideology and hegemony are discussed as ways of understanding the work of power in discourse. Although the primary unit of analysis for this study is linear television, it is acknowledged here that television is increasingly being consumed alongside applications on mobile devises. These devices play an important role as the extension of viewership experience, especially in low-income markets where costs are a barrier to access to broadband. Viewers use "second-screen" mobile devices to access social media applications like WhatsApp and Twitter, which require less bandwidth and data. Mobile devices also enable viewers to access desktop sites

and mobi-sites of various online publications, enables them to post comments at the end of news articles. The above platforms are used by viewers to engage vertically with content (and/or producers) and horizontally with other viewers (Guo, 2019: 140). For example, in her analysis of tweets of coloured audiences, Viola Milton observed patterns of ambivalence in which entertainment in *7de Laan* was received with feelings of apprehension against stereotypical representation of coloured people in the soap opera (Milton, 2015: 263). The ability to engage this way enhances the experience of television viewership and has been argued to fuel the "renaissance of live broadcasts" (ibid: 139). These platforms, enabled by affordable smart mobile phones, helps the viewer to take the negotiation of the meaning of television programmes beyond face to face, and create communities beyond the bounds of physical connection.

5.8 Data collection methods

The following methods of collecting data are used:

- Direct analysis of television text using the qualitative method of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)
- Interviews with relevant subjects such as senior SABC officials and personnel from production companies behind *Muvhango* and *7de Laan*.
- Corporate publications, such as policy documents, drama Series Bibles, commissioning briefs and annual reports
- News articles and social media sources
- Existing reports from commissions of enquiries, court judgements and parliamentary portfolio committee reports (that are in the public domain).
- Secondary sources such as film reviews and existing scholarly articles on target texts

5.9 Ethical considerations

In conducting interviews, care has been taken to protect the identities of the subjects. This is because the SABC personnel generally operate in a politically sensitive environment, and employees often find themselves suspended or facing

disciplinary action for various ‘transgressions.’ The study also did not pursue further correspondence with possible respondents who declined interview requests at first attempt so as not to appear to force of pressure anyone. Permission was also sought from and granted by the SABC’s Human Resources division for official access to premises, interviews and SABC owned content material.

Officials from the SABC’s Content Hub and commissioning office were interviewed, However, officials from SABC2 approached for an interview were “unavailable”. On the production companies’ side, most of the relevant subjects (writers and producers) approached declined the interview request. Only one member of the writer’s team from *Muvhango* gave the interview.

5.10 Validity of the findings

Care has been taken to ensure that the research is ‘sound’ and findings are credible and backed by rigorous, transparent data gathering and analysis. The research sought to establish the extent to which the SABC has created an environment conducive for the consolidation or deepening of democracy. To follow Nordenstreng’s (2006: 38) model, it is a way of linking the media to a particular normative role within a specific socio-political environment, thereby addressing the broader question of the normative role of the media in society. This way, the research creates a link to the validity of its findings in the ‘outside world’. This question, however, has not arisen out of the blue, for it links to the stated role of PSB as a democratic institution in the South African broadcasting legislation and the SABC’s specific editorial policies. Specifically, the study focuses on policies related to entertainment ‘programming’ (not news and journalism), as well as to the two selected series of soap operas and their ‘bibles’ to ensure that the evaluation is not arbitrary but is conducted against the SABC’s own stated claims.

To operationalise the otherwise abstract concept of democracy, five constructs were identified – which are peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability, and active citizenship. Using MCDA as a method, the idea was to

identify how these aspects of democracy are resemiotised in these soaps, through particular ways of representation (or omission), and to what effect. Using Norman Fairclough's three boxes of text, discursive practice and social practice, the study was able to legitimately connect the SABC's entertainment content (text) to conditions of production (discursive practice) as well as the broader socio-political context (social practice). This way, the research design has internal validity.

The discussion below highlights Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln's four criteria of 'soundness' of qualitative research, which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 114).

5.10.1 Credibility

All analysis conducted in this study relied on analytical tools, terminology and concepts prevalent in media and cultural studies. Filmic and televisual language such as shots and editing, as well as concepts such as intertextuality and metadiscourse are analytical tools used in the study and understood across the field. Different types of data collected were used to corroborate each other, thus increasing credibility. For example, an interview with the official of the SABC would be corroborated against an interview with a member of the production house together with previous claims made in media releases. This way, data ultimately used passed the credibility test to avoid incorporation of claims that do not make sense, for example.

5.10.2 Transferability

It is always difficult in the social sciences to transfer one study's research design to the other. The circumstances always vary and there is a lot of moving parts making it difficult to 'freeze' the study environment in time. For example, another study on the same soap operas a year later might find that the SABC's approach and management of editorial for entertainment programming has changed, resulting in a radical change in the storylines and aesthetics.

5.10.3 Dependability

The research process and data gathering approaches are clearly documented. During the research, the idea of the 'role' of the media, in which the agency to

dictate editorial direction for all content was placed in the hands of the SABC, was challenged when it became clear that production companies did not always conform to the broadcaster's editorial directives. This had an impact on the extent to which responsibility for the final text could be hung on the SABC's shoulders alone.

5.10.4 Confirmability

Care was taken to ensure that all conclusions and interpretations are derived from the research data alone. Available literature on *7de Laan* has helped with the confirmation of how previous studies have interpreted aspects of the same data, leading to a level of consistency in how the soap opera is viewed. Due to the scarcity of existing studies on *Muvhango*, similar learnings were applied in *Muvhango*.

6 Democracy as Social Practice

6.1 Introduction

As the study edges closer to the analysis of the SABC's televisual texts, it is necessary to provide a broader picture of South African social context as proposed in the methodology section. This chapter provides a review of the state of democracy in South Africa which serves as a backdrop of the socio-political environment in which the SABC plays its role as the public broadcaster. The chapter at first looks like pure political analysis that isolates itself from media issues. However, issues of democracy are the very issues that public broadcasting concerns itself with, and as such become the basis of both its news and entertainment content. The chapter explains the political forces at work in enabling or disabling the SABC from fulfilling its public mandate. It does so by unpacking the social practice of democracy in terms of the democratic variables identified in the literature review.

The discussion on the state of democracy will be conducted in terms of the five themes or concepts of democracy that were identified in literature review. These themes are *peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability, and active citizenship*. It is these aspects of democratic practice that are usually recontextualised - through patterns of representation or by omission - within television text. This way, the study can identify these constructs and determine how democratic consolidation (or lack of) is represented within the cultural public sphere of television. As outlined in the methodology in the previous chapter, this chapter constitutes Fairclough's outer box of *discursive practice*.

6.2 The state of democracy in South Africa

Because Jacob Zuma's administration was preceded by more than twenty years of established democracy with four general elections that had been deemed free

and fair (Letsoalo, 2014)[19], some scholars and analysts regard South Africa's democracy as consolidated. Labuschagne states that regular elections, as well as acceptance of loss of political power in some parts of the country by the ruling party, indicate a process of democratic consolidation (Labuschagne, 2016: 123). However, he also agrees with Kotze and Loubser (2017: 35) that on closer inspection there are indications that South Africa's democracy is beginning to faulter (Labuschagne, 2016: 111).

The lack of democratic consolidation has been acknowledged since Nelson Mandela's administration. The Mandela era was about facilitating the regime change and rolling back the various apartheid laws (Lange & Van Eeden, 2015: 68). The Mandela administration would understandably not achieve full democratic consolidation because he was president of the new political dispensation for only four years. During the Mbeki era, patience started running out, with various critics accusing him of being too elitist, citing GEAR's jobless growth as a case in point (Kotzé & Loubser, 2017: 44 - 45). When Jacob Zuma came to power, he positioned himself as "the man of the people as distinct from Mbeki who was often regarded as aloof" (Shubin, 2018: 52). The Jacob Zuma administration launched the New Growth Plan (NGP), aimed at increasing South Africa's development drive, as well as the National Development Plan (NDP), aimed at stimulating economic growth and social welfare. These interventions were not achieved due to a number of reasons. First, because the Jacob Zuma administration could not strike a balance between the two seemingly contradictory objectives (Kotzé & Loubser, 2017: 47). His failure was also due to weakened state institutions in which cadre deployment policy resulted in incompetent people deployed to positions of responsibility and were used as a vehicle of factional battles within the ruling party (Booysen, 2011: 160). Zuma's administration also failed due to widespread corruption, including his

[19] The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) have also declared the elections of 1994, 1999 and 2014 free and fair.

own personal involvement, for which he has been facing charges since he left office in 2018 (Shubin, 2018: 60).

Due to the failure of various state-sponsored interventions (i.e., RDP, Gear, Asgisa and NDP) the ANC government started to concede that the goal of democratic consolidation was not easy to attain. In mitigation attempt, the ANC tabled a proposal for the "second transition" in 2012 (Maseko, 2013: 62). It was their first major attempt to explain their failure to consolidate, almost two decades after the collapse of apartheid[20]. A few years later Jacob Zuma won his second term as president of the ANC, and by extension the country's president. It was during this time that allegations of corruption on a mass scale, which have famously been termed 'state capture,' surfaced (Madonsela, 2016: 4)[21]. Consequently, there were as many as eight motions of no-confidence against him (Miya, 2018)[22]. In trying to survive various calls for him to resign, the president delayed setting up a "state capture" enquiry and shuffled parliament multiple times without accounting for his decisions (Shubin, 2018: 57). This he managed in part because of the ANC majority in parliament closing ranks and shielding him from opposition (Bracking, 2017: 183). During this time, the ANC unleashed a major spinning machine trying to justify their way out of Zuma's political scandals. They first tried to portray the complaints by the public as concerns of white people and the so-called "clever blacks" (Kitis, Milani & Levon, 2018: 2) – and portrayed themselves as the champion of the struggle for the masses who still needed to be delivered from the apartheid legacy of poverty and unemployment (Onishi, 2016). However, the

[20] According to this proposal, the first transition had taken 18 years. The second, however, had a 50-year horizon. (The Second…, 2012: 35)

[21] The full investigation into state capture was conduced by the then public protector (PP), Advocate Thuli Madonsela. Titled "The State of Capture", the PP investigated corrupt and unethical conduct by the president and other leaders of government and state-owned entities.

[22] At the time of President Zuma's resignation, there was already the ninth motion tabled by the EFF.

disgruntled communities organised nationwide waves of civil society protests against Zuma's administration, including relentless service delivery protests (Ngcamu, 2019: 3). The 'Fees Must Fall' movement in which tertiary education students demanded the scrapping of fees in higher education (Davids & Waghid, 2016), as well as the 'Zuma Must Fall' campaign, a call for Jacob Zuma himself to step down (Southall, 2019: 206), are two examples of such protests. In one of his responses, Jacob Zuma and the Gupta Family solicited the services of Bell Pottinger, a British public relations firm based in London to spread the idea that the reason for the country's lack of development and the reason why black economic empowerment efforts were failing was because of white monopoly capital - WMC (Bateman, 2017)[23]. It subsequently appeared that WMC, which Zuma had been preaching and hoping it would find resonance with the 'masses', did not exist as it was his and the Gupta's invention (ANCIR, 2017) to breed "racially divisive politics" (Govender, 2016: 253).

With strong support from the ANC Youth League, Zuma also did tease out the idea of a third term as president of the ANC – a move synonymous with some African dictators such as Burundi's Pierre Nkurunziza and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda (Darboe, 2018: 18). He did not visibly campaign so as to appear like a "reluctant hero" (Jacobs, 2015), but the ANCYL did attempt to sell the idea to the broader ANC. When it became apparent that such a move would not be possible, he instead advocated for Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, his former wife to be his successor. This move also failed when Cyril Ramaphosa was instead elected the ANC's president at NASREC in November 2017.

Due to large structural inequalities, a weakened democratic institution including the public broadcasting system, and a lack of accountability that has led to

[23] Ancir (2017) reports that Bell Pottinger's web of fake news produced at least 220,000 tweets and hundreds of Facebook posts to confuse the public between July 2016 and July 2017

widespread corruption, some analysts are beginning to offer some qualification of South Africa's democracy. De Kadt and Hudson mention inefficient state system, unaccountable "troublesome" elites, inequality and unemployment as factors making South Africa's democracy to be "fragile" (2014: 8-10). Also, Freedom House have given the country the status of 'free', albeit with a cautionary "backsliding" note[24]. It is therefore reasonable to argue that South Africa is not a consolidated democracy. What it seems to be, is a "consolidating" democracy (De Jongh, 2017). It is a democracy on a path of consolidation, but consolidation has not been achieved and the outcome of such a state, as Voltmer puts it, is "uncertain" (2013: 72).

6.3 Peace

It was argued earlier that while democracy and violence can co-exist – especially, as Karl von Holdt has observed, in the 'developing' global South (2014: 129), citizens in consolidated democracies by-and-large enjoy relatively stable internal peace (Hegre, 2014: 163). It is not surprising that Nelson Mandela's foundation of South Africa's democracy was rooted in peace. The first priority in his first four years as a free man was to end violence and ensure that peace prevailed among South Africans (Daniel, 2012: 386). He announced this vision for a new South Africa based on racial harmony, and immediately made his intentions to "forgive for the sake of peace" known (Daniel, 2006: 28). South Africa also decommissioned nuclear weapons, stopped assaults on other emerging democracies in Africa (van Wyk, 2014: 80) and initiated a national reconciliation programme (Kotzé & Loubser, 2017: 45). It was on values of peace during Mandela's administration that Desmond Tutu's concept of the Rainbow Nation (Maluleke, 2011: 30) was coined. The ideal of a peaceful new South Africa was actively marketed to the public using programmes on SABC TV. Dorothy Roome (1997: 8) demonstrated how a comedy series like *Surburban Bliss* was used to

[24] Source: Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/regions/sub-saharan-africa [2019, March 27]

contribute to nation building. However, City Press editorial of 24th of September 2017 lamented the erosion of 'Rainbow Nation'. Projects of peacebuilding, such as active nation-building, moral regeneration movement and social cohesion objectives, seem to have been abandoned. In his February 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Ramaphosa decried the absence of the 1994 Nation Building spirit, which he said needed to be brought back. This, once again, points to something amiss with South Africa's democracy project.

Despite the advent of democracy and freedom, the shadow of political violence still looms over contemporary South African politics. Apart from murder, which has largely been reported in the province of Kwazulu-Natal (Bruce 2014: 3), indirect violence such as intimidations and loss of jobs or economic opportunities has been the preferred tactic for sanctioning political detractors. The Zondo *Commission of Enquiry Into State Capture* has heard testimonies from public servants who have lost their jobs because they would not take illegal instructions from politicians. Former president Jacob Zuma is reported to have fired ministers and director generals who would not want to open business opportunities for his fugitive friends, the Gupta family (Chabalala, 2019). The former premier of the Free State Province, Ace Magashule, fired some people, including the MEC for Economic Development, Mxolisi Dukwana, for refusing to work with the Gupta's in the province (Bates 2019; Mahlati, 2019a).

Twenty-five years after the dawn of democracy, patriarchy is still prevalent in South Africa. The ensuing structural condition fuelling the continued lack of gender equality fuels gender-based violence (Alderton, Henry, Foster & Badland, 2020: 2). Mpani and Nsibande note that in South Africa, gender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread and common problem which is increasingly normalised and underreported. They cite several studies in which it has been concluded that as many as one in four women in the general population experience physical violence at some point in their life, and that almost every woman in South Africa will experience some form of violence (emotional, economic, physical or sexual) at

least once in their lifetime both within and outside their intimate relationships. They also observe that a large proportion of men admitted to committing some form of violence against women in their lifetime. Additionally, a national study on female homicide concluded that a woman is killed every six hours by their intimate partner (Mpani & Nsibande, 2015: 6).

Britton and Fish note that from HIV infection rates to epidemic levels of gender-based violence, the legacy of apartheid and failure of post-apartheid government continue to leave their mark on persisting systems of gender, class and racial inequality (Britton & Fish, 2008: 14). The biggest structural challenge in South Africa is a chasm of class inequality which creates a condition of structural violence that threatens peace in the long run (Fjelde & Østby, 2014: 738). Despite some gains made after the fall of apartheid, South Africa's worsening economic situation (Keeley, 2015: 37) has made it one of the most unequal societies in the world (Govender, 2016: 240). Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss have noted that despite unprecedented spend and expanse in social and infrastructural programmes since 1994, more than half of the country's population is living below the poverty line (Statistics South Africa, 2017: 14-20). The perceived government's failure, such as a lack of perceived quality of governance, service delivery failure, fraud and corruption, are largely to blame for the majority being left out of economic opportunities (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012: 251).

The high unemployment rate of 29% adds to the blight of inequality and threatens the cohesion of the social fabric as it impacts negatively on people's perception of social justice within South Africa (De Kadt & Hudson, 2014: 9). De Kadt and Hudson also argue that this kind of economic inequality also creates a constituency "vulnerable to populist politics, xenophobic demagoguery as well as personal misery and the existential insecurity associated with joblessness and, often, abject poverty" (2014: 9). In the past ten years, public protests have been a constant feature similar to apartheid-era riots, to the extent that South Africa has been dubbed the protest capital of the world (Rodrigues, 2010). Against the backdrop of

a state that is regarded as largely unresponsive to peaceful protest (Kgatle, 2018: 252; Cameron, 2016; Southall, 2014: 66), protests are now taking a violent form. Largely initiated by the poor and working-class people, the major reason is the lack of service delivery which ordinary South Africans regard as key to their lives (Potgieter & Govender, 2016: 13).

As far as crime is concerned, about 57 people are murdered in South Africa every day, which translates into 36 murders per 100,000 population. As the country with the fifth highest murder rate in the world in 2015, the country is one of the most dangerous places to live in the world (Bloom, 2019) in comparison to other industrialised countries. Apart from murder, other violent crimes are hijacking and cash-in-transit heists. Despite a decrease in vehicle theft, South Africa has one of the highest car-jackings in the world with one vehicle hijacked every 37 minutes (Lindwa, 2019). Hlaudi Motsoeneng's insistence on "sunshine journalism" (Grootes, 2013) was observed to have resulted in SABC news' "soft-pedal crime reporting" (Glen & Mattes, 2012: 500).

The above review shows that while South Africa may not be in a state of war either with external or internal enemies, the state of peace of its citizens remains precarious. Structural violence, which is systemic suffering as a result of widespread inequality and corruption, is prevalent. It is also clear that the government has always been aware that the country's state of peace is undermined by protests, high crime levels and gender violence, for example. However, these failures have not been met with serious attempts to improve, but rather attempts by government to lead the public to believe that everything is under control. This results in government's attempts to control public perception of these failures. For instance, there is always a controversy surrounding manipulation of crime statistics; and the SABC's insistence on sunshine journalism in the wake of service delivery protests was linked to efforts to manipulate public perception of peace in the country (Grootes, 2013).

6.4 Civil liberties

South Africa's constitution is based on the reversal of oppressive laws of the apartheid regime. Apartheid regime, which was founded on ethnic and racial segregation, deprived South Africans of civil liberties by denying them equal rights and opportunities. The regime was therefore regarded as undemocratic and illiberal (Giliomee, 2013: 390). In repealing the various apartheid laws, the new democratic regime introduced[25] civil liberties as exemplified in its democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights – as specified in the Bill of Rights in Chapter 2 of the Constitution (Potgieter & Govender, 2016: 4). The section on civil liberties discusses selected aspects such as civil rights, equality before the law and freedom of expression.

Civil rights in South Africa are inscribed and protected in the constitution which, on paper, grants all civil liberties without any restrictions. However, there have been instances where the exercise of rights has been limited in reality. Political killings mentioned above serve as an example of people's political freedoms being stifled through violence. Report from Freedom House shows that the Jacob Zuma administration's plans to curb the media had a negative influence on the score for the freedom of the press which dropped from an earlier favourable score of 100 to 79" (Labuschagne, 2016: 120). Labuschagne mentions the Marikana Massacre[26] as an example of how the state has sought to rob individuals of their right to protest (2016: 120). However, it is also worth noting that the violent and disruptive nature of protests in South Africa also infringes on the rights of those who are not participating in strikes.

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[25] Prior to this moment, South Africa had never seen a liberal democracy in its history. Traditional societies were communal in nature, so the rights individuals often took secondary importance to the rights of the collective

[26] The 2012 Marikana massacre left 34 striking mine workers dead in clashes with police and in the same year 38 ANC members and 13 civilians were killed in what were termed as political killings (Labuschagne, 2016: 120).

There has also been a lack of justice delivered against high profile politicians, such as Zuma's preferential treatment over Shabir Schaik in the 'arms deal' bribery case in which the latter was convicted and sentenced to a jail term. After being elected president, Zuma later pardoned Schaik under questionable circumstances (Wolf, 2011: 61), giving the impression that those with financial means and political influence can wiggle their way out of prosecution for crimes. Zuma's administration was also mired in widespread corruption across provinces run by the notorious "premier league" of the Free State, the North West and Mpumalanga. Scandals such as VBS, Vrede Farm and Nomvula Mokonyane and Bathabile Dlamini (Leshilo, 2018) involving billions of rand are yet to be seen through, and some of the suspected culprits are still in high political offices. For example, the Seriti Commission, set up at a cost of R140 million to investigate the arms deal corruption, found no culprits and it remains to be seen what will eventually happen now that its findings have been set aside by the Pretoria High Court (Legalbrief, 2021). What all this appears to show is the lack of respect for the rule of law due to a lack of equal treatment and equality before the law.

In operationalising the right to freedom of expression, there are various legislative promulgations and policy directives giving substance to this right. Stemming from Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is seen as a "fundamental right and a prerequisite in any democracy" (van Vollenhoven, 2015: 2299). At the heart of South African legislation on communication, the spirit of freedom inscribed in the constitution, and establishment of Public Service Broadcasting respects and extolls the right to freedom of expression as spelt out in Chapter 1 of Broadcasting Act Number 4 of 1999.

Despite South Africa's constitution protecting freedom of expression and media freedom, and after many years after the end of apartheid, The Economist's Open Future Report (2018) has rated the country's state of media freedom as only 'partly free' (The Global Slump in Media Freedom). A closer look at this particular aspect

of freedom might reveal cracks in the democracy project. PSB, as exemplified by the SABC, has seen a clampdown on the work of journalists during the reign of Hlaudi Motsoeneng as the COO of the organisation. South Africa's 2017 Cybercrimes and Cyber Security Bill, adopted by the National Assembly in November 2018 and expected to become law, has raised concerns about the government's encroachment on freedom of expression (Meer-Mia & Shacksnovis, 2018). Analysts say, in trying to protect the interests of the state in securing the cyberspace and individual freedoms and rights, the Bill "affords opportunity for repressive implementation, as well as enhanced investigative and surveillance powers for security agents" (Masters & Lister, 2017: 10).

Freedom of expression has also been threatened by non-state agencies and groups some of which are alleged to be in cahoots with the government or a faction of the ruling party. For example, Black Land First (BLF) has also picketed outside of journalists' homes and death threats have been levelled at Sipho Masondo of *City Press*, former SABC journalist Vuyo Mvoko and *Sunday Times*' Mzilikazi wa Afrika (Louw, 2017: 89). BLF has also picketed outside journalist Peter Bruce's home demanding that he reports the "white monopoly capital" instead of anti-Gupta stories (Cronje, 2017). Bongani Hans reported that Arts and Culture Minister Nathi Mthethwa had withdrawn advertising in newspapers and other media institutions which were reporting negatively about the ANC, the government and President Jacob Zuma (Hans, 2017). Within the SABC, the case of SABC8[27] is a glaring reflection of how desperate the interference by the ruling party was during the tenure of Jacob Zuma as president.

[27] The SABC8 were journalists who were fired for objecting to, and resisting Hlaudi Motsoeneng's "unethical policies and intimidatory tactics" (de Waal, 2019). Their names are Lukhanyo Calata, Thandeka Gqubule, Foeta Krige, Busisiwe Ntuli, Krivani Pillay, Vuyo Mvoko, Jacques Steenkamp and Suna Venter.

6.5 Democratic institutions

The classic three pillars of democracy – legislative, judicial and the executive – are pillars of the South African constitution which ensure that separation of power is in place (Koenane & Mangena, 2017: 62). South African constitution has been hailed as one of the best in the world (Kende, 2003), as it has clearly legislated the establishment and retention of the democratic institutions with the aim of making the democratic state outlive individual governments. The role of the democratic institutions is, among other things, to ensure accountability. In South Africa, some of the institutions of democracy are dedicated to the promotion of democracy itself (such as the SABC), such as holding the executive to account (such as parliament), defending civil liberties and human rights (such as the Human Rights Commission). The discussion on democratic institutions below includes the need to strengthen such institutions with a reference to PSB.

The responsibility of the state is to ensure that democratic institutions remain strong, and resist any forces seeking to roll back the democratic gains. It would therefore be expected of the state to actively promote these to the public so that the public is well versed in the work they do. However, the Zuma administration seems to have sought to weaken some of the institutions, so they lack the effectiveness to deal with wrongdoing by those close to power. For example, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Affairs declined to resource the office of the then public protector Thuli Madonsela with a budget increase when she needed to investigate state capture claims. The ANC majority in the National Assembly has also resulted in this important institute of democracy being compromised in carrying its oversight job. The abuse of the ANC's majority in parliament, exemplified by Zuma's arrogant assertion that "the ANC will rule until Jesus comes" (Southall, 2019: 199), has resulted in the parliament's failure to hold the president to account, and South Africa is increasingly being labelled a failed state or on the verge of becoming one (Kane-Berman, 2018; Mashele, 2019).

From the perspective of the public broadcaster, political interference has robbed the SABC of the power it needed to service the public. This is a result of the ANC's abuse of its dominant majority to deflect challenges to its power through its control of state resources and through the manipulation of independent state institutions (Botha, Schaks & Steiger, 2015: 260). In fact, Antonio Ciaglia (2017: 829) argues that this political dominance of the ANC's creates a "structural facilitator" for its political influence over the SABC. This will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter. The reshuffling of communications ministers, instability and the politics at the board and executive levels, and the unstable financial position have weakened the SABC as a democratic institution.

There was a general lack of oversight into the SABC by the executive despite glaring evidence that the SABC was not run as the public broadcaster, but as a state broadcaster. The Parliamentary Enquiry in the SABC's Board Fitness to Hold Office only resulted in the firing of the board chaired by Professor Mbulaheni Maguvhe (Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the SABC Board …), but did not lead to the restoration of the health of the public broadcaster which, at the time of writing, was still technically insolvent (Ndenze, 2019). Even the changing of the company status from a PTY LTD to a state-owned company (SoC), stripping this institution of its independence[28] – was not part of the recommendation of this Enquiry.

Although South Africa cannot exactly be labelled a failed state, a look at its democratic institutions above have revealed a weakening trend that, if left unabated, can gradually lead to a failed state. Despite efforts by the Zuma administration to hollow out democratic institutions such as the national

[28] Qhobosheane and Maphetshana argue that most state-owned companies are prone to political interference. This is particularly valid in the case of the SABC (Qhobosheane, 2018: 66; Maphetshana, 2016: 24).

broadcaster and the NPA, a critical press, independent judiciary and vocal opposition are keeping the government on its toes (The Economist, 2016: 26). This has been evident from institutions like the Public Protector (Adv. Thuli Madonsela). There have also been courageous individuals like Mcebisi Jonas (MP) who volunteered to testify at the Zondo Commission Enquiry into State Capture (Jonas, 2018). Against this, Daryl Glaser regards the democratic institutions as being "pretty sound" (2016: 30).

6.6 Accountability

Public accountability is a description of how elected officials and government employees answer for or justify their "actions or inaction, which may be measured against set standards or expectations" (Sikhakhane & Reddy, 2011: 86). Within state institutions, this can also be regarded as corporate or administrative good governance driven by an organisational culture that supports ethical behaviour (Raga & Taylor, 2005: 22). Accountability is one of three (the other two are bureaucratic efficiency and the rule of law) crucial requirements that Francis Fukuyama argues to be necessary for a country to be a "stable, prosperous and wealthy liberal democracy" (De Kadt & Hudson, 2014: 10). Henk Botha, Nils Schaks and Dominik Steiger (2015) argue that in South Africa, the electoral system of proportional representation compromises accountability:

> the accountability of democratic representatives to the electorate is undermined by the closed list system of proportional representation that is used in South Africa (Botha, Schaks & Steiger, 2015: 260)

They further argue that in this system, voters vote for political parties rather than individual representatives, and political parties in turn impose their representatives onto the public (ibid). Accountability below is being discussed in terms of dominant party state, transparency and ethical leadership.

South Africa's democracy has been characterised by some analysts as a dominant party state in which there is very little prospect of change of government though the ballot box, given the extent of voting patterns influenced by race (Giliomee,

Myburg & Schlemmer, 2000: 37). There is also criticism that the state is largely insensitive to the sensibilities of the people (Lowe 1999: 429). As such, Labuschagne argues that the ANC's 20-year political dominance has effectively institutionalised a de facto one-party state resulting in progressively high levels of corruption, breakdown of security and self-serving members that threaten a still vulnerable democracy (Labuschagne, 2016: 111). Botha, Schaks and Steiger argue that the electoral dominance of the ANC endangers party-political competition and threatens to undermine the independence of democratic institutions (2015: 259). This, they elaborate, it does by using its legislative majority to change the rules of political engagement to stifle dissent and suppress information that can put it in a bad light. Southall argues that the lack of accountability in a dominant party state "leads to widespread corruption" (2014: 61).

In South Africa corruption is rife and service delivery is slow, with declining levels of accountability. In his 2018 report (on 2016/17 fiscal year), the auditor general found the "highest level of non-compliance with key governance laws since 2012-13" (Auditor General, 2018), with municipalities achieving "overall audit outcome regression" (ibid). This observation sums up a general state of lack of accountability by government officials during Jaco Zuma's administration, which Nyaniso Zonke opines is characterised by "lack of political will" to instil a culture of accountability (Zonke, 2016: 9). Some analysts such as Kotze & Loubser have gone so far as to claim that South Africa's transition has been hijacked by predatory elites who loot the economy with little concern for the poor (2017: 48). They further note that about 20 per cent of government's procurement budget alone went down the drain each year. Because of this lack of accountability, Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss observe that the ANC deployees had their fingers in the till, overpaid for products and services or failed to monitor how money was spent (2012: 252).

The policy of cadre deployment is one of the most openly secretive approaches of the ANC to governance (Southall, 2014: 54). Cadre deployment creates predatory

elites with little concern for the poor (Kotze & Loubser, 2017: 48). The lack of transparency behind their appointments makes them lack legitimacy, and this, together with their lack of managerial and corporate leadership experience, have led to a failure to provide and maintain efficient standards, resulting in service delivery protests (Nleya 2011, in Labuschagne, 2016: 2). Labuschagne asserts that without transparent and accountable systems, the vast resources channelled through public procurement systems run the danger of being abused through increased corruption and misuse of funds (Labuschagne, 2016: 118).

Peter Dahlgren notes that the business of government is so complicated that details of its workings are beyond the grasp of ordinary citizens (1995: 1). It is also not practical for every decision to be consulted upon, otherwise the government would cease to function (ibid). Kotzé and Loubser assert that the (political) elites hold authoritative positions in powerful public and private organisations and influential movements and are therefore able to affect strategic decisions regularly" (Kotze & Loubser, 2017: 40). They are key decision makers on behalf of the public concerning policy formation, as well as identification, definition and allocation of scarce resources within society. However, many MP's lack the capacity and skills to undertake their roles adequately. In some areas in South Africa, the municipality is the biggest employer, and politics is by and large the biggest ticket to securing employment in the public sector (Ngamlana and Poswayo, 2013: 95). Peter Franks notes that incompetent managers hire even less competent subordinates in order to safeguard their position, thereby swamping centres of excellence with malaise (Franks, 2014: 49).

This section has argued that accountability is one of the key pillars of democracy. The key identified characteristics of accountability are transparency, respect for the rule of law, and responsible and ethical democratic leadership. It has been noted that accountability had been replaced by corruption and rogue leadership, which seemed prevalent during the Zuma administration. From the Arms Deal to State Capture scandals, Zuma and the ANC have sought to defeat the ends of

justice by undermining the rule of law and weakening the relevant democratic institutions. It has also been noted that the ANC's cadre deployment strategy has defeated the principles of transparency and accountability, because most of the appointments happen under the veil of secrecy. There was a widespread conflation of party and state (Southall, 2014: 54); this also is the case within the SABC as PSB. This gave rise to rampant corruption at a massive, and arguably unprecedented scale. When the leadership of Jacob Zuma came under attack, the ANC, using its dominance, closed ranks and protected him from numerous motions of no-confidence.

6.7 Active citizenship

William Gumede describes South Africa as a constitutional democracy, which is both representative and participatory, not just an electoral democracy where voters only have power during elections every five years (Gumede, 2014: 6). The South African constitution makes a provision for both representative and participatory strands, "through which a dialogue between the people and their representatives is instituted" (Botha, Schaks & Steiger, 2015: 260). This means that active and empowered citizenship is necessary to ensure that their interests are seriously taken care of by the elected representatives. It is therefore important for the state to allow free availability and sharing of information among citizens so they remain competent contributors in their own democracy. Competent citizens are not prone to what Mamphela Ramphele labels as "misguided loyalties" (2000) which put democracy at risk. This way, citizens engagement will be based on a balance between critical thinking and patriotic feeling (Schoeman, 2006: 134). This view of participation is more collaborative and moderate, rather than critical and radical – an extreme case that might seek to subvert a democratic state. Active citizenship is also important to stop the representatives, who are in the minority, sitting in the ruling party, from taking illegitimate decisions for and on behalf of their constituencies. Active citizenship is discussed in terms of citizen empowerment and inclusivity.

Peter Dahlgren makes an important observation that the public or citizen's choice is not always the right choice. This of course can be a result of a variety of things, least of which is the lack of knowledge. This is in line with the idea that effective participatory democracy would require two things: an "informed public and a vibrant civil society" (Hart & Nassimbeni, 2018: 4). This is the reason that the mass media, especially television, is envisaged to play the role of enhancing the public knowledge (Dahlgren, 1995: 46). Knowledge is an important pillar for meaningful active participation, and public service television, plays an important part in this regard.

The South African politics is very populist in nature, and often preaches messages of rights and misplaced entitlement to masses of supporters. An example is the EFF encouraging its supporters to occupy any open land (Qukula, 2016), or lower-class voters believing that voting for opposition parties might result in their social grants being taken away (Mahlangu, 2019). These trends in politics play on citizens' ignorance and insecurities without empowering them with proper and full knowledge and very little reminder about their responsibilities too.

The (cultural) public sphere, like the idea of citizenship, must be inclusive to all. The vulnerable population, like women and children, and those living outside of the urban areas, must be part of, and engage actively in, the public sphere. The South African government has since 1994 tried to intervene and ensure that exclusion on the basis of language and economic position is avoided. Therefore, soap opera series such as *Muvhango* were commissioned to ensure inclusion of minority languages and regions that are not normally covered in popular television. The democratic means for the active engagement of citizenship must be available to everyone, including the vulnerable. This involves access to television in one's own language and ensuring that the television reception is available in remote places as well. To this end, the government has tried to provide for universal access through state agencies like Universal Service and Access Agency of South Africa (USAASA). Inclusivity and accessibility mean availability of content that does not

only represent all social groups equitably, but also responsibly too. This means avoiding demeaning a social group by, for example, representing them in stereotypical ways.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter is an attempt to sketch a picture of the state of South Africa's democracy; and to determine whether this democracy is fully consolidated or if it is stuck in a democratic grey zone. It is an evaluation of the broader social practice attempting to apply the identified five constructs of democracy into the South African situation. The study has shown that, just like other third wave democracies, South Africa is also caught up in the prolonged state of transition. The presence of freedom of expression, as well as the ability of some democratic institutions to push back and defend their mandate shows that South Africa "is still a long way away from being classified as authoritarian" (Southall, 2019: 200). However, the huge equality gap, coupled by widespread corruption worsened by populist politics, have shown that the democracy is still some mark off full consolidation. Due to these factors, some analysists have concluded that "it cannot be said that South African democracy has been consolidated" (Kotzé & Loubser, 2017: 49-51).

This state of democracy has implication for the media, especially public service broadcasting. It raises questions on how the SABC as the public service broadcaster has survived in view of the fact that PSB's in 'compromised' democracies have become victims of state interference. The following chapter deals with the institutional analysis of the SABC, and will reveal the dynamic between the SABC and the prevailing political administration.

7 The discursive practice of the SABC

7.1 Introduction

Before delving into the analysis of selected texts - the case studies upon which this study focuses - this chapter conducts an institutional analysis of the SABC and brings to surface the practices that determine the condition under which the selected texts (the entertainment content) are produced and transmitted. Doing this helps to assess whether the SABC is optimised as the cultural public sphere. As Clive Barnett (1998: 277) has found, the content or text is impacted by the institutional framework within which it is produced. To this effect, Phyllis Dannhauser urges that the impact of commissioning editors and commissioning procedures on how content is produced must be used as instruments of national integration (2013: 60).

In the model of analysis as spelt out in Chapter 5, this chapter constitutes Fairclough's second box – the discursive practice. Discursive practice in this case is the professional codes of practice, the policies and organisational dynamics, as well as the production process that have a bearing on the nature of the text – in other words, the analysis of the democratic institution itself. The chapter also offers a deeper discussion into the complex nature of the 'role' of the SABC. The question is if the SABC could be 'captured' by anti-democratic forces, can it still claim to be a unified, independent, single-purpose structure that can play a specifically defined 'role'? Analysis of the discursive practices which influences the nature of text makes it easier to assess the extent to which the broadcaster is strengthened or weakened to achieve its stated goals, key of which is ensuring democratised state.

7.2 The importance of the SABC as PSB

The SABC was created by an act of parliament as a Public Service Broadcaster (PSB) in 1936[29]. From the time of apartheid, the mandate of the SABC was to be the 'national' broadcaster, responsible for championing development and nation building (Dannhauser, 2013: 44).

However, the SABC's role in society has always been the subject of contention. The 'national' interest during apartheid served the interests of the white population, and after the collapse of apartheid, the SABC is still a point of contention. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli notes that after the fall of apartheid, contending struggles were over questions of control, racial composition, news-content, language policy, ideology and many other aspects of society that could constitute a 'new South Africa' (2008: 73). Today, more than 25 years since the advent of new democratic dispensation in South Africa, the SABC is still constrained by state control attempts, party-political interests, 'state capture'[30] and corruption.

Apart from the democratic "veto players" (Morlino: 2008: 9) mentioned above, South Africa still needs PSB to forge ahead with development in order to improve the lives of the people. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are still major social issues that South Africa, as self-positioned as a developmental state, needs to address. Issues such as economic inequality, housing, education, infrastructure, and health impact on, and can improve, when democracy is nurtured and protected. As such, PJ Fourie outlines the following Reithian principles to define ideal, universal PSB:

- *the provision of an impartial space for free expression and open debate*
- *the provision for all interests and tastes (plurality and diversity)*

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[29] Ruth Teer-Tomaselli writes that this was done under a charter authored by Sir John Reith of the BBC (2008, 73)

[30] State Capture was dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6

- *the provision for minorities*
- *concern for national identity and community*
- *competition in good programming rather than for numbers*
- *the liberation rather than restriction of programme makers*
- *universal accessibility*
- *addressing audiences as citizens, not as consumers,*

(cf Fourie, 2003: 148)

Although they have been interpreted and applied in different ways across different contexts, Teer-Tomaselli observes that these principles have become the accepted basis of PSB around the world (2008: 76). For the South African context, different authors have expressed different principles and functions of PSB. Fourie explains that the South African PSB policy is based on the principles of the country's Constitution which "guarantees fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, the right to equality, choice and diversity, the equality of all languages, and the right of all South Africans to promote their cultures"[31] (2003: 152). It is because of economic, political and social inequality that access to the means of communication has been unequal - hence the government's intervention through PSB, among others, to level the playing field. The SABC's history of attempts for positive social change has been introduced earlier and will not be repeated here.

[31] In this argument, PJ Fourie advocates, PJ Fourie argues for the return to the basic principles of PSB. However, he later (2013) argued that the three-tier model of PSB (Public, Commercial and Community), does not work considering technological convergence, amongst other reasons. Seeing that the South African policy approach is still based on the three-tier model, this research does not debate the viability of the approach, it is rather to evaluate the extent to which the SABC has adhered to it.

7.3 Brief background of SABC's PSB channels

In the early 1990's, South Africa witnessed the start of political transition which, among other things, resulted in the collapse of the apartheid regime which was characterised by racial discrimination of the black population by white supremacist government of the National Party (Clark & Worger, 2004: 101). Prior to this, the racial divisions had defined the complexion of the country since at least 1948 (Habib, 1995:50). Under the first democratically elected leader, Nelson Mandela, the new South Africa's "rainbow nation" (Lange & Van Eeden, 2014: 68) was ushered in. This new political order carried hope and optimism of an equal society in which oppression or discrimination of any kind would have no place; in which the government would be based on the will of the people; and in which all civil liberties (including protection of minorities, property rights, cultural identity and freedom of association, among others) were guaranteed by the country's new constitution.

In recognising the role of the media in the enhancement of democracy, the new government made a provision for freedom of speech, which would ensure total abolition of censorship. Prior to this moment, SABC television was a mirror of apartheid's separatist policies (Cowling, 2009: 117). TV1 was a bilingual English and Afrikaans channel created for the white population (McLarin, 1995), while TV2 and TV3 were created for "the black viewer" (SABC Annual Report, 1980:13; Louw, 2004: 321-322). The government also sought to create media diversity by transforming ownership of existing media, as well as promoting regional and community media (Duncan, 2016: 7). The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was reconstituted to embrace values of democracy such as "equality, editorial independence, nation building, diversity, human dignity, and accountability and transparency" (Dibetso & Smith, 2012: 2). As such, through diversity of control (management), equitable representation of different groups in South Africa as well as development agenda (e.g., education or democracy) the SABC was transformed, at least in intention and early efforts, from being a state broadcaster to a true public service broadcaster. Immediately after the

announcement of ‘reforms’ by then state President FW de Klerk, the established pattern of 'apartheid' television with two black channels was disrupted. The special transmission channel Top Sport Special (TSS) was replaced by National Network Television (NNTV). The single channel TV2/3/4, which was a concoction of black South African programming and imported entertainment, was changed into what was rebranded as Contemporary Community Values Television (CCV-TV) in early 1992 (Collins, 1992:35). During these ‘reforms’ TV1 remained a whites-only bilingual (English and Afrikaans) television channel. Further changes were introduced in 1996 – the year in which the Government of National Unity was dissolved, and the Interim Constitution replaced by the permanent one still in force today. The changes at the national level also impacted on the configuration of SABC channels – the changes heralded by some critics as “finally ending apartheid television” (Barnett, 1998: 17). This move saw TV1 replaced by SABC2, CCV-TV replaced by SABC1 and NNTV replaced by SABC3. Today, as Woudri Botha has observed, the three public, free-to-air channels have defined the PSB of post-transitional South Africa (Botha, 2010: 2).

7.4 Channel positioning

The restructuring of the SABC channels resulted in these channels being positioned very differently from each other and assigned different roles to assist the delivery of different aspects of the SABC’s mandate. SABC1 broadcasts in Nguni and English, addressing mainly the young, black audiences. With its target market being the youth between ages of 16 and 34, the channel sees itself as a guiding light to the youth (Channel Hopping…, 2013: 8). From this point of view SABC1 appears to support a populist line of democracy (Botha, 2010: 188). SABC2 reflects a family focus and broadcasts in Afrikaans, Sotho and English. The aim is to expose their viewers to educational content in order to empower them and improve their lives, in addition to uniting the nation by bringing together all languages, cultures and religions through their programmes (Channel Hopping…, 2013: 8). In this view, SABC2 appears to support a pluralist line of democracy (Botha, 2010: 188). Lastly SABC3 aims to be a source of inspiration for South

Africa by offering a mix of entertainment and lifestyle in their content. As a commercial channel, it seeks to offer what the viewers want and what's relevant (Channel Hopping …, 2013: 8) in its reach for the more up-market English-speaking audiences" (Botha, 2010: 2). The restructuring of the three SABC national television channels into "distinctive social groups follow(s) a logic that may be working against the idea of a unified nation" (ibid: 3).

7.4.1 SABC2 – You belong

The channel positioning of our channel of interest, SABC2, warrants more in-depth discussion here. The "You Belong" slogan which was launched in 2013 evolved from the slogan "Feel at Home" which in turn had replaced "Come Alive with Us" in November 2002. The "Come Alive with Us" brand theme was established in 1996 (Botha, 2010: 2). Throughout all three phases, SABC2's brand essence remained the same with its focus on the family – referring at the same time to both the domestic and the national South African family. From the old positioning of SABC2 as 'the channel of the nation" (SABC RFP Book, 2011: 48), the new slogan still encapsulates the same essence of belonging to the nation. This is exemplified by the keyword "belong" as a descriptor of the channel's old positioning statement:

> SABC2 is where South Africans are proud to belong – together celebrating and empowering the nation, through cutting-edge programming that is vibrant and entertaining (SABC RFP Book, 2011: 48).

This way the channel positions itself as the television "channel that truly reflects the multifaceted nature of the South African family" (Botha, 2010: 2). This shows that the channel can only refresh its brand for more clarity and audience resonance, but cannot really wiggle its way out of the mandate of "nation-building", as inscribed in the SABC editorial policy discussed further below. In his analysis, Thinus Ferreira finds that the new 'You Belong' signals a much stronger emphasis on inclusion:

> 'You belong' speaks at the same time to both the individual and to the group - and to the individual's social inclusivity in the group (Ferreira, 2013a)

With different but richer colours, the channel continues to indirectly “support the mythos of South Africa as a rainbow nation" (Ferreira, 2013a). The repositioning is not a departure from, rather a strengthening of, SABC2’s nation building mandate by being the strongest champion of public service broadcasting of the three channels. It is still the home to events of national importance including The State of the Nation Address, Budget Speech and State Funerals, among others. Other programme themes comprising “pillars of family” are identity, health, education, careers and world exposure (SABC2 Unveils…, 2013). Examples of programmes on SABC2 are, *Pasella*, *Motswako* (lifestyle magazines), Noot vir Noot (entertainment variety), 50/50, Leihlo la Sechaba, *Nhlalala ya Rixaka* (documentary/knowledge building), *Takalani Sesame* (children), *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* (soap opera).

The above channel positioning statement is very important as it functions as the rallying point for the channel’s singleness of purpose. As such it is always communicated to the channel’s important stakeholders such as staff - for them to understand the greater goal they need to help the SABC to achieve. The SABC also communicates this to their trade partners so that advertising brands can understand the value system and the environment in which their brands are placed. The production industry also receives it in order to create content that will bring this purpose of empowerment for democratic participation to life in the minds of the viewers. Through various promotions and public service announcements, the audiences and the market receive the positioning statement to create a differentiator in the market, and helps the channel to create a consistent communication pattern for immediate resonance and recognition across all platforms. There is therefore very little chance for the SABC not to achieve the nation-building, citizen-empowerment goal when the statement of purpose is this clear to all key stakeholders. Or is there?

7.4.2 Channel profile

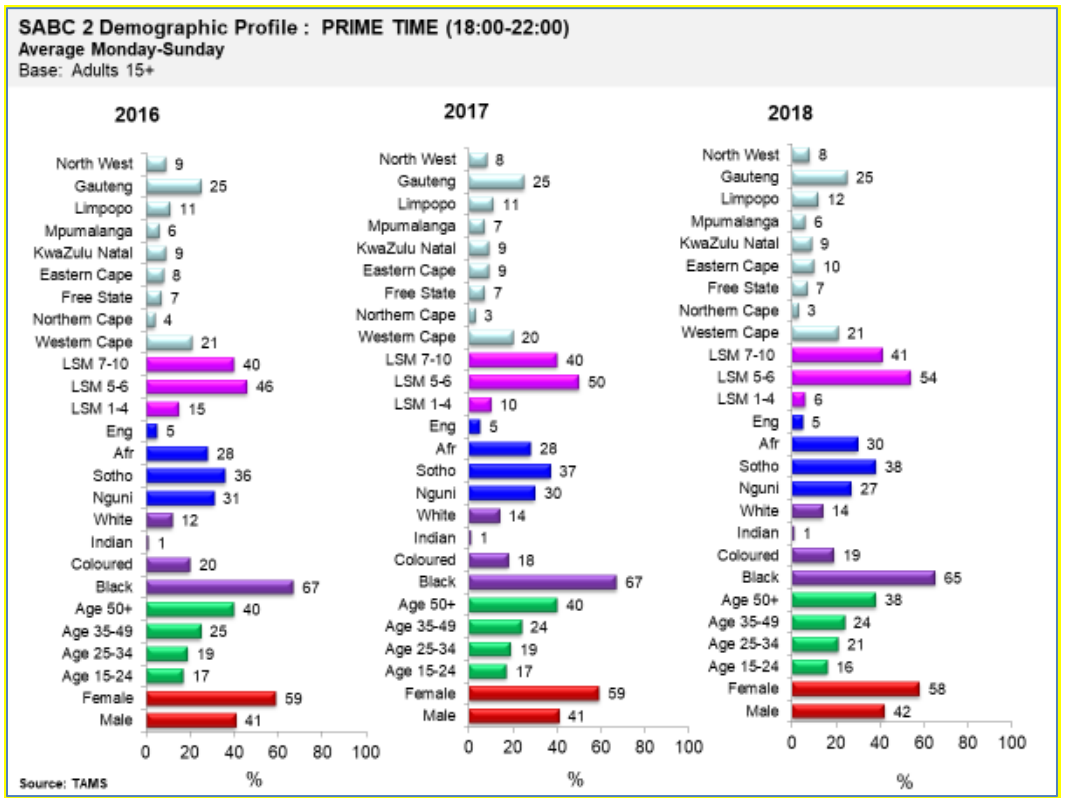

Table 4: SABC2 Audience Profile

The table above shows the demographic distribution of viewers on SABC2. Over the years, the channel has consistently attracted LSM 5-8, the middle-income group. The channel has a gender skew of around 60% female viewers, is viewed by whole families, and attracts a large amount of indigenous language speakers (Afrikaans, Nguni and Sotho). From this picture, it is safe to say that the channel appeals to the average South African, and is the lowest common denominator. The broad-church nature of the channel befits the positioning of 'channel for the nation' and the 'You Belong' visions.

Legislative and policy framework

It is important to briefly discuss the legislation as it spells out the democratising objective which informs the SABC's editorial policies. In its editorial policy

documents[32], the SABC's editorial values are aligned with the national objectives as set out in the country's Constitution as follows:

- *To heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights*
- *To lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by the law*
- *To improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person*
- *To build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.*

(Quoted verbatim from the official SABC Editorial Policies document, 1 April 2004: 3).

Chapter 4 of the Broadcasting Act is a Charter that captures the spirit behind the objectives of the SABC as the public broadcaster. In doing so, it emphasises the independence and freedom of expression (6(3)) of PSB to enable the SABC to "encourage the development of South African expression" (6(4)). Through this unique expression, the SABC can "advance the South African national and public interest" (6(4d)). The Broadcasting Act of 1999 (as amended) requires the SABC to develop the following policies: i. News editorial policy, ii. Programming policy, iii. Local Content policy, iv. Educational policy, v. Universal service and access policy, vi. Language policy and, vii. Religious policy (SABC Editorial Policies FAQ…). According to the SABC, the policies are developed for ultimate editorial strength:

> The policies are intended to help the editorial staff negotiate difficult editorial issues and decisions so that distinctive and compelling – and sometimes controversial – programmes can be made, while maintaining the highest ethical and public service standards. Essentially the policies provide the

[32] Here a reference is made only to the officially adopted policies – not attempted but failed amendments, or policies that were previously adopted by overturned through a court ruling, etc.

framework within which SABC staff take decisions about the content that is carried on its platforms (SABC Editorial Policies FAQ's…).

7.5 SABC's core editorial values

In order to sustain the above-described roles, the SABC has adopted editorial values by which all its television channels must abide. According to the editorial policy document of the SABC, the following are the core editorial values of the SABC. They are *equality* – to provide programmes for everyone in their languages; *editorial independence* - provision of the constitutionally protected freedom of expression; *nation-building* – to provide citizens with information for democratic participation; *diversity* – to reflect South Africa's cultures, languages and regions; *human dignity* – to respect everyone by not representing them in stereotypical or prejudiced notions of South Africa's races, cultures and sexes; *accountability* - through accountability to the board, the SABC management is accountable to the public; and *transparency* – that the SABC conducts its business and content procurement with honesty and openness.
(cf. SABC Editorial Policies[33] document, 1 April 2004: 3).

These values correspond, albeit indirectly, with this study's democratic attributes as discussed in the literature reviews. It is the most direct connection between the country's democratic ambitions and the SABC's editorial policies. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that by aiming to uphold these editorial values, the SABC has sought to contribute towards the country's democracy and its consolidation.

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[33] There was subsequently another editorial policy document that the 'rogue' SABC board headed by Prof. Mbulaheni Maguvhe unlawfully introduced in 2016 (SABC Draft Editorial…2018: 1). The new policy sought to encourage 'sunshine journalism' and banned the airing of violent protests (De Villiers, 2017). These policies were later declared invalid by ICASA and in June 2018, new draft policies were released for public comment by the then Minister Nomvula Mokonyane. At the time of writing, the new policy was not adopted yet.

7.6 SABC's programming approach

In the editorial policy, the SABC makes a distinction between 'programming' and news. In this sense, programming is content that is not news or current affairs. It is content that, in this research, is referred to as 'entertainment'. The editorial approach for the programming aspect, according to the SABC's policy, is as follows:

- *As the national public broadcaster, it is our duty to encourage the development of South African expression. We therefore showcase South African talent, support South African culture, and aim to develop programmes that are identifiably South African. These should contribute to a sense of national identity and of shared experience, and to the goal of nation building*
- *Freedom of expression is at the heart of our programmes. We provide a home for programme makers that encourages them to innovate; to take risks and to develop their craft so that audiences may be given a rich diversity of top quality programmes.*

  (Quoted verbatim from the official SABC Editorial Policies document, 1 April 2004: 7).

In trying to meet the programming editorial objectives, the SABC has tended to create programmes for different social groups. This is a progressive move for it seeks to give a voice to the previously marginalised groups and provides a platform of expression for minority interests and languages. For example, *Simcha* covers festivals, events, culture and the arts for the Jewish community. *An Nur - The Light* does the same for the Muslim community while *TalkAbility* does the same for disabled people. *Riviera* is a drama dedicated to the coloured community. The soap operas of interest for this study appear to have followed the same approach. *7de Laan* is part of SABC2's Afrikaans programming block while *Muvhango* has been created to focus on Venda speakers. The two soap operas are discussed in depth in Chapters 8 and 9. This pluralist approach tends to create silo identities which, if unabated, takes the country back to apartheid's "separate development"

approach. For if a Christian viewer, for example, comes across a Muslim programme, they might be tempted to switch channels for more 'suitable' programming. It keeps the South African 'family' compartmentalised and deprives members of the family the opportunity to deepen each other's understanding. This bias towards pluralism needs to be balanced against a more collaborative, social responsibility approach where the public broadcaster needs to intervene for the greater social good.

7.7 Democratic consolidation and the SABC editorial policies

The analytical model for the 'media and democratic consolidation' developed in Chapter 5 draws a generic relationship between the media and its role in democratic consolidation. After discussing the SABC's editorial values and policies, it is time to see if these policies, at least in idealist terms, do have the potential to enable the SABC to contribute to the consolidation of democracy. As mentioned earlier, these objectives are centred around building a united, democratic and open society (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: 1). The table below shows the approximate correspondence between democratic concepts, broad SABC editorial values and programming (entertainment) approach.

Democratic concepts	SABC Editorial Values	Programming Approach
Peace	Human dignity	Respect and non-discrimination
	Nation building	Shared experience/identity
Civil liberties	Equality	Freedom of expression.
Democratic institutions	Independence	'Risky', innovative programming
Accountability	Accountability & transparency	Fulfil everyone's audience needs
Active citizenship	Diversity	Diverse stories & plural views

Table 5:Correspondence between democratic concepts, SABC editorial values and entertainment programming

Though the correspondence is not necessarily direct or exclusive, it enables the study to evaluate the SABC's content against the broadcaster's claimed democracy-aligned values. So, when the SABC's Content Hub develops their strategy, they do so by referring to the pillars of the broadcaster's (entertainment

programming) editorial code. The SABC's staff is very aware of the importance of PBS in democracy as exemplified by one officer at the SABC:

> "… if you want to check the health of any democracy, you only need to look at the health of its public broadcasting…" (Interview, 14 August 2019).

This section is a brief discussion of the above table. The editorial policies assist in bringing about a *peaceful* South Africa by embracing values of human dignity and nation building. From entertainment content perspective, they achieve this by representing different social groups with respect, without stereotyping them in any way, and without discrimination on the grounds on sex, religion, race, sexual orientation, etc. *Civil liberties* are the cornerstone of any liberal democracy. Here the SABC's editorial values of equality in which every member of the audience and every member of the public must be treated the same without elevating one group above the other. For this to be achieved, the SABC staff and independent content producers must be afforded freedom of expression without the interference of the state to curtail voices from certain groups. The SABC positions itself as an independent *democratic institution*. This is based on the understanding that independent PSB is a key pillar of democracy. By extension, the SABC seeks to guarantee the editorial independence of its staff and independent content providers, with the understanding that this creates the best way to represent the public interest, and not those of government or interest groups such as political parties or commercial organisations. This is reflected in the broadcaster's entertainment content by allowing producers to take risks in telling the South African story. Risky stories can be provocative and possess high talkability value thereby keeping the public engaged. *Accountability* has also been upheld as one of the virtues of a true or consolidated democracy. By being transparent in everything they do, including but not limited to procurement of content and raising public awareness of the SABC's obligations, the public broadcaster remains accountable to the public.

In terms of editorial policies, this is done through the duly appointed board whose role is to hold management accountable. From the entertainment content output

point of view, accountability enables the SABC to fulfil every viewer's needs, because a hidden agenda invariably prejudices some at the expense of others without feeling the need to account for any undemocratic decisions. Lastly, it has been argued before that *active citizenship* is the cornerstone of every democracy. Active citizenship stimulates a sense of acceptance of diversity, which rallies the diverse voices to ensure equal and just representation of different views and opinions. Therefore, the SABC's value of diversity seeks to give every South African a voice in order to air their views on matters of public importance. In entertainment programming, this is brought to life by reflecting the real-world experience of all South Africans, as well as ensuring that the SABC service is available to everyone (universal access), while ensuring that those with access can identify with the content offered. The point made in this section is that adherence to SABC's editorial values can safely be regarded as assisting the advancement of democracy in the broader South Africa.

7.8 Content procurement policies and processes of the SABC[34]

To achieve the abovementioned editorial the SABC is required by law to procure its entertainment content in line with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), whose key objective is to ensure that the SABC derives best value for money through price competitiveness, fair awarding of contracts to the best contenders, and ensuring that the process is free of corruption. In addition, the SABC has internal content procurement guidelines that are aimed at making sure that the content procured is in line with the SABC's editorial policies. Also, is the need to ensure that the chosen production company is fit for purpose, and that proper performance management of the producer or programme is put in place - so the

[34] The information that follows is the result of extensive interviews with various staff members. The information is supplemented by my own knowledge of the system as a former employee of the SABC. The sources are not quoted individually to protect them from possible victimization.

programme can be quality managed at every step of the way. Below is the description of content procurement steps at the SABC.

The SABC's corporate strategic plan is a translation of the SABC's vision and public mandate into a series of practical projects and programmes that the organisation adopts within a set period of time, often in a given fiscal year. Sometimes written with the expert assistance of consultants, this board-approved document has a three-year view of the organisation. All the departments, including programming, have to follow this guide and devise department-specific plans to show how they will assist the SABC to achieve its corporate objectives.

As a starting point, a market analysis is conducted by the corporation's market research department in order to identify areas where the SABC is strong and needs to maintain or consolidate, and areas where the SABC is weak and needs to improve. The main source of market research data comes from Television Audience Measurement System (TAMS), which is a quantitative data sampling viewership over seven days, used as an industry-wide currency as endorsed by SAARF. Where necessary and affordable, qualitative research (e.g., focus group interviews) is commissioned for a deeper understanding of the market.

Based on the abovementioned research, channel managers go out on strategic planning sessions and develop programming and scheduling strategies to respond to audience trends. Programming strategies address content gaps and develop new content ideas for different slots. Scheduling strategies address issues of placement of programmes on different time schedules in order to optimise chances of audience success for a particular programme. Scheduling also address issues of content quotas (e.g., percentage of drama, local content or language) which have to be maintained to keep compliance with the channel's license conditions. The Strategy Summit is usually presented to the executive heads of the organisation, as well as supporting departments such as the Content Hub and commercial enterprises (responsible for the sale of advertising space). Once

channels have presented their plans, the Content Hub studies these strategies and comes up with content proposals for channels. The Content Hub presents their ideas at the Content Summit. These proposals are programme ideas that can best address a channel's schedule gaps or programmes with declining audiences and revenue. The Hontent Hub presents these ideas and 'sells' them to the channels. The channels' chosen ideas get to be incorporated into the schedule and are duly budgeted for.

Content on the schedule has to be accounted for in terms of time slot justification, cost per minute (budget) and commercial opportunities (revenue). At the forum called the Budget Summit, channels and Content Hub present the overall cost of their schedules, the timing for financing the programmes (cash flow rollout), envisaged amortisation of programme titles as well as return-on-investment (ROI) account for different programmes. The Content Hub then gets a budget allocation in order to cash-flow programmes that have been approved for commissioning and licensing.

Once the channels and Content Hub have consolidated their strategies, content rollout and budget, the television division presents to the board during the forum called The Board Summit. Ideally this is presented by the divisional executives, but there are instances where some of the relatively 'junior' staff such as channel heads and programme managers have presented their strategies directly to the board. The objective of the board summit is to ensure that the channel and content plans are in line with the overall corporate plan. The board also approves the corporation's budget for fiscal purposes, so the board summit provides the background and basis for the support of budget requests.

Once the overall summit process has taken place, the SABC, through the Content Hub, has to approach the production industry for proposals that will best address the corporation's content needs. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is packaged as an open public tender document that every producer would have the opportunity

to contest. This contains clear guidelines of what is needed, including language, channel and timeslot, budget and genre required.

7.9 Content acquisition procedures

The content briefs are just one of the few approaches to content acquisition. When the RFP book is not published, or if the SABC has not found suitable proposals from responses to the RFP book, unsolicited proposals can be considered. Also, if the producer approaches the SABC with an already produced programme, then the SABC can consider buying or licensing these rights outside of the RFP book. It has been reported that some producers, assisted by some managers or executives within the SABC, have used the unsolicited route to avoid the competitive process prescribed in the RFP book (Interview, 14 August 2019). Hlaudi Motsoeneng was also accused of using this option to get a few productions commissioned when he allowed some producers to directly present content ideas to him. He argued that the RFP book gave away too many strategic secrets to competition by being too specific in terms of the SABC's requirements, whereas the SABC's competitors held their cards closer to their chests (Blignaut & Gedye, 2016).

7.9.1 Business models

When the SABC procures content, it does so with funding of that particular programme in mind. As such, the below are broad approaches (business models) that are adopted. The pre-license model applies where the producer approaches the SABC with an undeveloped idea, but where the SABC is not requested to commission the idea. With this approach, the SABC does not own the content, but licenses it for a limited period of time (usually two years) with a view of broadcasting it on a first-to-market basis[35]. The producer usually has multiple

[35] First-to-market refers to exclusivity of first broadcast, where a broadcaster plays the content before its competitors.

sources of funding for the content and seeks to secure the broadcast partner in the SABC and uses the SABC's contribution to complete the project. On rare occasions the SABC elects to own the rights in full or in part, or only for the South African territory in perpetuity. This model is referred to as pre-license because the SABC licenses the content before it is produced.

The licensing model applies where the producer or distributor approaches the SABC with a fully developed product on tape. The SABC is not requested to buy-to-own the content but licenses it for a limited period of time (usually two years) with a view of broadcasting it on a first-to-market or second or third run basis[36] . This model is referred to as licensing because the SABC licenses the already existing content for a limited period with no intention to own. Licensed content is usually offered to the SABC on an unsolicited basis, and on a sole supplier[37] basis. When the SABC commissions a programme, it is usually with a view of owning the final product in its entirety. Programmes deemed strategic are usually the ones being commissioned. Products such as soap operas, local game shows and dramas drive audiences (and retains them), attract revenue and contribute to channel identity and audience resonance. For this reason, most broadcasters choose to own them lest they are taken over by the competition. In this approach the SABC assumes full editorial control of commissioned programmes, cash-flows the producer and ensure total quality control throughout the process of production. Most commissioned programmes are solicited for, and have come about as a result of a request for proposals (RFP).

Advertiser-funded programmes (AFP) are, as the name suggests, programmes that are funded by a specific product brand or a group thereof. The acquisition can

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[36] This applies where the content has broadcast in the same territory by one or more networks before.

[37] The sole supplier is a supplier who solely owns a unique product. Procurement of this nature is never done on an open-tender basis because only one supplier has ownership of such a product

happen on a solicited or unsolicited basis. Unlike all the other models, the SABC does not pay for the content. Instead, the advertiser pays for the whole production, but the SABC assigns a commissioning editor for editorial input and control so that commercial interest do not overpower the SABC's editorial objectives. AFP's are usually spaces of conflict between the SABC's editorial focus and the client's commercial focus. As a designated 'commercial' channel with relatively lower budget compared to the other two channels, SABC3 is usually the home of AFP's.

In terms of its mandate, the SABC has to have a certain number of educational programmes. These programmes' sole role is to impart public education on a certain specific issue or set of related issues. Although many of the educational programmes have high entertainment value, they are placed under stringent educational editorial to ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved in every episode. Educational programmes are usually owned by the SABC, although funding does not always come from the SABC budget itself. Most of the external funding comes from the National Department of Education, although there are instances where some programmes have been funded by the Department of Health, or Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS).

7.9.2 The commissioning process

The commissioning process is of particular interest to this study because all the case studies are of commissioned programmes. Dramas are commissioned in line with the SABC's editorial policies and procedures, and generally subjected to the criteria discussed below.

A drama is one of the flagship programmes of the channel, and usually reflects the world and people that the channel wants to be associated with. Thus, if a channel's role is that of family values or nation-building such as SABC2, then dramas in this channel will carry storylines strong in family thematic, or one that have events or dates of national importance. The characters in the drama will most naturally be representative of the channel's imagined world. So, the family values positioning

of SABC2 will reflect characters from a child to the elderly, whereas a channel like SABC1, which is youthful, would mainly have youth as its prominent characters.

As the public broadcaster, the SABC's dramas are always characterised by a strong 'educational' or public value editorial. Examples of public value themes are rape, abuse, health, etc. – such as a storyline with an HIV positive or homosexual character. While entertaining, it will show the negative social effects of discriminating against this character, and how unharmful and rewarding it is to support this character instead. The drama will also have telephone numbers of an organisation that helps HIV positive people, for example.

Nation building has been the centre theme of SABC dramas since the end of apartheid. Diverse and different social groups, such as homosexuals, people from different races, religions and geographical regions, for example, would be represented. This representation has to be fair and avoid belittling any social group. Nation building is not only about reflecting reality as it is. It is also about creating a possible world – the desired end goal of developmental and nation building efforts. It is this 'vision' of the drama that the editorial team will assess.

In terms of government/state priorities, nation building is often represented by a reflection of national symbols, celebration of national heroes and national public holidays. As one of the unique PSB's in the world, the SABC has to also open itself to commercial revenue for it to survive. The main method through which commercial revenue is through the sale of advertising spots. The other ways are through sponsorships of programmes, where a particular programme would be "brought to you by" a product brand or commercial organisation (corporate brand). In addition, product placement is employed where a product or brand is placed visibly into a set or scene. In addition, the SABC allows storyline integration in which a storyline is developed to create an environment within a drama in which a product or brand can find extended expression – where product use or description can be placed in a proper use context.

7.10 The commissioning editor

In all of the above-described commissioning process, the commissioning editor (CE) plays an important role. The commissioning editor's role is more prominent in entertainment programming, as opposed to news and current affairs. The editorial in the latter case is the domain of the news editor. The difference is that most news programmes are produced in-house by permanent or freelance staff of journalists or producers, whereas entertainment programmes are produced by outside independent production companies on behalf of the SABC.

Once the programme idea has been accepted, the commissioning editor must ensure that the production project is scoped in line with the SABC's production qualities and budget. Project scoping also involves incorporating the project into the SABC's cash-flow budget and plan. Part of this process involves the development of the 'Series Bible', the purpose of which is to develop detailed guidelines for a specific programme before the production process starts. In the case of a drama, the Series Bible includes plot descriptions, character descriptions, location specifications and the general style of the programme. This is done to ensure that, once writers are given the green light to develop the scripts, the story and its world fulfil the public service objectives of the broadcaster. Scoping ensures that everything that goes on air is a result of deliberate encoding process which reduces the chances of content escaping the curatorship of the SABC's editorial.

Once the production process has started, the CE is responsible for both editorial quality control (integrity of storylines) and production quality control. The former ensures that the programme keeps in line with the SABC's editorial policies, while the latter is to ensure that the programme keeps the required technical standards of production. If the commissioning editor is not happy with any aspect of the production, they do not sign it off until the producer has corrected it. The CE is also responsible for the enforcement of the SABC's commercial policies that govern the extent of commercial exposure within any of its programmes. The main objective

is to ensure that commercial interests do not overshadow the editorial objectives which are in the interest of the public. In addition, the CE is responsible for ensuring that the exposure is in line with what the client has paid for, and no more. In the event of less exposure, this has to be corrected immediately to avoid having to refund the client or compensate them outside of the currently contracted programme. The sections above showed a detailed process of acquisition and quality management of content within the SABC. If those processes and procedures are followed according to the book, the input would correspond or very closely resemble the output on air. However, not everything happens according to the plan at the SABC.

7.11 Problems within the SABC

With all the tight controls in place, one would assume that the chances of violating the SABC's editorial codes and procurement policies would be minimal. In its policies, the SABC's line of command is clear – that its management and staff is accountable to the board, and the board ensures compliance with the Broadcasting Charter. However, from literature review of the corporation's recent history, it would seem like its biggest challenge was that of political interference at the leadership level. For the past decade, the SABC has been struggling with financial sustainability, to the extent that the public broadcaster has been bailed out two times. Even after the second bailout, the public broadcaster was still facing financial difficulties with projected losses of R1.2bn for the 2020/21 fiscal year (Jika, 2020). What is alarming though, is that only twenty percent of the SABC's revenue goes to content – which is its core business. The majority goes to staff, which comprises of 45% of total spend (ibid).

Again, political interference in the form of the ruling party and trade unions is frustrating the SABC's attempts to reduce staff costs and remain competitive (ibid). The following table shows the high turnaround of ministers in the national Department of Communications. It particularly shows that there was a high turnover and lack of stability during the Jacob Zuma administration.

Minister	Party	Term	Under President
Pallo Jordan	ANC	7 May 1994 – 28 March 1996	Nelson Mandela
Jay Naidoo	ANC	29 March 1996 – 16 June 1999	
Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri	ANC	17 June 1999 – 2008	Thabo Mbeki
	ANC	2008 – 6 April 2009	Kgalema Motlanthe
Manto Tshabalala-Msimang (acting)[3]	ANC	2009	
Siphiwe Nyanda[4]	ANC	11 May 2009 – 31 October 2010	Jacob Zuma
Roy Padayachie	ANC	1 November 2010 – 24 October 2011	
Dina Pule[5]	ANC	25 October 2011 - 9 July 2013	
Yunus Carrim	ANC	10 July 2013 - 25 May 2014	
Faith Muthambi	ANC	25 May 2014 - 30 March 2017	
Ayanda Dlodlo	ANC	30 March 2017 - 17 October 2017	
Mmamoloko Kubayi	ANC	17 October 2017 - 26 February 2018	
Nomvula Mokonyane (Minister of Communications) Siyabonga Cwele (Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Service)	ANC	26 February 2018 - 22 November 2018	Cyril Ramaphosa
Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams	ANC	22 November 2018 -	

Table 6: Ministers of Communications since the dawn of democracy (Source: Wikipedia (Minister of Communications, South Africa)

The Zuma administration has seen seven communications ministers in nine years – an average of just over one minister every year. Zuma used his powers as president to shuffle ministers on his whim, without any accountability for his decisions. The main objective for the many reshuffles was to remove those ministers whose loyalty to him was in question (Patel, Tromp, Marrian, 2019). As mentioned on many occasions during the State Capture Inquiry, his particular interest was to benefit the Gupta family and their businesses (Haffajee, 2018). This constant reshuffling of ministers had the effect of destabilising the Ministry of Communications, thereby weakening this important institute of democracy.

For ministers who served under Jacob Zuma, the problem of short-tenure and lack of stability started with minister Siphiwe Nyanda who claimed that “he was removed in the 2010 cabinet reshuffle and replaced by the late Roy Padayachie to ensure the controversial Gupta family were given special favours” (Madia, 2019). It was during Padayachee’s tenure that “Atul Gupta and Sahara Computers were given special recognition by the ministry as tech industry leaders” (Munusamy, 2018).

It was also during this time that Hlaudi Motsoeneng's ascent to the high echelons of power within the SABC gained momentum. As a member of the executive, he signed a controversial deal to co-host The New Age (TNA) business breakfasts – which would give a lucrative commercial exposure to the Gupta-owned newspaper, at no cost to the Guptas (McLeod, 2018). When Minister Padayachee was moved to DPSA department in 2012, he was replaced by his deputy, the controversial Dinah Pule, who spent two years of her tenure embroiled in corruption controversies (Corruption Watch, 2013) and unlike her predecessors, inappropriately met with the Gupta family (Cowan, 2017). It was Pule who first defied the ANC's position on digital migration. The ANC preferred that digital television (DTV) should be encrypted, and that set-top-boxes (STB's) needed to be fitted with conditional access (CA). She was eventually fired and replaced by Mininster Yunus Carrim. Carrim was appointed minister of communications in 2013 and immediately sought to implement the ANC policy on digital migration in accordance with the resolutions of Mangaung Conference of 2012 (Steyn, 2017). Seeking to open competition and entry of black entrepreneurs into pay TV, this policy adopted encryption as opposed to non-encryption. This meant that the set-top-boxes for digital migration would need to have conditional access (Carrim, 2017). The new minister arrived at a time when etv and Multichoice opted for encryption and non-encryption respectively, and it would seem like the wind swung etv's way in the war with Multichoice.

Carrim lasted less than a year, and in 2014, President Zuma appointed the controversial Faith Muthambi. Muthambi was the minister who pushed for and defended Hlaudi Motsoeneng's permanent appointment as the Chief Operating Officer of the SABC. Under Muthambi, digital migration also suffered, and was stagnated with little progress. Against the ANC's standing policy on digital migration, Muthambi decided that the government would adopt the non-encryption stance which favoured the pay TV giant Multichoice. Under Muthambi, the ministry of communications revised the SABC's articles of association and changed the organisation from a public to a state-owned company – which effectively made the

SABC a government communications entity and not the public's[38]. The memorandum also gave the minister the power to appoint the chief operating officer (COO), chief finance officer (CFO) and chief executive officer (CEO) (Maqhina, 2018). This political support and interference explain how the controversial Hlaudi Motsoeneng was appointed without any tertiary education qualifications. The ministers that followed (Ayanda Dlodlo, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane and Nomvula Mokonyana) never really had any meaningful tenure beyond an average of six months each.

Hlaudi Motsoeneng, a self-confessed friend of the Gupta's, became prominent at the SABC when in 2011 he was appointed the acting COO for three years. The clearest indicator of the link between Motsoeneng and Zuma is contained in a letter written by Hope Zinde, an SABC board member complaining about Motsoeneng's leadership at the SABC. In response, the communications minister, Faith Muthambi, said to Zinde that Baba (as Zuma was affectionately called) loved Hlaudi, and "we must support him" (Mokone & Shoba, 2015). Around this time, the SABC was embroiled in leadership in-fighting under the controversial board chairperson, Dr. Ben Ngubane. Motsoeneng became a member of executive management which qualified him to be a member of the SABC board. It was during this time that Motsoeneng and Ngubane became 'allies' (Le Cordeur, 2017). Five SABC board members resigned in protest over Ngubane's unilateral decisions over the corporation's affairs (ibid). In August 2014, the advertisement for permanent COO position was published. The first advertisement required extensive experience at executive level together with tertiary business qualifications, preferably postgraduate level. This advert was soon withdrawn and

[38] Despite her efforts to strip the SABC of its independence, a strong pushback from civil society organisations led by FXI, SOS Coalition and Right2Know culminated in the ruling by the High Court that her amendment of the SABC's MOI was illegal, as it would strip the SABC of its independence (Gerber, 2018)

replaced with a version which required no qualifications (Mahlati, 2019b). Motsoeneng then landed the job after going through the interview process. His position was supported and approved by Minister Faith Muthambi. As a permanent COO, and together with the now disgraced[39] Prof. Mbulaheni Maguvhe as board chair, the SABC was run like his personal fiefdom. In 2016, the SABC unlawfully revised the editorial policies which gave Motsoeneng the powers of the editor-in-chief of both news and current affairs, and programming or entertainment content:

> … the SABC's Chief Operations Officer (COO) … has the overall responsibility for SABC content. The COO's decision on any editorial issue shall be final (SABC Editorial Policies, 2016: 8).

The original editorial policy had bestowed this power on the chief executive officer (CEO) (SABC Editorial Policies, 2004: 5). The revised draft policy, which at the time of writing is pending public consultations, shows that the SABC intends to restore this power back to the CEO (SABC Editorial Draft…, 2018: 7). After being appointed permanently to the position of COO, Motsoeneng introduced two controversial and highly damaging decree-style[40] policy directives. One pertained to news, which compelled SABC journalists to avoid broadcasting negative stories against the government. When it came to entertainment content, Hlaudi passed a directive that the SABC had to broadcast 90% local content. The first one resulted in a resistance by some journalists who openly criticised the SABC and were subsequently got dismissed en-masse. Popularly called the SABC8, the journalists were rehired after the court interdicted the implementation of the 'unlawful' policy (Herman, 2016). The second decree, which had to be implemented within three months, resulted in a major disruption of not only programming and audiences, but

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[39] Professor Maguvhe tendered his resignation as the SABC board chairperson after his appearance before the Parliamentary Enquiry into the SABC Board's Fitness to Hold Office. The Enquiry recommended that the entire Board of the SABC be dissolved and replaced by an interim one (Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on The SABC Board …, 2017).

[40] The policy directives did not come out of the corporation's revised editorial line. He just instructed all managers to implement them.

the SABC's balance sheet. The abrupt removal of existing international programming meant that the SABC had to write-off millions or rands of programming value already contracted and paid for (Ferreira, 2016b). This, together with rapid cash flow demands of local content (which usually costs more to acquire than international programming), meant that the SABC's revenue quickly got overtaken by costs, thus plunging the organisation into a state of technical insolvency by the middle of the following fiscal year (Quintal, 2018).

The illegal editorial policy and MOI amendments meant that the SABC conducted its business outside of approved policies. This, together with leadership problems within the SABC, has created an environment in which a breach of policies and procedures occurred as a norm. The heightened political interference, the rogue management style of Hlaudi Motsoeneng, and the general fear of connected executives by ordinary employees of the SABC, meant that some officials would self-censure.

Since at least 2009 when the SABC received the first bailout in the form of government guarantee-backed loan from Nedbank, the SABC has been in a precarious situation financially. When Motsoeneng 'took over' the SABC, he took pride in paying off the debt, which the SABC arranged when Phil Molefe was still acting CEO. However, this honeymoon was short-lived when Motsoeneng introduced the 90% local content. This resulted in the shrinking of audience and revenue – a decision that took the SABC back in the red immediately. At the time of writing, the SABC was still struggling to pay its suppliers, and their ability to enforce editorial policy has been very limited as a result. The lack of financial strength compromised editorial standards – due to a lack of capacity and lack of respect and cooperation from producers because of incurred debts.

7.12 Conclusion

This chapter was the exploration of the discursive practice – the conditions under which text is produced. It was a revelation of political interests and elite

contestations that impact the ultimate nature of televisual text. In studying the entertainment media's role for consolidation of democracy, this chapter has shed light into the SABC's fitness to function as a cultural public sphere. The SABC has been an important bridge in the otherwise wide gap between social practice (the socio-political context) and text. This particular analysis shows that the SABC has water-tight editorial policies, processes and procedures aimed at strengthening the institution as it contributes towards democratic consolidation through nation building. SABC2's positioning statement has galvanised this mission to all important stakeholders such as its staff and content producers. The intentionality of SABC2's editorial policy makes it fair to assess the channel in terms of its stated objectives.

The analysis of the SABC's discursive practice in this chapter, however, has shown how the brazen political and corruption forces sought to undermine these policies and procedures in order to replace them with politically infested decision-making. It has clarified the intent of these partisan interests and how they created a condition that negatively impacted on the SABC's ability to deliver public value.

Discussion of the discursive practices also deepened the understanding of the concept of 'role' of the media in society. As McQuail (2006: 55) asserts, the role traditionally implies that the role-player is a unified and single-minded being that is armed with the power of agency. However, the case of the SABC has shown that the role player can sometimes be exposed to all manner of institutional contradictions and the inability to play the role as required. The chapter has shown that the 'agent' SABC was sometimes rendered schizophrenic by the various conflicting interests simmering within it. The textual output therefore may not have always been what the "SABC" ideally intended, but it has defined its 'role' anyway. The SABC's conditions of production, or discursive practice, create an environment where the SABC's role as an agent of democracy (and its consolidation) is constantly compromised. The SABC's institutional case has confirmed the trend identified in the literature review, that of the weakening of

democratic institutions by the ruling elites of the third wave democracies. It is therefore hoped that this chapter has provided a useful institutional context that will enrich an understanding of text, the analysis of which will be conducted in the next chapter.

8 Textual Analysis: *Muvhango*

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has established that all SABC content is, at least on paper, subjected to the broadcaster's editorial sanction. The connection between this editorial and the SABC's contribution to the broader democratic project has also been established. This chapter focuses on a textual analysis of one of the two selected long-running dramas on SABC2. This drama, *Muvhango* like all content on the SABC's schedule, is not produced by chance – nor is it value-free entertainment devoid of social significance. It has been created within an environment in which editorial oversight is closely conducted. In the model of analysis as spelt out in Chapter 5, this chapter constitutes Fairclough's centre box – the text. Text, in this case, is the actual television output as consumed by the viewer on the screen. As argued in that chapter, text is by nature multimodal, and consists of multiple semiotic resources such as sound, visuals, editing, characters, dress code, mannerisms, and others to convey meaning.

In this analysis, not every semiotic resource will be used – but only the salient ones lending themselves to the discussion of democracy and its representation (or absence thereof). The democratic constructs (peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability and active citizenship) as identified in the literature review sections are used as aspects that make up the concept of democracy. It is an attempt to answer questions of the extent of this representation, such as which themes have been highlighted, and which ones have been omitted; and in what ways have these themes been represented, promoted, discouraged and with whom are they associated, and to what ends, and so on.

The specific text – the units of analysis for this study – are a selection of specific storylines of season 19 of the soap opera – *Muvhango*. This season was broadcast in 2018, the year following the 54th Elective Conference of the African National Congress (Nasrec Conference) at which Cyril Ramaphosa took over the reigns as president of the ANC, effectively ending the Zuma era. This chapter seeks to

answer the last aspects of the key research question – *whether and in what ways the SABC's entertainment content is supportive of a political culture that promotes the consolidation of democracy in South Africa.*

8.2 Introducing *Muvhango*

Muvhango is a commissioned soap opera, meaning that the programme remains the intellectual property (IP) of the SABC. In this business model, the SABC exercises the full editorial control over the production and guide the production company as to what themes are important to explore. The contract between the SABC and the production house is usually renewed every three years, and the condition for contract renewal is usually influenced by audience performance, financial return on investment and public value. Given the investment that goes behind the production of soap operas, the SABC's retention of this series for more than twenty years means that they continue to fulfil the broadcasters' expectations of them.

The unsolicited proposal for *Muvhango* was accepted by the SABC on the grounds that it catered for minority languages. First broadcast on SABC2 as a 13-part drama series on 7 April 1997 (TVSA, 2017), its initial plot was centred around two widows of a polygamous Venda man fighting over his estate. Contemporary *Muvhango* is now a soap opera with a more sophisticated plotline. It explores intergenerational tensions in the rural Venda via the Thathe royal house, extended family rivalry over business in Johannesburg, as well as infusion of personal conflicts against the backdrop of local government through the office of the mayor. While the soap opera is based on South African reality, it contains a lot of traditional fantasy elements such as witchcraft and supernatural characters which in the narrative are presented as real and as fact.

The relationship between the SABC and Word of Mouth, the production company behind *Muvhango*, has not always been smooth. For example, the production house has in the past been aggrieved by the SABC taking unilateral decisions, an

example of which was when the COO of SABC instructed that the soapie must be produced on location in Venda as opposed to in-studio in Johannesburg (Ferreira, 2016d). Irreconcilable disagreements over editorial direction have also been mentioned in interviews by both the SABC and the production house (Interview, 19 August 2019 & Interview, 28 October 2020). Delays in the issuing of contracts due to the broadcaster's financial strain and audience ratings often spills over to the media with the two parties blaming each other (Ferreira, 2019 & 2020). This often-turbulent relationship shows that the SABC does not always have the final, uncontested say on editorial issues – their editorial command does not travel in a unidirectional and linear fashion.

8.3 Claimed public value

The soap opera is positioned to include minority languages and to become the champion of authentic South African stories. In so doing, it assists in bringing truth to SABC2's slogan, "*You Belong*" as discussed in the previous chapter. The slogan gives expression to the 'channel for the nation' mantra (SABC RFP Book, 2011: 48) or a sense of belonging in the South African family (Botha, 2010: 2) for the previously excluded minority language of Tshivenda. SABC2 also defines its target market as 'the family', and not individuals. As captured in the Series Bible, the series is positioned as belonging to the larger family of the African extended family.

> Even though we live in the global village, our existence is informed by the African code of ethics. It takes the page out of the African philosophy of Ubuntu: I am because you are. A strong sense of belonging by all South Africans is highly emphasized (cf. *Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 5)

In *Muvhango*, Mashudu Mukwevho's home represents the home of the broader South Africa – it remains the core of *Muvhango*. It is the gravitational point of all the main characters. The Series Bible says that the home epitomises the broader values, the fireplace where all the stories are told (ibid). The current Chief Azwindini (Mashudu's son) is regarded as the extension of that family and is the

custodian of its legacy. His *khotsimunene*[41], Gizara, is there as a support system because the late Chief Mashudu, who was the patriarchal figure of the family, dies a few years ago. By definition, therefore, *Muvhango* has to represent these values and reflect the true domestic stories (cf. *Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 6). In an interview, *Muvhango*'s series writer emphasises African authenticity and 'values' as the series' differentiator. They say that the series is not predicated on American shock factor to drive audiences; but from its inception, its authenticity reminds Africans of who they are (Interview, 28 October 2020). These values are those of ubuntu – the idea that "I am because you are"— the idea that a child belongs not only to their biological parents, but to all parents. It captures the idea that "we belong to the larger family of man" (*Muvhango* Core Values Document, 2003: 1).

In terms of ICASA regulations or content quotas, the series contributes to the mandatory genre of drama as well as local content. SABC2 also expects *Muvhango* to have 40% Venda and 35% Sotho. The rest of the languages share the remaining 25% (Muvhango Channel Review, 2017: 5). The channel's target market of LSM 5-7, which is generally regarded as the lowest common denominator with a commercial appeal, is in line with the drama's 'viable mass' appeal ambitions.

8.4 Audience profile

The average audience profile of *Muvhango* is mostly older black females of lower middle class (LSM 5-6). There is a higher concentration of these viewers in Gauteng, perhaps due to bigger population density and more television sets per capita, and access to electricity as compared to rural areas. This largely mirrors SABC2's target market. In terms of its main broadcast slot, the soap opera enjoys a large audience – it has an average audience rating (AR) of 13.3 and 39% share

[41] Khotsimunene is the brother of the last deceased chief (Nengovhela, 2010: 57).

of all adult viewership. This translates to 4,681,726 viewers. Table 6 shows details of the average profile of the soap opera.

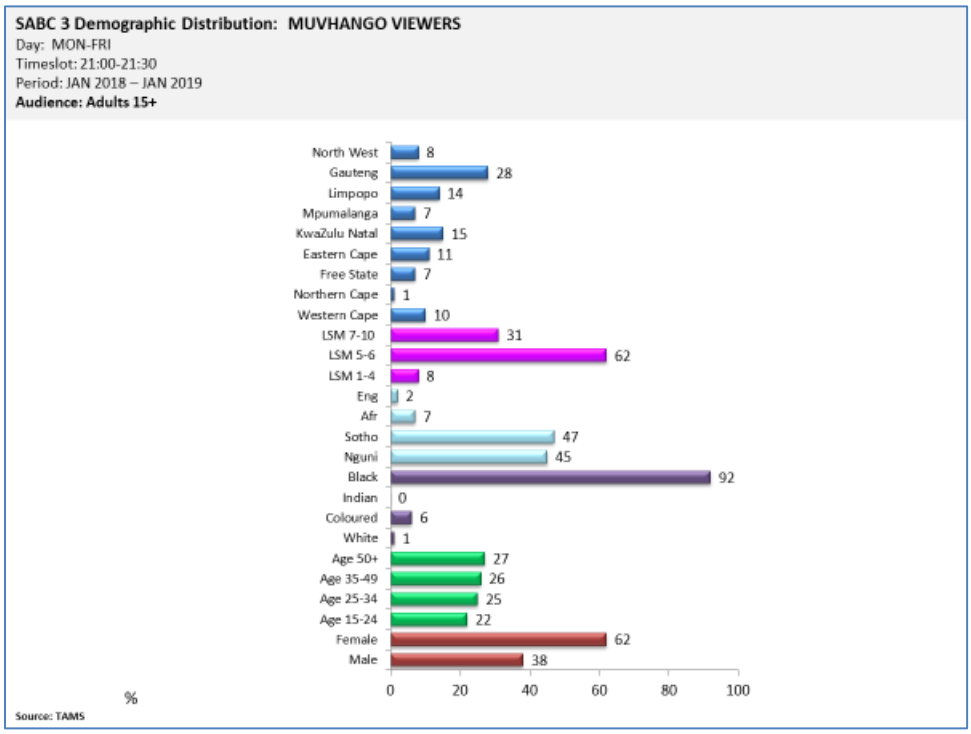

Table 7: Demographic distribution of Muvhango viewers

8.5 Approach to narrative construction

In line with the SABC's programming editorial approach, *Muvhango*'s televisual narrative is an attempt to construct a story that is uniquely South African. A close examination of narrative codes and conventions like shots, editing and general style features enables us to create a 'distance from familiarity' so that an effective analysis can be conducted. Like many South African soap operas, *Muvhango* is mainly studio-based. This enables a convenient, controlled environment immune to the hassles of location shooting. The shooting style and camera techniques are based on realism and relies on steady and stable shots enabled by the use of studio cameras wheeled on smooth surfaces. This creates an almost undetectable camera presence that allows the viewer to mainly focus on the story and less on the mechanics of storytelling. Of note are the realism narrative conventions of the 180-degree rule, the 30-degree rule, application of shot reverse shots and close-ups.

Editing style also follows realist conventions. When shots are edited, together with the use of establishing shots, there is a general avoidance of jump cuts through the insertion of cutaway shots. This technique helps to avoid a sudden 'unnatural' jump in the progression of movement between shots and lapse of time. This editing style, together with the abovementioned shooting style, creates an impression of an orderly, coherent and unified world. This production approach is a tried and tested attempt to suture the viewer into the constructed realism of the drama. It is a highly ideological approach that seeks to encourage a passive, lean-back viewership behaviour instead of an agitated, active and critical view of the drama and its world.

In terms of style, *Muvhango* seeks to project an African worldview based on African aesthetics. The décor, both in Johannesburg and Thathe, has rich natural and earthy colours. The texture of the paintwork is matte as opposed to glossy, which is reminiscent of coloured clay used in ancient African house decorations. This approach to aesthetics has an authenticating effect on the claim of an original or unique South African story. The choice of music is also very African, but a choice has been made towards a score that soothes rather than agitates – a typical soap opera approach. When using such music amid editing together otherwise disconnected shots, the drama creates a smooth transition between shots. This creates a unified and continuous space that attempts to resemble the familiar, natural world. The acting style is, much along Hollywood lines, very naturalistic. Characters are three dimensional and their acting motivation derives from deep emotions. This is a subtle approach which seeks to draw the viewer more intimately into the character's inner psychology as opposed to the externalised acting of exaggerated facial expressions and gestures. In contrast, the exaggerated acting style is synonymous with avant-garde or agitation propaganda films aimed at mobilising the audience for social action.

In addition to the abovementioned realist techniques, soap opera narrative employs the technique of verisimilitude. In South African soap opera, stories are set in surroundings familiar to the viewer to make the environment more 'real' (Marx, 2007: 103). *Muvhango* has additional settings in Thathe, (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 7) a real place that actually exists. In terms of acting, the naturalistic acting style discussed above results in realistic looking actors. In *Muvhango*, the office of the mayor has pictures of the real sitting state president and that of the minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA). Among these is the picture of the mayor of Thathe, represented by the character in the soap opera. By so doing, the character is placed within the real South African government context. Verisimilitude also takes advantage of the fact that soaps are broadcast every day. In this vein, Marx notes that South African soap operas, *Muvhango* included, emulate the Anglo-American soap opera approach of sticking to the same time frame their viewers are in, for instance celebrating Christmas in December (Marx, 2007: 102). This realism is ideological as it tries to authenticate its narrative by emulating the real world. Verisimilitude, argues Marx, makes South African soap opera to "potentially function as more than mere entertainment" (Marx, 2007: 107).

Muvhango uses metadiscourse, an age-old technique used in literary fiction and adopted by realist filmmaking to hold the narrative together. Metadiscourse places the viewer in a position of dominant specularity (Fiske, 1987b: 20) – a position of all-knowingness that enables the viewer to follow the story. Fiske calls metanarrative "an ideological tool that irons out contradictions" (Fiske, 2010: 88) to enable the viewer to understand the final presented 'truth' of the story without confusion.

Another technique employed in soap operas is that of 'intertextuality'. This is the approach where texts make a reference to other existing texts to reinforce their claims to reality. It is an attempt to restrict the interpretation of text to the already existing meaning as initiated by text that precede or run parallel to it. In the context

of the two SABC2 soaps, intertextuality refers to other programmes that are on SABC2, other SABC channels or broader South African media landscape whose realism is being referenced in the two soaps to legitimate their own truth.

Close to these traditional beliefs that *Muvhango* draws from is the tabloid journalism of Media 24's newspaper, *Daily Sun*. The newspaper draws a lot of its stories from unproven African myths involving witchcraft, prophets, tokoloshes and sangomas. Tabloids are seen by proponents of traditional, broadsheet journalism to "lower the standards of public discourse" (Ornerbring & Jonson quoted in Strelitz & Steenveld, 2005: 265). However, Wasserman lauds tabloids for giving a voice to the majority of the population who have "remained on the margins of the post-apartheid mediated public sphere" (Wasserman, 2008: 788). Elsewhere, he explains the unprecedented popularity of tabloids in South Africa as being fuelled by the void left by the very mainstream print which exclude or marginalise them out of their news agendas (2018: 27).

On SABC television, tabloid-type programmes that *Muvhango* references are *Khumbul'ekhala* (Zulu, means 'remember home') and *Speak Out*. Both of these programmes are categorised as current affairs. Traditionally, current affairs programmes like *Special Assignment* are produced internally by SABC News and presented by seasoned journalists. However, *Khumbul'ekhala* and *Speak Out* are produced externally by commissioned production companies and are presented by popular personalities. Scheduled on SABC1, *Khumbul'ekhala* is a reality-type programme that searches for those who have been separated from their families or homes and reunites them. This way, the programme contributes to the important nation-building objective. The target market is lower class (semi) urban black people, and as such, is presented by Andile Gaelesiwe, an ex-Kwaito music star. Majority of the subjects in this programme seek their lost families because they believe that the hardships they experience is a result of their inability to perform rituals which can only be facilitated by their direct family. Long journeys to mostly rural areas are undertaken to unite people with their parents or family, and the

programme often ends with emotional unity in the knowledge that life will get better going forward. *Khumbul'ekhaya*, like *Muvhango*, has a strong familial, spiritual and ancestral aspect to it. Another 'current affairs programme,' *Speak Out*, is scheduled on SABC2. Like *Khumbul'ekhaya,* the programme targets lower class viewers in rural or semi-urban areas. In addition to its target market and setting, the intertextual link to *Muvhango* is the fact that it is presented by *Muvhango* actors. *Speak Out* assists aggrieved community members to confront service providers or suppliers who have violated their rights as consumers. The former Muvhango actor, Lesley Musina, presented the first few seasons of the show after the departure of Dosto Noge (a non-*Muvhango* actor). At the time of writing, Musina has been replaced by Dingaan Mokebe who currently plays James Motsamai in *Muvhango*.

Through intertextuality, the popular media, like *Muvhango*, attempts to authenticate the realism of its world by bringing in claimed realisms already expressed in other texts – thereby buying a 'testimony' and avoiding credibility questions. This intertextual reference therefore helps *Muvhango* reinforce the rules of the world based on deep superstitions and traditional beliefs which is often at odds with liberalist rational discourse based on verifiable facts..

8.6 Plot description

SABC2 describes the main plot on *Muvhango* as involving the juxtaposition of fictional rural village of Thathe and the metropolis of Johannesburg as an interplay between traditional way of living and the challenges of modern life in the city (SABC2 Website). In rural Venda, it centres around the embattled chief who had inherited the throne with the blessing of the ancestors. The chief is in constant battle to keep his throne and family together. On his side are two of his five royal wives[42] Susan (Maumela Mahuwa) and Mpho (Azwimbavhi Litelu), who support

[42] The other three wives do not live with him in the same house

the chief and upholds the honour of the royal house. The power struggle never seems to end as it is complicated by the chief's younger brother Mulalo Mukweho (Sydney Ramukwela), who once contested the throne, but at times he is the king's supporter and ally. The chief's royal *maine* (i.e. sangoma) however assures good relations with the ancestors that maintain the delicate power balance (ibid). In Johannesburg, the power battle enters the boardroom with the internal corporate dynamics within Mukweho's company MMC. The company is headed by the very 'smooth operator' Gugu Nkosi (Bukamina Cebekhulu). The group however faces a tough competition from family friend James Motsamai's (Dingaan Mokebe) thriving firm Qalabocha Holdings (ibid)[43].

This is the story that attempts to capture the microcosm of South Africa's black lives not only at a social level, but their deep psyche and spirituality too. Because of its popularity, it has opportunities to deliver enormous public value, especially the promotion of democracy that contemporary South Africa is grappling with.

8.7 Milieu

There are three main locations for the soap opera – Soweto, Johannesburg and Thathe, – and these represent the three main South African settlement types. These settlement types – township, urban and rural - make *Muvhango* one of the most spatially representative dramas in the country. In Johannesburg, *Muvhango*'s characters do not live in the suburbs, but in Soweto sections of Chiawelo and Diepkloof. The reason, according to the SABC is that the characters "are proud of being part of a larger African community" (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 8). Soweto was established in the 1930's using the notorious 'Urban Areas Act' in 1923 (SA History Online, 2011) and later the Native Settlement Act of 1954 where black people were forcefully removed from what would be called white suburbs. The new township was arranged according to black people's ethnic groups. Thus

[43] Paraphrased from SABC2's website (www.sabc2.co.za)

Chiawelo (meaning the place of peace in Tshivenda) was a Venda and Tsonga section, and Diepkloof was a Sotho section. No wonder then, that Mashudu, the late original patriarch of the Mukwevho family, and Chief Azwindini's father, had settled in Chiawelo. His Sotho wife from Soweto lived in Diepkloof. The settlement of black characters in Soweto reinforces this apartheid-era ethnic grouping. In *Muvhango*, Johannesburg suburbs represent a land of opportunities for the characters who are, according to the SABC, "all migrant workers in this space as none of them live in the city" (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 8). Only character 'misfits' like KK, "who sought to remove themselves from their family structures" (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 9), live in the suburban apartment blocks. With this commentary, the SABC somewhat reinforces that apartheid migrant labour system thereby symbolically resisting social integration that the very family SABC2 is about.

The other critical setting for *Muvhango* is the village of Thathe in Venda, where Chief Azwindini (Gabriel Temudzani) lives and rules. Interestingly, Venda no longer exists in post-apartheid South Africa as a geographical area – because this was one of the black "bantustants" or 'reserves' under apartheid. However, Venda as a geographical location still features prominently in *Muvhango*, another nostalgia into apartheid divisions of the country according to ethnicity. What does exist is the place "Thathe". The village lies on the north east of Thathe Vondo, a forest in the Eastern Soutpansberg of the Limpopo Province. The SABC explains further:

> The mystical Lake Funduzi is also situated within the Thathe Vondo complex and is shrouded in ancient Venda myths. The lake is the home of the Python God. Azwindini is the chief of Thathe Village, Nethathe the white lion is part of his ancestry (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 7).

This setting is the rural village context of the series and serves as the origin of mystical religions of the Venda people. It is this context that explains the presence of ancient African religion, superstitions, spirits and supernatural beings in *Muvhango*. It also explains the prominence of the *maine* (spiritual/traditional

healer) character to whom the chief and other villagers turn for healing and explanation of the unknown.

8.8 Character description

Azwindini Mukwevho is the Chief of Thathe. He is Mashudu's Venda-born son to a Venda wife (Mashudu's second wife was Soweto-based). He is a very powerful chief who holds Thathe in his hands. In the drama, one of his praise names is *Vhafowi* – the cattle herder or keeper. He has been put in the position of the chief by the ancestors. His subjects know that to defy him is to defy the ancestors. Azwindini shares a house with two wives – Suzan and Mpho - and lives with his mother, the matriarch of the extended family. Thandaza Buthelezi (Sindi Dlathu) came into the Mukwevho family through marriage to Edward (Glen Lewis), Mashudu's Johannesburg-born son to a Sotho wife. She is the tragic heroine of the series as she always battles disasters both in business and her personal life. Through her ethical way of dealing with her challenges, the moral compass of the drama is established. Her mother, Mankosi (Cynthia Shange) still plays a role in her life - she helps her look after her son Vusi (Raphael Griffiths), who is Edward's son. The Mukwevhos will always see her as their daughter-in-law, since she is the CEO of Mukwevho Holdings (MH).

James Motsamai started as the marketing consultant for MH. He is a father to Busisiwe, a child he fathered with Doobsie, while she was married to Edward, Thandaza's late husband. Over the years, he has established a solid friendship bond with Thandaza. His loyalty to Thandaza is undoubtable, and at times makes him a wimp. Nzimande describes James as "a softy and sweet guy" (2015: 4). Through his hard work, he became the managing director of Mukwevho Milling, but his nice guy character is not a natural in business, and he always sells his soul to be seen as a tough guy with guts.

In the past, *Mulalo Mukwevho* fancied himself the chief of Thathe. Because of this he plotted to take over the throne by toppling Azwindini. He succeeds, albeit for a

short period of time because the ancestors intervened directly and taught him that Azwindini was the chosen chief. Mulalo, who is also Azwindini's half-brother, is the only other person who has a legitimate claim to the chieftaincy. Throughout the series Mulalo remains close to the royal house and is the go-to-person each time the chief and other members of his family have problems. *Suzan Mukwevho* is the first wife to Azwindini and his true love. Her heart lies with her family and with such unquestionable loyalty to the Chief. She is also an unshakeable pillar of support for their son. She has a good relationship with Azwindini's other wife Mpho.

8.9 Gender and children

In *Muvhango*, men are positioned as unquestionably superior to women. Through the chief of Thathe, who is placed on the throne by the ancestors, the authority of men in the rest of the soap opera exists as a matter of course. In this universe, even 'independent' women have a glass ceiling, and the possibility of a truly powerful woman is far-fetched. For this to happen, the ancestors will have to review the rules of the universe and communicate these to Chief Azwindini. An example of women's place in society is the long story arch of Thandaza. Thandaza was first married to Edward (Mashudu's Gauteng-born son and Azwindini's half-brother) who Edward died on the day of their wedding and Thandaza became a widow bride. She remained the love of the Mukwevho family who regarded her as one of their own. Thandaza had a brilliant suggestion for the family to use Mashudu's death insurance pay-out of R5 million to establish Mukwevho Milling. The business became successful and Thandaza ultimately became its CEO. From this point of view, she is seen as an intelligent and strong woman and is described as having earned the respect of the men in the soap opera, including the chief (Nzimande, 2015: 4). However, Thandaza's character as a woman has limits. As such, she can only go as far as the company CEO and is not able to climb to higher ranks of company chairperson or owner which are still defined and occupied by men. This is because the business belonged to the family, which is ultimately male headed. In the end, Thandaza's life was untimely ended after she was diagnosed

with cancer. After Thandaza's death, *Muvhango* never had such a powerful woman in the series again, but the patriarchal order remained.

The Series Writer hinted that the character of Gugu was going to be developed into Thandaza's replacement as a powerful woman in the series. However, due to pressures to increase viewership, Gugu's character is now involved in a murder plot – a move that made it impossible to redeem her character and make her a shero (Interview, 28 October 2020). On a short story arch basis, *Muvhango* has also done well to upset women groups. There are at least three examples recorded by complainants on Gender Links[44]. Faith Zaba (2019) complained of a scene in *Muvhango* in which, in the face of danger, women are portrayed as irrational and only acting emotionally without using their heads. The other complaint related to Suzan's storyline in which Azwindini, her husband had impregnated another man's wife. The complaint was that Suzan's pain is overlooked:

> "Because the character's pain is overlooked and her role as a wife is being used to judge her actions. The man is not being blamed for his part." (Zaba, 2018).

Under normal circumstances, free and independent women would have filed for divorce or demanded that the man account for this behaviour. However, Suzan's reaction is to suffer on her own and get on with it and continue to be the obedient wife of the chief. Another complaint arose from the story of KK Mulaudzi and his long-term girlfriend, Matshidiso. KK is an unscrupulous businessman who goes for what he wants by any means necessary. Good business relations and personal reputation don't matter to him, and he is prepared to break ethical rules or the law to get what he wants. He had a long-term fiancé, Matshidiso – a housewife who is willing to sell herself to the richest man. The two are always fighting over one thing or the other, and the relationship is a very abusive one. On a typical argument

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[44] Gender Links (GL) is a leading Southern African Women's Rights Organisation. www.genderlinks.org.za [2019, September 19].

scene between the two, KK manhandles Matshidiso by often holding her upper arm with his strong hand and intimidate her from speaking further. Often this ends with him throwing her away from him. Matshidiso's character is designed as a troublesome woman who somehow deserves KK's treatment so that the viewer has little sympathy for her. On one occasion Matshidiso goes to the extent of inflicting injuries on herself to frame KK of abuse, resulting in his arrest. This storyline poses problems for the many voices calling for the end to GBV. While these voices try to teach men that there is no justifiable reason to inflict violence on women whatsoever, *Muvhango* seems to advance the opposite argument that says, 'she deserved it.'

In *Muvhango*, it seems that children are also constantly falling victim to the conveniences of the soap opera's discursive practices. In keeping with the slogan of 'You Belong', and the family positioning of SABC2, it would be reasonable to assume that children would be a natural fit in *Muvhango*. However, the analyses of the sample episodes suggest that children do not have a place in *Muvhango*. Child characters do not last long in the series, and at best, those who continue to be present, are not seen often. At worst, children are subjected to the most extreme of violence. Teboho's child from her marriage with Mulalo, was involved in a car accident and since he went to hospital, he was never seen again. The other child in the series – Mulanga (Chief Azwindini's son and Mulondo's twin brother) died of gunshot wounds. He died as a collateral damage during a fight between his father and Tenda's brother. The SABC explained this absence or killing of children in soap operas:

> It is hard to schedule children […]. Another way is to send them to boarding school and … forget about them (Interview, 02 September 2019).

The interviewee conceded that to inflict violence on children is undesirable and alternative ways must be found to get them off the soapie if they are no longer wanted.

8.10 Citizenship and belonging

As previously mentioned, SABC2's positioning statement upholds the notion of *belonging*. In *Muvhango*, the organising principle of belonging is the family. Unlike the community, which is more place-driven (as in *7de Laan*, Hillside is the only setting of the series), the family is very member-driven (van der Merwe, 2012: 38). Originally, *Muvhango* was developed as a Venda drama. However, in recognising the fact that Venda is part of the broader South Africa, the series has commendably become multilingual. However, in its emphasis on family and not community, *Muvhango* seems to have adopted the American soap opera model. In *Muvhango*, membership into a family is contrasted with a community where membership can be earned by residing in, adopting a community value system or being accepted by other members of the community. In life, one usually cannot belong to a family by simply opting into it. In a civil situation, there are many ways of becoming a member of a family, including being adopted. In *Muvhango*, belonging to a family is through birth or marriage. The majority of the characters in *Muvhango* belong, one way or the other, into of the powerful families.

When *Muvhango* started, the families were not as politically and financially powerful as they are now. Chief Mashudu Mukwevho was a migrant labourer who came to work in Johannesburg, settling in Soweto with a Sotho woman. *Muvhango* has now evolved into a series focussing on political power dynamics and dynasties of wealthy families. This is one of the many aspects that, according to the series writer, compromises the series' values:

> In the past, the idealism of *Muvhango* was to strive to be extraordinary people. Now the thriving is to be rich – to become materialistic […]. If you look at all the characters everything is about the money (Interview, 28 October 2020).

All the main characters in *Muvhango* are somehow related, and their families are in some way connected. They therefore through birth or marriage belong to the bigger family. The Mukwevho family is a big tree that starts in Thathe, and currently headed by Chief Azwindini. Mulalo, the former mayor and currently the MEC, is Azwindini's cousin. In Johannesburg, Thandaza – the main female protagonist,

was married to Edward, Azwindini's half-brother (through their late father), and though married to the Mokwena's, still considers herself a part of the Mukwevho family. Another prominent character, James Motsamai, came into the fore when he impregrated Doobsie, while she was Edward's mistress. Over the years, Thandaza and James enjoyed a strong bond of friendship and loyalty to one another. The Nkosi family, who hail from Kwazulu-Natal, came into the fore when their daughter, Imani, Thadaza's cousin came to move in with them. After a fling with Ranthomeng – Thandaza's husband, Imani fell pregnant, and this caused a rift between her and Thandaza. Through this family bond, members of the Nkosi extended family were gradually introduced over time.

In this family, there are outsiders and threats that do not quite 'belong'. One such outsider is the character of KK Mulaudzi, an unscrupulous character who came into the story through a successful hostile takeover of Mukwevho Milling, a family business. He is known for his greed, love for power and selfishness. Tenda, the current mayor of Thathe, is another outsider. With a history of having kidnapped both Teboho, Mulalo's wife and Chief Azwindini at different times, Tenda is the ultimate enemy of the royal house. Because of Tenda and KK's bad characters, their outsider status is somehow justified.

As the organising device for 'belonging', the family is not a good facilitator of citizenship, as it restricts the right to belong only to those who are born or married into it. It also restricts the broader social interest of characters because they are engaged in endless family issues and dynamics. The family is a kind of 'private institution' with limited interest in broader social issues. It is therefore not surprising that, through the foregrounded African tradition, history, heritage and religion, it is hard for the greater South African civic family to belong in *Muvhango*. Therefore, although SABC2 purports to represent the broader family of South Africa, *Muvhango* excludes a lot of social groups like LGBQTI, white, coloured and Indian people.

Even within 'African' groups that *Muvhango* claims to authentically represent, there appears to be challenges. When *Muvhango* started, it was conceptualised as a Venda drama. As such, research was conducted into Venda culture for historical accuracy and cultural authenticity. More than twenty years later, for the season under analysis, *Muvhango* still has a Tshivenda language and cultural adviser on set. Even though there is no designated Zulu cultural and language adviser, the quality of Zulu language used in *Muvhango* is high. Like Venda, Zulu-speaking characters are played by actors who are native language speakers. However, Sotho is represented differently. Being one of the official languages in South Africa, Sesotho in *Muvhango* is represented as a foreign language. The forebears of present characters come from Lesotho, and each time, for example, Ranthomeng's mother visits, she is said to have travelled directly from Lesotho to Johannesburg – reminding the viewer of the 'origin' of this language and its speakers as outsiders. The younger Sesotho speakers who grew up in Johannesburg, like James and Ranthomeng, do not speak authentic Sesotho. Their accent is diluted with Zulu and other languages spoken in Gauteng – implying that their roots are very far away, outside of South Africa. In the politics of belonging, Sesotho as a language is represented as the 'other.'

Other racial groups, like white, coloured and Indian, do not feature and do not 'belong' in *Muvhango*. They belong in a different world where *Muvhango* characters do not usually mix with.

The selective representation (or absence of representation) of some social groups discussed above make *Muvhango* an example of pluralism – the idea of "interest group democracy" (Christians, et al. 2009: 96) purporting that a variety of group or community voices create a diversity in the democratic marketplace of ideas. Pluralism pays little attention to the quality and mechanism or objective of such voices (Hall, 1982: 64). This "system of segmented media" (ibid: 98) is problematic in that it tends to justify the absence of representation of certain social groups in one medium hoping that it will be covered in another. Rather, diversity and inclusivity within the same medium is preferable. This way *Muvhango* will more effectively enable the SABC to live up to the "principles of diversity and inclusivity"

(Wasserman, 2018: 5) upon which the post-apartheid media system was founded. It is argued here that due to the never-ending nature of soap opera storylines where many subjects and issues can be accommodated over time, the lack of inclusivity in *Muvhango* is not justified.

8.11 Muvhango sample episode – Women's Day

Below is a discussion of a select episode for closer analysis. The women's day theme runs throughout the episode. Other established storylines will continue as well – such as the story of James under investigation for theft of company funds; and the story of Thandaza's suspicion that her husband, Ranthomeng, is having an affair. These stories are told against the backdrop of women's day, an annual South African public holiday on 09 August. Reference to women's day in the episode undergirds the soap opera's claim of reflecting reality as it is in line with the viewer's real time (Marx, 2007: 102).

In this episode, James Motsamai, the business partner to Thandaza in Basadi Construction, is suspected of stealing the company funds and has been placed under precautionary suspension. Under the heavy influence of his friend, Matshidiso, KK's girlfriend, his hatred of Thandaza is increasing. Once again, Motsamai is portrayed as a weak character that can easily be influenced. His sense of style, as shown by his denim shirt tucked into a formal pair of trousers, does not show a serious corporate player. In the background, it shows some of the books he is reading, the most prominent of which is one authored by Minette Walters, an English crime writer. For a series that prides itself on reflecting African heritage and pride, James' choice of books and style is a way of communicating his weaknesses as an African man. By contrast, Chief Azwindini, the man the series heralds as the "head of the family" (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 28), dresses in designer shirts with an African print motif. In this episode, Azwindini is portrayed reading a book by Zakes Mda, a renowned African writer. In the end, Motsamai is cleared of charges and Thandaza apologises to him. Another man, again contrasted to Chief Azwindini, is Ranthomeng. When the episode starts,

Ranthomeng gifts his wife a book entitled “The Mothers” and offers to cook for her because “It’s woman’s day, I should make you breakfast.” Thandaza is delighted because she has been looking for the book. However, in her reply to women’s day breakfast gesture, Thandaza says she’s over women’s day and gifts. Indeed, when she is later invited to a women’s day event, she declines, saying she just wants to stay home and sleep for twelve hours. For a series commissioned by the public broadcaster, one of the mandates of *Muvhango* is to promote public holidays and events. This act of rejection by one of the main characters without any justification or explanation, seems like the series’ rejection of this important day. *The Mothers*, the book gift she receives from her husband seems to remind her, much against the spirit of women empowerment, that her place is in kitchen and much less in business.

Back in Venda, by contrast, there is no women’s day – at least according to Chief Azwindini. His youngest wife, Mpho, who is very assertive, demands that the Chief spoils her for women’s day. The paternalistic Azwindini, as expected, ignores the demand with disdain. Instead, Azwindini demands that Mpho bears him a child[45]:

Azwindini:	Why are you upset?
Mpho:	Where are my contraceptive pills?
Azwindini:	I threw them out [sic]
Mpho:	You can’t do that!
Azwindini:	I can. You are from a royal family. Don’t forget why you are here.
Mpho:	Chief, I am not a cow you have bought and brought here in order to have calves.
Azwindini:	Well, I did not marry you so you could decorate my house
Mpho:	You sound ancient!
Azwindini:	So, you are going to stand there and disrespect me? Yell all you like, but I am not negotiating with you about having kids!

[45] Dialogue transcribed from subtitles.

On Azwindini's final word, Mpho slouches on the couch in despair and capitulation. Azwindini then continues to read his book, *Sometimes there is a Void: Memoirs of an Outsider* – an autobiography of Zakes Mda. This is contrasted to James's book choice, which is that of an un-African British author. For a series predicated on representation of the African family, where Chief Azwindini is the extension of that family and the custodian of its legacy (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 6), women's day appears to have no place in it. It appears that it was a reluctant coverage for the sake of compliance, because the SABC expects them to. Like the case with Thandaza, the principal female character, Chief Azwindini's rejection of women's day is contrary to the values of the "new South Africa" and those of the SABC.

In this same episode, Matshidiso is having a conversation with Motsamai about money theft charges that Motsamai faces. At the end of the core conversation, the following parting dialogue is exchanged:

Matshidiso:	Anyway, I must go. KK has booked for dinner somewhere in the Free State
Motsamai:	Poor you
Matshidiso	Think about it. Barry will be there, and there will be a lot of tannies. I'd rather be in Sandton
Motsamai:	I actually like Barry.
Matshidiso:	I don't. He tells the same joke over and over. You can keep him.

Barry is KK's friend and dubious character who once tried to help KK take over MMC by hostile means. He is the only white cameo character on *Muvhango*, and he is portrayed as a bad person. The 'tannies' Matshidiso refers to are old white (and Afrikaans) women. If the separation of the worlds of *Muvhango* (black) and white people is only implied in the series, this conversation proves it. So instead of working towards common interests and common spaces, this scene emphasises the opposite.

8.12 Representation of reality

The narrative techniques discussed at the beginning of this chapter have been used to construct realism in *Muvhango*. The soap opera has positioned itself as an authentic South African story, and as a product of public service broadcasting, it is expected to not only entertain, but to also inform and educate. The analysis above has shown how the soap opera has claimed and attempted to do so. However, a closer examination of patterns of representation of South African realism raises some questions. In *Muvhango*, the structural condition of the characters is underrepresented. Most Johannesburg based characters live in Soweto. They are not exposed to commuter issues caused by, for example, taxi strikes, traffic congestion or the controversial e-Tolls. Service delivery protests or municipal worker strikes which often disrupt services, are not a reality in *Muvhango*. Power cuts as a result of load-shedding that affects millions of South Africans daily, do not have any effect on the lives of the people in the soap opera.

Muvhango misrepresents South Africa's social realism by representing the fantasy elements of African myths and superstition as fact. The storyline involving the power contest between Azwindini and Mulalo is a case in point. When Azwindini was forced to give away his throne, Mulalo managed to manipulate his way and ascended to the throne as the chief of Thate. However, Mulalo started getting sick because the throne rejected him, and Azwindini turned into a lion to show that he is the rightful chief. Once Azwindini managed to regain control of the throne, Mulalo got healed. This way, the story reinforces the traditional authority of the chief, and using its realist conventions, represents unrealistic mystical events as 'real'. Another example is the storyline of Susan's complications during pregnancy. When she eventually gave birth to Mulanga, she died. She only survived through the intervention of the ancestors who brought her back to life. Mulanga was sent away to be raised in a place of safety. The metadiscourse in the story confirms that indeed Mulalo got sick because he sat on the throne that was not rightfully his. This is the truth of the story – it does not belong to the realm of the real, but to

fantasy or fiction. The fact of shying away from social realism is admitted and lamented on by another SABC official as an underutilised “goldmine”:

> [The producer] has shied away from real issues […]. You’ve got the potential to talk about politics, or corporate issues like PFMA, like how people get ousted [from their jobs]. It’s not all these people in corporate they are doing it right. But when they want your head, they will pull something and that thing, just that one policy, is the one thing that will get you. The goldmine is what is currently happening now… (Interview, 02 September 2019).

Another example of the use of metadiscourse is the story of Mulondo and Mulanga, Chief Azwindini’s twin sons who were separated at birth. Shortly after Mulanga was reunited with his family and twin brother, he was murdered. But Mulanga makes an appearance and can only be seen by his twin brother, Mulondo. This presents a contradiction in the story – the question of how Mulondo could come back to life when he is dead, or is it possible that he has another supernatural, after-life existence. This event presented a threat of contradiction for realism, and this contradiction needed to be reconciled with reality for the viewer to accept the ‘truth’ of the fictional world presented. So, in television, if an event is witnessed by a particular character, and seen from that character’s point of view (often using an over-shoulder shot with a blurry frame), the viewer does not have to believe the event, but understands it as a figment of the character’s mind. However, in this case, Mulanga first appears as an image in the mirror behind Mulondo. From this point of view, the viewer regards Mulanga as the figment in Mulondo’s mind. But when Mulondo turns his head, the camera pans (without cutting) to show the real Mulanga in front of Mulondo. The pan shot connects the spaces between Mulondo and Mulanga into one unified spatial continuum. Conventionally, cuts are used to shorten space, but pans are more generous with reality and confirm the reality in the unified mise-en-scene. What is revealed in the pan shot reveals to the viewer that what Mulondo sees is not an illusion, but ‘real’.

This thesis argues that magic and fantasy should not have a place in public service broadcasting system unless they are used as devices to illustrate a point through

a strong metaphor, such as in children's programmes. In *Muvhango*, this approach to storytelling is asserted as being "authentic" (John, 2017).

> Whether it's a question of lack of research or utter disrespect on the production side of the soapies remains a question, but nonetheless these prominent channels' viewership ratings continue to grow, despite the intense, somewhat incorrect portrayal of witchcraft and African tradition and religion (Makhele, 2017).

It is a missed opportunity for *Muvhango* to afford audiences and the public an educational or informational chance to see a reflection of their real world and its inner workings, thereby building public knowledge in the process. This approach has actually met with backlash from some viewers on social media. One viewer, Alfred Mabunda, wrote on *Sowetan Online*:

> The only problem with the two SABC soapies is exaggeration. Things like Mashudu of Muvhango, who is now a zombie, do not exist in life. The zombi plot is just an exaggeration. No person can live two lives (Mabunda, 2016).

Muvhango also owes it to the public to accurately represent the world, and accurate portrayal of business is no exception. In Johannesburg, the central assembly point for most of the prominent characters is business. Mukwevho Milling is a business empire run by Thandaza. It started as a humble family business, but now it is listed as a public company. Accepting the SABC's explanation that business is only the backdrop but *Muvhango* has never been about business (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 9), it still must portray business accurately in order to avoid misleading the public.

However, Mukwevho Milling does not operate in line with the rules of a listed company and there is nothing that makes it a listed company apart from a mere mention of it. Due to the dominance of Mukwevho family in the business, corporate governance is overlooked in the story, and the wrongful representation of the business world passes as fact. An example is a storyline in which Albert, a senior member of the family and a board member of Mukwevho Milling, was killed in a violent shooting incident and died. His wife was 'taken over' by his older brother,

Gizara, who lived in Thathe. Gizara also came to Johannesburg and barged into a board meeting. When other board members questioned his presence, he stubbornly said he was a member of the Mukwevho family and had come to take the place of his late brother. The meeting commenced after the board members were happy with Gizara's explanation. This should not be possible in a big company like Mukwevho Milling, and certainly not in a listed company. There are specific shareholder agreement provisions, as well as general corporate governance rules and procedures to follow when one shareholder is replaced by another.

Another example is illustrated by James Motsamai, the director in Mukwevho Milling's competitor called Basadi Construction. When Motsamai was considering leaving the company, he asked his accountant for the value of his shares, for which a formal meeting was scheduled, and a full discussion was had. Motsamai did not have to ask his accountant this information, as the company itself (through its finance department or auditors) could tell him by issuing a statement of vested shares. The companies in *Muvhango* are also immune to the turbulences affecting businesses in the broader society. They run smoothly and are profitable, year in and year out. If the world of business is such a prominent backdrop, it is only responsible for this backdrop to be represented factually and accurately. This is another missed opportunity to indirectly educate and inform the public about business while at it. In an interview, the representative of the SABC's Content Hub admitted to occasional 'cheating' by the producers:

> There would be a lot of cheating because of … low LSM target audience. […] If you did a stock exchange story … it would go above their heads. […] The reason there was not even a complaint is because that audience does not understand it [stock market] anyway (Interview, 02 September 2019).

The interviewee added that this represents a missed opportunity to educate the public on how the country or the world works, in this case the stock exchange. Another way of representing reality is through absence of things that should otherwise be present. This lack of accurate representation of reality seems to have also resulted in outrightly irresponsible public messaging. It is conventional for

television, public and private, to always resolve plots in such a way that the good triumphs over evil or bad. In the *Muvhango* season under review, there has been incidents where the bad has prevailed over the good. One example is the story of Tenda, the current MEC in the Limpopo Provincial Government. Before he even became the MEC, Tenda was an unscrupulous and corrupt businessman who kidnapped, extorted, and stole money. On one occasion he kidnapped Teboho in revenge over her husband, and on another he kidnapped and tortured Chief Azwindini after discovering that the chief had an affair with his wife. Tenda has never been caught to face justice, nor are his deeds under investigation by law enforcement agencies. Instead, he got rewarded for these crimes and went up the political ranks and became mayor of Thathe before becoming the MEC in the Limpopo Provincial Government. By virtue of being an MEC with a picture of President Jacob Zuma in his office, Tenda is presumably an ANC deployee. This bears resemblance to some ANC political appointees who got away with corruption without much accountability for their actions. When the series writer was asked about this, they were very dismayed, painting a picture of concern within the writing team:

> … because one of the writers loved Tenda, they did not want him to be punished for corruption. […]. The first time in *Muvhango* somebody steals money and gets away with it (Interview, 28 October 2020).

The series writer was asked if this had anything to do with political considerations – that *Muvhango* might not have wanted to show an official of the ruling party being punished for corruption – because that was not commonplace under Jacob Zuma's administration. The writer said they had no idea.

Omission or exclusion says a lot about the author's construction of their world and how they prefer it to be. The world of *Muvhango* is that of traditionally oriented African society in which black people are prominent. In this world, other racial groups simply do not exist. In series 10, the only white person to feature was the character Barry Louw, who was introduced as KK's partner in his treacherous bid to stage a hostile takeover of MMC. Also, in this world, members of the LGBQTI

community are not present – which speaks to the conservative nature of the production. This is surprising because the SABC's editorial is based on inclusiveness as a reflection of South Africa's diversity. From this perspective, *Muvhango* seems to be negating some of the important aspects of the SABC's editorial policy.

As discussed above, the reality deficit in *Muvhango* is a problem admitted by SABC officials in the Content Hub, as a missed opportunity to enhance public engagement and education. If this drama is the property of the SABC, it begs the question of why is it that the SABC does not enforce their editorial policies. When asked, therefore, who between the producer and the commissioning editor, has the power, they had this to say:

> I should have the power ... but this does not mean I have the final say. I think it's because there will be proper escalation [to the COO, who have the final editorial say], if they don't agree with editorial […]. Sometimes you let it go, and the other times you stick to your guns […]. It's a relationship … you don't want to be antagonistic. It's a negotiation all the time because whether you like it or not you are at their mercy… (Interview, 08 August 2019)

This response describes the power of the producer, because of implied relationship that exists between some producers and the higher powers at the SABC. It means that the Content Hub officers are aware of this dynamic and are careful enough to know when to exert authority and when not to. It is a delicate balancing act bordering on self-censorship.

The above account begs another question – of why producers themselves would feel tempted to develop stories that shy away from reality and compromise the public value of their productions. After all, if they helped the SABC achieve their public service objectives, their contracts would run for longer, which is good for business. In a pushback, *Muvhango* series writer attributes culpability to the SABC, citing pressure from the SABC to chase high audience ratings. They believe the SABC's mission should not be about ratings, but about public value, and that the

pressure for audience ratings is a result of the SABC's instability and poor financial situation:

> … and just out of my dealings with the SABC … there is a raw fear there. Nobody knows what is going on, nobody knows if there is money, nobody knows if they'll still have a job – so there's panic and fear. So, if you operate out of panic and fear, you are not going to do an authentic work… (Interview, 28 October 2020).

On the impact of pursuing ratings on the storylines and values, the writer says the SABC have increasingly interfered, and the production house has been accommodating them, whereas in the past they used to resist the SABC's interference:

> … but the last couple of months, especially because *Muvhango* has been having some ratings problems, I have seen a distinct shift towards American [soaps]. But … that is why we are losing audiences if they [SABC] would listen to us (Interview, 28 October 2020).

The American soaps' approach is described as "the diabolical, debauched and dysfunctional route", characterised by dysfunctional families "where I marry my brother and have a daughter with my father" - which makes "me feel like I am writing Dallas" (Interview, 28 October 2020). From the narrative structure perspective, the SABC "demands more drama, more shock" – although *Muvhango*'s audiences, the writer notes, were never interested in suspense devices like the cliff-hanger – but more in the desire "to know what is happening in the inside [of the character]" (ibid). The following quote illustrates just how divergent the visions of the SABC and the production house are:

> You have a broadcaster who's only interested in ratings and not in building the soul of a nation. You end up bowing to the bloody dollar. Whereas in the past, *Muvhango* … was about real issues. *Muvhango* was about 'do I betray you or not'; 'do I have the right to love you and still live'; 'do I have the right to raise my child, or you are my child even if I did not give birth to you?' Those are all African values that [were] interrogated. No longer! (Interview, 28 October 2020).

Apart from the pressures to improve audience ratings, there are other, more business-oriented reasons why producers may want to please the broadcasters.

The incident around *Uzalo*, the new series proposal submitted to the SABC by the producer of *Muvhango* and his new partners, is a case in point. In 2016, the SABC put together a review panel to recommend whether to recommission or discontinue the drama *Uzalo*. At that time, *Uzalo* was a 13-part series which had come to an end (Ferreira, 2016b). The review panel expressed reservations over the high production budget which would not yield a healthy return on investment for the SABC. Also, this happened at the time the cash strapped SABC was asking for a bailout from the government. The panel took a decision against recommissioning and recommended a cancellation. The producer escalated the matter to then COO, Hlaudi Motsoeneng. Motsoeneng exercised his powers as the editor-in-chief and took a unilateral decision to approve the series as a daily drama, for a contract to the amount of R167million. After this experience, Motsoeneng's meddling became the new norm. This he did by isolating the executive head of television, head of television channels as well as head of Content Hub – the three heads responsible for making content calls. The then executive head of television raised concerns about Motsoeneng's meddling in editorial policy, schedules and programming - including dictating the line-ups of music award events – noting that these caused the rapid rising costs, declining audience and revenue across the three television channels (Blignaut & Gedye, 2016). This, according to the labour law case between the executive head of television and the SABC, strained the relationship between her and Motsoeneng, resulting in her contract termination in 2016. From this time onwards, Motsoeneng set up a "Special Projects" to evaluate all entertainment proposals. The team reported directly into Motsoeneng and was entrusted with the powers to assess all submitted content proposals (ibid). It has been reported that Motsoeneng made the final content calls, and often directly met with producers who sought new deals. The dedicated departments for programming, which were the Content Hub and television division, were rendered powerless.

It would therefore seem like the producers were caught in-between having to 'appease power' - represented by executives like Motsoeneng - and opted for more politically safe narrative lines on the one hand or give in to more populist storylines

for fear of contract termination due to poor audience ratings, on the other. *Muvhango*, in this case, does not seem to have been an exception. This is reminiscent of Grade Imoh's observation of the relationship between the media and the state in the new democracies of Sub-Saharan Africa. The author argue that the ruling elites enable certain media operations "in exchange for media support and patronage to sustain the ruling groups ideologies, interests or hold on to power" (Imoh, 2013: 46).

8.13 Conclusion

Muvhango is a traditional African utopia characterised by metaphysical events that have no bearing on the everyday lives of South Africans. It has fantasy elements written in realist style to hide their fictitious nature and lack of parallels in real life. This way, *Muvhango* glosses over critical social issues and avoids content that engages and empowers the public. It therefore offers little or no value for democratic citizenship on the public service platform.

Analyses of the institutional dynamics at play in the production of *Muvhango* reveal that the lack of a common vision between the SABC and the producer creates a disjuncture between the SABC's editorial and what ultimately gets produced and broadcast. This represents a missed opportunity to work together and achieve the national common goal of democracy and nation building.

9 Textual Analysis: *7de Laan*

9.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how democracy is represented in *7de Laan*, the second case study in the analysis of SABC's televisual text. Like the case of *Muvhango*, it seeks to establish an editorial connection between the SABC's entertainment content, and the broader democratic agenda of the broadcaster's editorial policies. As demonstrated in Chapter Seven, it has been created under the SABC's strict editorial guidance. In the model of analysis as spelt out in Chapter 5, this chapter is the second case constituting Fairclough's centre box – the text. Like *Muvhango* and other televisual texts, *7de Laan*'s text is multimodal, and consists of multiple semiotic resources such as sound, visuals, editing, characters, dress code, mannerisms and others to communicate meaning.

Again, not every semiotic resource will be used – but only the salient ones lending themselves to the discussion of democracy and its representation (or absence thereof). The democratic constructs (peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability and active citizenship) as identified in the literature review sections are once again used to define the otherwise abstract concept of democracy. It is the second case study to answer questions of the extent of this representation, such as which themes have been highlighted; which ones have been omitted; and in what ways have these themes been represented, promoted, discouraged and with whom are they associated, and to what ends, and so on.

The specific text – the units of analysis for this study – are a selection of specific storylines in Season 18 of *7de Laan*. This season was broadcast in 2017, the last year of the Zuma administration before the Nasrec Conference of the ANC that saw Zuma relinquish power to his successor, Cyril Ramaphosa. Through this textual analysis, this chapter seeks to once again answer the last aspects of the key research question – *whether and in what ways the SABC's entertainment content is supportive of a political culture that promotes the consolidation of democracy in South Africa*.

9.2 Introducing *7de Laan*

Like *Muvhango*, *7de Laan* is a commissioned soap programme, which makes it the intellectual property (IP) of the SABC. The SABC exercises full editorial control over the production of the soap and guides the production company as to what themes are important to explore. As is the case with *Muvhango*, *7de Laan*'s contract is usually renewed every three years, and the condition for contract renewal is usually influenced by audience performance, financial return on investment and public value.

7de Laan is one of the longest running television series in South Africa, with the first episodes having been broadcast on 4 April 2000 (Javan, 2016). At the time of writing, more than 20 seasons of the soap opera had been produced and broadcast, translating into over 5000 episodes (ibid). The analysis that follows focuses on a selection of storylines in season 18 which were spread between episodes 3902 to 4161. The storylines of interest are the newly introduced themes in season 18, which came as a result of the SABC's editorial intervention for 'change' in *7de Laan*. The identified storylines revolve around the introduction of the Moloi's, a black family; the new Afrikaans family, the Welmans; LGBQTI characters which are a gay couple and a transsexual character; and interracial relationship which involves two young doctors, Fikani Chauke and Alexa Welman.

As much as *7de Laan* is a property of the SABC, this chapter will show that the SABC does not always have the final editorial control. The broadcaster and the production company have not been seeing eye to eye on some issues, and the relationship has not always been a smooth ride (Interview, 19 August 2019). From issues of transformation (Marx-Knoetze, 2015: 150), dispute over broadcast slot changes where the SABC makes changes without consulting the production house (Channel 24, 2017) to disagreements over editorial issues between the two parties (Interview, 19 August 2019). In some instances, the SABC's own institutional problems such as delays in the issuing of contracts due to the broadcasters' financial strain (Malgas, 2017), or operational glitches such as scheduling

episodes in the wrong order have also strained the relationship between the two parties (Ferreira, 2016c). All these show that the SABC could not enforce their editorial wishes on the production company in a unidirectional, linear fashion.

9.3 Plot description

7de Laan tells the story of a bustling community living in Hillside, their interactions with each other, the ever-spreading gossip stories, the love and laughter of family and friends, and rivalry between Hilda and Matrone (cf. TV Plus). Hannelie Marx-Knoetze describes the general plot:

> The show generally consists of 17 permanent actors and approximately ten regular guest actors. The setting of the soap opera is the fictional *7de Laan* (Seventh Avenue) in the imaginary suburb of Hillside, in Johannesburg, South Africa, where all the characters live or work. Within this fictional space, the characters all interact on an ostensibly equal level irrespective of age, gender, race or class (Marx-Knoetze, 2015: 145).

The location for much of the action in *7de Laan* is one building, The Heights. This building consists of various businesses and apartments, and their tenants. There are other places in the area like the Welman House and the hospital, which form part of the setting but are not at The Heights. Thus, the audience in the soap opera "sees the characters in various personal, social and work-related situations" (Morden, 2014: 3).

The series is broadcast mainly in Afrikaans, but some characters also speak English, IsiZulu, Sesotho and Setswana. In addition, the soap opera has wall-to-wall English subtitles. In telling the story about the personal lives of different characters living in 7th Avenue of Hillside, *7de Laan* has relatively short story arches. There is no overarching story, just a situation. The storyline arches are fragmented and divided almost equally amongst the approximately 17-member cast. There is no main character or family around which the story evolves. It is about the community of Hillside as they live through the banality of everyday life. The radical threats to the community, such as an occasional robbery or presence

of a dodgy impostor in the community, are resolved rapidly and the established order resumes quickly to restore the status quo.

9.4 Claimed public value

Like *Muvhango*, *7de Laan* is aimed at creating a unique South African story. This, according to the Broadcasting Act No. 4 of 1999 is to "encourage the development of South African expression" (6 (4)). Through this unique expression, the SABC can "advance the South African national and public interest" (6(4d)). Like *Muvhango*, *7de Laan* is one of the many programmes on SABC2 that must give credence to this public value. The South African expression implies the importance of freedom of expression which South Africans must enjoy as part of their civil liberties. *7de Laan* contributes to this ideal by being inclusive in its representation of South African people and being the champion of authentic South African stories. In so doing, it assists in giving credence to the channel's slogan, "You Belong". The slogan gives expression to the 'channel for the nation' or nation-building positioning. SABC2 also defines its target market as 'the family', and not individuals (cf. *Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 5).

The inclusiveness credential of the soap opera is in its equal representation of black and white characters, both groups of characters playing equally important roles (Marx, 2007: 97). The coloureds and Indian groups also have a presence in the soapie. Concerning the intended target audience of the soap opera, the original creator of the series, Danie Odendaal, claims that, "even though the primary language of the soap opera is Afrikaans, *7de Laan* was never intended to be a white soapie." (Marx-Knoetze, 2015: 146). The goal of *7de Laan*, in Van der Merwe's assessment, is supposedly to represent a non-threatening, non-racial, but representative version of the South African imagined community (Van der Merwe, 2012: 38). However, she mentions that the aim of it all is to provide escapism. This critical sentiment is shared by many authors and will be discussed in depth later.

9.5 Audience profile

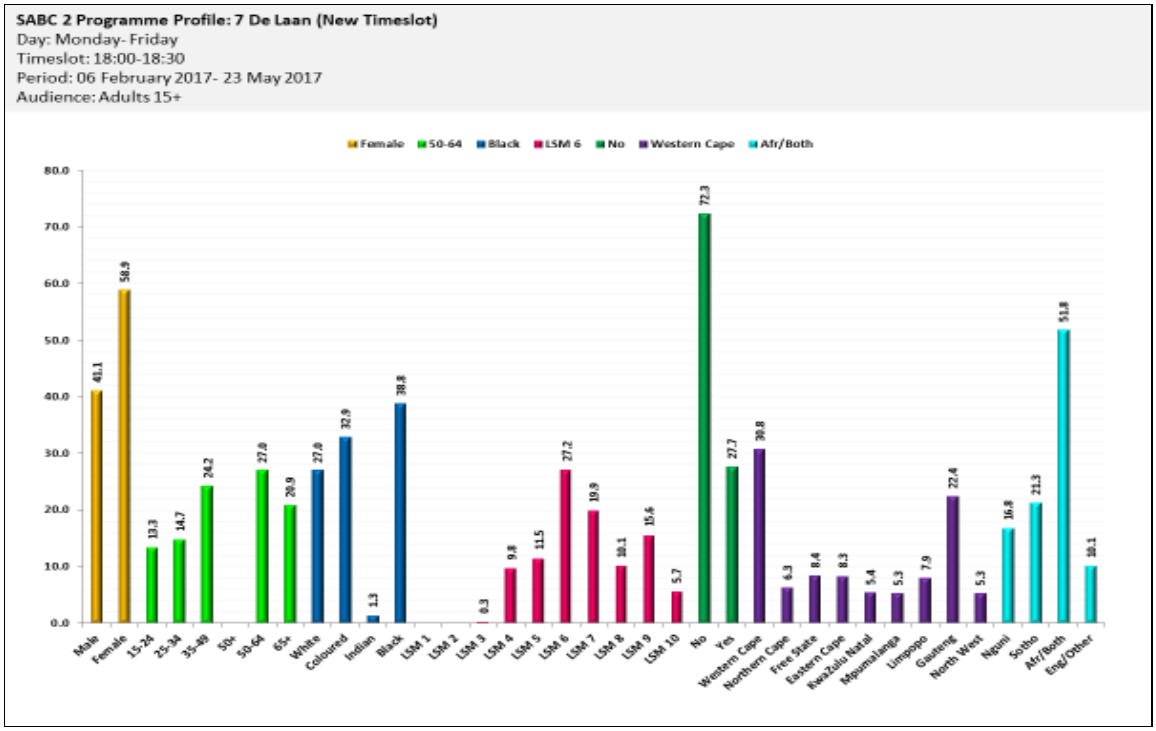

Table 8: 7de Laan's viewership profile

Audience profile statistics for *7de Laan* have largely remained unchanged for a number of years. There are slight differences between what Nadia van der Merwe observed in 2012 and what is represented in the graph above, which is a snapshot for 2017. To quote van der Merwe:

> A few aspects of the audience profile stand out, for example the fact that it only marginally draws in more female (57%) than male (43%) viewers and that 35% of the total audience is older than 50 years. […] there almost equal spread between white (33%), coloured (35%) and black (31%) viewers. (2012: 37)

The graph above shows the 2017 audience figures as supplied by the SABC. It shows that *7de Laan* is watched mostly by audiences in the LSM 5-7 group. They are predominantly more female (58.9%), representing a slight increase in female audiences. In terms of racial split, the soap has majority black audience (38,8%) compared to coloured (32.9%) and white (27.0%). Interestingly, the black audiences appear to have increased with the decrease of white audiences

whereas coloured audiences have remained unchanged. Perhaps this is the result of the SABC's suggested changes which started trickling in from late 2014:

> Regardless of its obvious popularity then, it seems that *7de Laan*'s presentation of the South African imagined community as an artificial hybridity, denying difference and conflict, is problematic to some, and this is reflected in the SABC's suggested changes (Marx-Knoetze, 2015: 151).

The other reason for a drop in the soap opera's audience performance is competition created by another broadcast network, Kyknet[46]. This television network has launched a handful of Afrikaans only channels.

9.6 Approach to narrative construction

7de Laan, like *Muvhango*, is a studio-based production which enjoys a convenient, controlled environment immune to the hassles of the external environment characteristic of location shooting. The shooting style and camera techniques are based on realism approach borrowed from Hollywood soap productions. For example, the use of steady and stable shots create an almost undetectable camera presence that lets the viewer into the private lives of the characters through the fourth wall. The Hollywood 'continuity editing' style, together with the abovementioned shooting style, creates an impression of an orderly, coherent and unified world. Like in *Muvhango*, this is a highly ideological approach that seeks to encourage a passive, laid-back viewership behaviour instead of an agitated, active and critical view of the drama.

The choice of music is originally South African, but like in *Muvhango*, a choice has been made towards a score that soothes rather than agitates – a typical soap opera approach. The acting style also borrows naturalistic approaches of Hollywood lines in which characters' acting motivation derive from deep emotions.

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[46] Owned by Naspers subsidiary M-Net, Kyknet was a single, Afrikaans-only channel on DStv. Today Kyknet itself is a multichannel network with specialist channels focusing on movies, children and lifestyle contents.

This is subtle approach which seeks to draw the viewer more intimately to the characters' inner psychology as opposed to the externalised acting of exaggerated facial expressions and gestures.

In *7de Laan*, like in other South African soap operas, stories are set in surroundings familiar to the viewer to make the environment more 'real' (Marx, 2007: 103). 7th Avenue is a familiar street name in many towns and cities in South Africa. In this vein, Marx notes that South African soap opera, *7de Laan* included, emulates the Anglo-American soap opera approach of sticking to the same time frame their viewers are in, for instance celebrating Christmas in December (Marx, 2007: 102). This realism is ideological as it tries to authenticate its narrative by emulating the real world.

Like in the case of *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* uses metadiscourse which places the viewer in the position of dominant specularity (Fiske, 1987b: 20) – a position of all-knowingness that enables the viewer to follow the story from a vantage point. *7de Laan*'s use of metadiscourse is closest to Hollywood's – as a way of trying to make the fictional world resemble the real world.

As far as intertextuality is concerned, *7de Laan* constructs a particular version of the Afrikaans world which is authenticated by a reference to other SABC texts like *Pasella* and *Voetspore*. For example, the older characters in *7de Laan*, like Matrone and Oubaas, provide a historical rooting and depth to the soap – and it is this history that overdetermine the cultural footprint of the soap. A look at *Pasella* and *Voetspore* provides examples of such 'characters' in the guise of Afrikaans-speaking farmers and retired restaurant owners. Texts from the broader SABC2 programmes, therefore, provide an intertextual reference which explains context and origin of Afrikaans language which *7de Laan* references and legitimates through its older characters. By contrast, other social or racial groups in the soap have no older generations represented. They are portrayed as late arrivals or outsiders who must adopt the prescribed ways as they found them. This way *7de*

Laan makes no intertextual reference to black or coloured texts even though they are also a part of the greater 7th Avenue, Johannesburg or South African society in the broader sense.

9.7 Milieu

7de Laan is set in Johannesburg and draws on the familiarity of the name because almost every South African town has a 7th Avenue (Marx, 2007: 103). It is a tried and tested approach to creating a sense of verisimilitude which creates an environment that the viewer can recognise as 'real'. The familiarity created through the narrative conventions of fictional realism of settings, recognisable, activities and familiar personae, "make it possible for viewers to identify with … a utopian version of the South African rainbow nation ideal in *7de Laan*" (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 26). Van der Merwe understands *7de Laan* as being closely aligned to the community model/British realist soap opera (2012: 38). However contrary to the case of *Coronation Street* which is generous with the way in which it shows the functioning and the social dynamism of its street, *7de Laan* has chosen to be conservative and instead glosses over the real social dynamics of this street (Van der Merwe, 2012: 37). The series has almost suffocated the characteristics of the community soap and placed it in an interior setting of a sitcom. Even the title sequence of *7de Laan* makes no real reference to the content and characters in the soap opera – instead, *7de Laan*'s approach is the creation of generic people of *7de Laan* in the soap opera's title sequence. These people are mainly white, urban and represent a particular strand of Afrikaans urban culture.

Streets in *7de Laan* are depicted from inside and not from the outside (pavement and kerbs, street corner, etc). This symbolically represents a way of looking out and cutting oneself from the outside world. By contrast, while most of the scenes are interior studio scenes, *Coronation Street* does showcase the actual street in which the houses and apartments are located. You see people going about their business as well as an impression of how the houses look from the outside. Such is a soap opera that has interest in the reality of people it seeks to reflect. Instead,

7de Laan confirms Adrian Steyn's claims about the racial slant of the Afrikaner culture industry, which is discussed section 9.10 below. This contrasts with the widely used soap opera convention in which the title sequence sets the tone of the soap by showing shots of characters, scenes taken from the story, and general atmosphere of the series. In *7de Laan*, these aspects are all made up in the title sequence, and the people shown are generic figures and not characters in the soap. Only their bodies, not faces, are shown. These faceless people are representative of the 'unknown' rest of South Africa. The current title sequence is even less generous with exterior mise-en-scene.

Muvhango uses a lot of establishing shots, which is one of the most prominent features of a soap opera. By contrast, *7de Laan* has no establishing shots. Nobody knows how each location looks like from the street point of view.

The pivotal point for most characters is Hillside Heights, a building in which most of the working class characters live (cf. *7de Laan* Series Bible). Others are Oppiekoffie, coffee shop owned by Charmaine Meintjies; Eclectic E Boutique Local boutique shop owned by Connie van der Lecq; Hillside Bookshop, owned by Ryno Lategan with the assistance of Matrone Netta Nortjè and Jacob Moloi (ibid); Hillside Deli, owned and managed by Vince Meintjies; Brynwaves, an events management company previously owned by Altus du Bruyn and bought over by the current owner Vanessa Meintjies; T&T is the local sporting equipment shop, formerly owned by Madel and Terreblanche, and now owned by Fikani Chauke (ibid); Stasie Ses, the after-work recreation and relaxation venue in Hillside owned and run by Marko Greyling); (ibid) Welman house, the old time mansion, previously owned by Madel Terreblanche and author Ryno Lategan, then by the Croukamps, but now by the Welmans; Beleef, the cafe' located above Stasie Ses, and was built by Chris Welman as a replacement for the Hillside Deli. It is jointly owned by Chris' ex-wife Mariaan and former deli owner Vince Meintjies (ibid).

As alluded to above, various businesses have exchanged hands over the years, especially with the new arrivals (e.g., Chauke) or coloured characters buying or sharing ownership with whites (e.g., The Meintjies). The series does not explore the nature of these transactions, and if they do show the details, they do not have anything to do with the current legislation of transformation or how the businesses were financed. The transactions are completely private and if money is borrowed, it is supposedly through normal private banks, and not via development finance institutions (DFIs) or state finance vehicles. DFIs and government funding bodies have social transformational conditions such as BEE, corporate social investment (CSI) and upliftment of other social groups such as people with disabilities. Private banks would be safer for *7de Laan* because they do not have any of these conditions and will not open the soap opera to having to deal with difficult social and political issues.

The setting of *7de Laan*, the imaginary Johannesburg suburb of Hillside, is perhaps the first representation front as the milieu of the story. Most characters live and work in *7de Laan*. In reality, though, it is not possible to have the whole suburb of people all working in the same street. Interestingly, the workplace and the businesses are mostly lifestyle, small and medium sized businesses. There are no large companies, nor do residents of *7de Laan* or Hillside commute every day to work at blue-chip companies further away. The small 'lifestyle businesses' in *7de Laan* are coffee shops, saloons, restaurants, events business, sports shops and bookshops. Small to medium companies are usually personally owned, and there are no corporate issues to deal with. This seems like a narrative device to cordon off Hillside as a standalone suburb disconnected from the rest of Johannesburg and South Africa. Residents working further away would have opened the community of Hillside to outside issues. Working for big blue chip or industrial giant would have created a major interruptive force, for workers in these companies are exposed to serious social issues like industrial action, strikes and other forms of mainstream politics that the *7de Laan* seems to avoid.

9.8 Select storylines

Soap opera characters drive the story and as they do, they become embodiments of social value systems expressed in it. They are a site of struggle in the representation of social subjectivities like race, gender, sexual orientation and class. Because of even distribution of storylines across all characters, it is not possible to just focus on the 'main' characters. Below is a summary of *7de Laan*'s character ensemble as described by the producers:

Madel, the matriarch; Charmaine, the motherly figure; Hilda and Matrone, the comics; Aggie, the upwardly mobile type; and, Paula, the egocentric exhibitionist (cf. Mahlangu, 2020). Others are Lesedi, the feisty lawyer; Charmaine Meintjies (Vinette Ebrahim), Connie van der Lecq (Quinne Brown Huffman), Aggie Ngwenya (Mimi Mahlasela), Alexa Welman (Carina Nel), Bonita Meintjies (Hildegardt Whites), Connie van der Lecq (Quinne Brown Huffman) (ibid).

Unlike in *Muvhango*, *7de Laan* does not seem to have any gendered power relations. Males in the series are usually non-violent and have no overbearing power over women. The world is even in terms of male and female. Marlin-Curiel notes that for years rugby has been used as the breeding ground for Afrikaner machismo (in Marx, 2007: 108). By cutting this umbilical cord, *7de Laan* has created new opportunities for the renegotiation of masculinity (ibid). Nadia Van der Merwe observes that the males are portrayed as good listeners and unlike the conventional muscular portrayal, they communicate their feelings to their friends (2012: 39).

For the large part, the above plot-points are usually nothing more than the portrayal of the banality of everyday life. Although it still shows a variety of potentially provocative themes like murder, inappropriate love affairs, betrayal, corruption, lies, disasters and sex, none of them, as Barbara Ludman puts it, is done in a manner that "takes the breath away" (Ludman, 2013). To some, this is good for democracy because it shows South Africa that is devoid of racial tensions or excessive violence. It is "what an ideal South Africa looks like" (ibid). In her

reception ethnographic study, Nadia van der Merwe (2012) conducted interviews with a selection of audiences with a view to determine why both Afrikaans and non-Afrikaans audiences are attracted to *7de Laan*. She found some 'uses and gratifications' benefits such as social interaction, problem solving and simply watching to relax as reasons for watching. For non-Afrikaans audiences, *7de Laan* was seen as a way of connecting with Afrikaans people in South Africa and to learn their language (2012: 53). However, as observed in literature review on *7de Laan* in section 3.6, the soap opera could do more to act as a catalyst for social good and the furtherance of democracy. From the SABC's perspective, *7de Laan* needed to change because of predictable and dragging storylines, as well as its "boring setup" and the need to break the dominance of Afrikaans in the soapie, which the broadcaster saw as a "barrier" (*7de Laan* Programme Review, 2015).

Interventions included the need for the production company, Danie Odendaal Productions, to transform and be more inclusive, or to make room for what *Huisgenoot* refers to as "affirmative action" (Marx-Knoetze, 2015: 150). This is perhaps the reason the company itself shed some of its ownership to include Thandi Ramathesele, a black female partner. The former general manager of SABC2 and a producer of several television shows, Ramathesele came into a familiar territory. Other changes in the production team were the inclusion of a black director, Neo Matsunyane and a black line producer, Frances Maphosa. However, the suggested content changes for season 18, which is the subject of discussion in this section, seem to have been met with some challenges. The SABC respondent remarked that there was some resistance from the writers of the series, who are largely "white males" (Interview, 19 August 2019). The official mentioned that the writers had not developed stories in line with the SABC's recommendations after many meetings and consultations. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the producers, writers and directors of *7de Laan* declined to grant an interview on their perspectives in this regard. This is symptomatic of an underlying tension between the production company and the SABC. The storylines discussed below are a result of the recommended changes for season 18. Many

changes were implemented, including the discontinuation of characters such as Oubaas and Hilda, as well as reduction of roles of characters like Matrone and Charmaine in a push to make the soap a bit younger. However, a choice has been made to discuss only the following: Welman family (new white family), interracial relationship, LGBQTI theme and the Moloi family (new black family).

9.8.1 The Welman Family

The Welmans are a family of five who in season 18 comes back to *7de Laan* Hillside from the United States. It is a typical nuclear family with parents and their children. David Rees who plays Chris Welman the father and husband, is a familiar Afrikaans actor well known from Afrikaans soap, *Egoli*. Deidre Wolhuter, who plays the mother and wife Mariaan Welman, is also a well-known Afrikaans actress known from KykNET's television series such as *Paw Paw Vir My Darling* and *Fluisters*.

The plotline for this family is typical of a soap opera: Chris's old friend, Frank, arrives in town and their old friendship and working relationship restarts. Unbeknown to Chris, Frank had a passionate affair with Mariaan years ago. He wanted Mariaan to leave Chris and start a new life with him but although she loved Frank, Mariaan refused – her children were young at the time and Frank could not offer her the financial security that Chris could. Then Frank and Mariaan have a full-blown affair and all the old feelings are rekindled. But then Chris finds out that his wife is being unfaithful to him – and that his trusted friend is the culprit. All hell breaks loose and Chris kicks Mariaan out of the house (episode 3923). After some time, Chris agrees that Mariaan can move back home (episode 3948). But he makes it clear that he has not forgiven her and is not ready to resume life as normal. It took a conniving ploy from Mariaan to fake amnesia after her hospitalisation to get Chris to develop some sympathy and forgiveness for her.

Plotlines for the children are banal and typical of *7de Laan* too. Rickus Welman the son (André Lotter) suffers a shock when he discovers Amanda, Alexa's double, in

a coma. His parents, Chris and Mariaan suspect that Rickus is taking drugs and therefore make up far-fetched stories and have him committed to a psychiatric unit (episode 3981). Rickus then escapes and starts working as a volunteer at the rehab facility where Amanda is regaining her strength after recovering from the coma (eps 3987). To prove to his family that he is telling the truth, he convinces Amanda to accompany him to the Welman house. In another subplot, Rickus wins a weekend trip to a luxury game farm and invites a group of friends to come along. Willem and Amorey both end up going, along with Marko, Diederik, Alexa, Petro and Suna, the pilot. Rickus gets amorous with the pilot, causing the plane to go down in an inhospitable wilderness area (episode 4086). The characters have to survive in the toughest of conditions – where there is no hope. The youngest daughter Amorey (Kristen Raath) courts controversy when she gets close to her cousin Willem, falls in love with him, culminating in a kiss on air. Realising that she has feelings for Willem, a shocked Amorey knows that this is a relationship that can never be and tells Willem to stay away from her. This subplot also includes Chris discovering that Amorey is not his biological daughter, causing him to leave Mariaan for a cruise ship tour.

This is a socially unproblematised plotline which seems to have done little to assist the changes that the SABC had sought. Chris's character is built on the traditional alpha male who, being the patriarch of the family, still exercises his power to chase his wife out of her home. The only 'power' Mariaan can exercise is within the bounds of her being a woman – to use emotional intelligence, blackmail and manipulation without challenging Chris's power and the broader patriarchy head-on. Within this family though, the older daughter Alexa Welman (Carina Nel) does the unthinkable and dates Fikani Chauke – a black medical doctor. Although this act attracts controversy off-screen amongst *7de Laan*'s fans, the Welman family and everyone else in Hillside do not oppose it. Though introduced as a change in season 18, the Welman family actually does the opposite. It helps to preserve the status quo of a traditional Afrikaans family already characteristic of *7de Laan*. The storylines built around this family could have fitted well in the apartheid-era soap.

9.8.2 Interracial relationship

This storyline circles around the controversial interracial relationship between Fikani Chauke, played by Nicholas Nkuna and Alexa Welman, played by Carina Nel (cf. *7de Laan* Series Bible). The interracial relationship is nothing new on *7de Laan* – the last one resulted in a disaster both in the media and on set. In the last interracial encounter, it was the character Nandi (Mbali Mlotswa) who was having a romantic affair with Bernard (Werner Coetser) which sparked viewer abuse and racial slurs. However, what made matters worse is Mlotshwa's complaint that some of the abuse came from within the production house itself, sparking calls for the producers to investigate the claims (Haden, 2016). In the current attempt, Fikani arrives in *7de Laan* in episode 4100 looking for a business opportunity. He buys the sports shop T&T, planning a huge revamp, including a new name. But after realising that T&T has a lot of history and tradition, he decides not to change the name, thus preserving the old *7de Laan*. Like Alexa, Fikani is a qualified doctor, but he had decided to leave the medical profession when he lost a patient on the operating table, thus losing confidence as a worthy physician.

Alexa Welman – Fikani's love interest - is a young white medical doctor who works at the local hospital. When Alexa and Fikani's relationship developed, it seemed like any other, until in episode 4482 when they kissed on screen. An act of kissing in *7de Laan* is normal and attracts no complaints, like the kiss between Amorey (Kristen Raath) and Willem (Markus Haywood), or between Vince and Agnes (who are racially similar). It is the interracial nature of Alexa and Fikani's kiss that caused controversy among viewers of *7de Laan*. Some fans were outright racist and sent hate emails to the actress Carina Nel (Winters, 2019). Some remarked on social media that the actress was "dragging white girls' name through the mud" (Daily Voice, 2019). There were naturally others who defended the decision to write the scene. However, it is significant because of the fact that it is the first ever interracial kiss in the soap's 18-year history (Dyer, 2019) and 26 years after the collapse of apartheid; and the resistance also shows how much some Afrikaans television

viewers have remained in the old South Africa. In the media, both the production house and the writer came in defense of the soapie. Hanlie Rolfes, the series head writer was quoted in *The Sowetan*:

> We live in a real South Africa where loads of people have interracial relationships. *7de Laan* is focused on putting the real South Africa on TV. It is our responsibility to show that art imitates life (Zeeman, 2019).

Following this kiss and the subsequent audience backlash, there was never another kiss noticed between these two characters. Furthermore, this interracial relationship remains in place but in name only – because it is never 'consummated'. Apart from the fact that they are both medical doctors, they have little in common. They come from two different worlds and there is not much to bridge the personal interests and cultural gap between them. Their romantic relationship lacks spontaneity and affection. Unlike what the series writer, Hanlie Rolfes said, the couple appears completely incompatible, the affair is forced through script and appears to lack the chemistry of relationships that work. This gives credence to one skeptical viewer's question on social media as to whether "their relationship [can] stay the course" (Winters, 2019). In fact, Alexa was taken to "Africa" for an indefinite period of time where she has joined MSF (Doctors without Borders). This might be symptomatic of a plotline the writers and producers do not know how to resolve or comfortably sustain. It suggests that this integrationist direction forced by the SABC onto the producers does not work, resulting in the producers creating a relationship that has no material existence, but one which merely ticks the boxes. What appeared on screen, therefore, seems to support the SABC's assertion that the interracial relationship and the kiss that followed was resisted by the series' conservative writers and producers:

> There were instances where some stories were avoided because they would ruffle feathers. For example, *7de Laan* writers resisted writing an interracial relationship and a kiss, questioning whether the audience was ready for it. I was like "when will they be ready?" (Interview, 19 August 2019).

It seems like, in the end, the producers had the last say with their (deliberately) failed artistic rendition of a mixed-race relationship aimed at proving that such relationships would never work. From this point of view, *7de Laan* rejects anomalies that threaten the identity of Hillside by having Alexa leave town like the proverbial outcast who had to be condemned to a life outside the city. For the producers, leaving them both in the same place presents the headache of having to sustain the love affair.

9.8.3 LGBQTI

In an unprecedented move, *7de Laan* showed a same-sex kiss that happened in a scene between Logan (Simon Tuit) and Divan (Arnu de Villiers) in front of waiters and patrons in the café, Oppiekoffie. There have been mixed reactions to the kiss. Some have said that the show is a bit too conservative to air the kiss, while others were thrilled. Either way, it was a historic moment for the show (ECR Drive, 2017). In reaction to the scene, some critics say they would like to see shows promoting more traditional Christian morals. But others say they appreciate shows that address interracial relationships and domestic abuse because it helps them talk to their children about those issues (McMurrey, 2017). Gay couples, which had been a familiar feature of South African television for a while, were until now left out of the soap opera. As television critic Thinus Ferreira notes, programmes like *Top Billing*, *Isidingo* and *Generations* have previously showcased gay couples in one way or another. Ferreira, however, notes that the debate following the kiss was no surprise owing to "the conservative nature of some of its [*7de Laan*] viewers" (Van Der Walt, 2017).

Another theme related to LGBQTI is the soap's portrayal of a transgender character. In April 2017, *7de Laan* made history again when they broadcast the first transgender character on South African television. Using the real transgender actress Deonay Balie to play Genevieve, *7de Laan* leveraged the actor's personal experience to enrich the on-screen character. Genevieve comes into *7de Laan* to take part in a competition for well-rounded women. She is paired with Aggie (Mimi

Mahlasela) as a tag team, but her strong character and personality makes her appear intimidating to Aggie, who tries to befriend her. On the screen, Genevieve is caught in an uncomfortable moment when an old school friend, Johan (Ashley Manuel) meets her at Oppie Koffie and recognises her as Gerard, her previous name when she was a male. Johan is disgusted to see 'him' dressed as a woman and makes it well known to her. This shows the pain that transgender characters go through every day and *7de Laan* has done well to highlight transgender people's plight. Some viewers praised the SABC, Danie Odendaal productions and Balie for the plotline (Rose, 2017). However, like was the case with the interracial and gay kisses, conservative viewers of *7de Laan* took to social media and churned out homophobic slurs against Balie (Valentine, 2017). This story arch was however short-lived with Deonay Balie only enjoying a month and a half of screen time. Like all the 'controversial' characters and storylines anomalous with *7de Laan*, the soap opera had to restore itself and go back to its roots.

9.8.4 The Moloi Family

Lesedi Moloi, introduced in episode 4016, is a lawyer who represents Cecile in the Cecile versus Vince custody battle (cf. *7de Laan* Series Bible). Lesedi is interested in acquiring a property portfolio and approaches Chris to be her mentor. Unbeknown to Lesedi, her father Jacob (Patrick Shai) and Chris were friends on a farm as young men. Chris, terrified of his father, had falsely blamed Jacob for a shooting incident in which a man was killed. Jacob was sent to a juvenile facility and later prison where he was harshly treated and sustained injuries that have plagued him ever since. When Lesedi, his pride and joy, was offered a bursary to study law, Jacob was ecstatic. However, Jacob was unaware that the bursary was made available by Chris. When Lesedi finds out (episode 4055), she plots revenge against Chris. She solicits the help of Justin, who is desperate for money to get himself and Amanda out of the country. As part of the plan, Chris is made to believe that he has shot Justin when Justin breaks into the Welman house and threatens Lesedi. Lesedi gets rid of a shocked Chris, telling him she'll take care of everything (episode 4068). When Mariaan learns that Justin is still alive, she realises that 'his

death' was part of Lesedi's plot. A livid Mariaan wants revenge, but Chris, however, is more interested in solving the problem once and for all. He goes to Jacob and asks for forgiveness. Jacob forgives Chris and their friendship is restored.

Over time Jacob eventually leaves Hillside, leaving Lesedi on her own. Lesedi's mother, Ruth (Tina Jaxa) had already left the soap in the early days after her secret that Lesedi was not Jacob's daughter, got revealed. So, in the end, the Moloi family, which was introduced with much fanfare, soon dissipated. Unlike the Welman family, which has remained intact, the Moloi family becomes another broken, dysfunctional, and scattered black family. Lesedi has become one of the many other non-white characters – a lonesome outsider who has settled in Hillside. As an outsider lawyer, she is not one of the trusted community professionals, like Alexa and Matrone – who work at the local hospital, trusted by everyone in the community. Therefore, the established characters in Hillside are not her clients. Instead, her clients are outsiders too – like the case of Cecile (Chantal Stanfield) who took on Vince (Jacques Blignaut) in a custody battle over their son Christopher (Jiphtael Langeveldt). Lesedi's outsider status is legitimated by the design of her character that is always conniving against and fighting with others. In episode 4482, Jacob discovers from Charmaine that his beloved daughter, Lesedi, is married and he was not aware of it. Lesedi, in response, budges into Beleef restaurant where Charmaine works and confronts her in front of the many patrons present. She accuses them of ruining her relationship with Xander (Theodore Jantjies), but admits that she is indeed married. In her irrational rant, she denounces everyone that was there, including Bonita, Vanessa, Esti, Hilda and Charmaine, saying that she has no friend at Hillside: "I am done with all of you. You can all go to hell". For her nature, she is not someone the community can trust to do any good. Again, Hillside has restored its old self where non-Afrikaans speakers and non-whites do not quite fit. They are reduced to individuals without roots and identity – to be defined in terms of the space in which they have sought refuge, the space in which they do not enjoy the entitlement of "belonging."

9.9 *7de Laan* sample episode – Women's Day

What follows below is a discussion of a select episode for a closer analysis. In this episode, Hillside is celebrating Women's Day. Although there is a continuation of established storylines (e.g., Alexa's fight with Willem over Willem's marriage proposal to Amorey, Alexa's sister and Willem's cousin), they unfold against the backdrop of women's day, an annual South African public holiday on 09 August. The broadcast of this episode on women's day, in which the women's rights activist, Sophie de Bruyn, was featured, gives credence to the claim that soap opera forges a sense of realism by sticking to the same time frame their viewers are in (Marx, 2007: 102).

In this episode, Fikani realises that the revenue of T&T, a sports shop he has recently bought, had been in decline for months. This implies that this trend had started even before he took over the business. To try to understand what is going on, he solicits the help of Agnes. As he engages Agnes, he is emphatic that he is a hands-on kind of guy. However, Fikani should have known this before buying the business, as part of due diligence. To try to understand the financial performance of a business after buying it shows that Fikani had a disregard for one of the fundamentals of business. Although this point is not explored further in the story, it creates a stereotypical portrayal of black people who are not diligent in business and management, no matter how "hands-on" they might claim to be.

Women's Day arrives, and Oppie Koffie is abuzz with guests. Vanessa (Ingrid Paulus) has booked the whole restaurant for women only, with the struggle veteran Sophie de Bruyn being the guest speaker. The women in attendance are largely white and coloured, with Lesedi and Agnes as the only established black characters. There were no visible Indian people. As one of the few places available for public gatherings in *7de Laan*, the demographic of the gathering does not reflect the people of South Africa in the broader sense. Even the suburbs of Melville and Greenside, which the soapie purports to be based on has been more diverse and culturally vibrant than what is seen on *7de Laan*. This appears to be the trend in

the soapie, as also reflected in the previous episode in which Matrone (Annelize van der Ryst) hosted the elderly people at Marko's restaurant, Stasie Ses. The "oldies," as she calls them, are all white and do not resemble the broader make-up of the South African society or present-day Melville/Greenside.

Women's day celebrations appear to be a racialised event. It has been organised by a coloured woman, hosting a coloured guest speaker. It is an event brought into *7de Laan* by outsiders into the white Afrikaans world. The conversation between Vanessa and Diederik (Hennie Jacobs) in the previous episode (episode 207) supports the impression that white people are agnostic to and ignorant of such post-apartheid public events[47]:

Diederik:	I don't know much about women's day. And because I am a man…
Vanessa:	It's about rights of all people. Regardless of sex. Surely you know about the march of 1956 - when 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings to protest about the pass books?
Diederik:	Sure?
Vanessa:	Sophie was one of the leaders. We need more women like that. People who are brave enough to stand for justice.

There is no issue with a woman educating a man about this important day in the South African history. However, as soon as Sophie de Bruyn finished her speech, and the credits start to roll, *7de Laan* goes back to its normal self. The token celebration of public holidays appears to be done to just tick compliance boxes, but not to remain part of the heart and soul of the soap opera. This shows the divisions that still exist in South Africa and how *7de Laan*'s make-up as a soap opera is not helping to bridge them.

[47] Dialogue transcribed from subtitles.

9.10 Social dynamics in *7de Laan*

In *7de Laan*, provocative and topical social issues are avoided in favour of more escapist storylines. Nadia van der Merwe notes that while social issues are from time to time included in the storyline, more engaging storylines such as gender-specific issues, homosexuality, AIDS, and overtly political issues are avoided. This includes sexual intercourse which, if at all is only implied and never shown (van der Merwe, 2012: 38). On the point of more provocative portrayal of issues, the SABC official interviewed mentions challenges with the 18:00 slot where the series is currently broadcast:

> The watershed restrictions dictate the level of safety with which to handle these issues, which include avoidance of scenes showing explicit sex and graphic violence. This is unlike in *Muvhango*, which is scheduled after 21:00 (Interview, 19 August 2019).

Some analysts are tempted to think of *7de Laan*'s racially balanced utopia as progressive, but as Marx-Knoetze points out, it exerts no tangible influence on the status quo (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 31). Another way of thinking about this utopia is that it provides a view of, and an imagination of a fully consolidated democracy in South Africa where everything works, where there is no corruption and the much dreamt-of racial harmony prevails. However, in avoiding being critical by, for example, suggesting what the society must do, or pointing at things the society is failing to do, the utopia is of no value. Rather, as argued before, it encourages the migration away from the ideal of a unified South African nation.

The series appears to have locked itself out from the real world. The only world that exists is the inward-looking, inside world characterised by the soap's interior settings. Many other community soaps, like *Coronation Street*, treat the national realities as issues of its own communities. By contrast *7de Laan* has no broader South African context – it simply negates it into non-existence. Marx-Knoetze refers to this as the "patrolled boundaries" which are exemplified in *7de Laan* as "the conversion of public spaces to private ones" (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 26). For example, Oppikoffie (a local coffee shop featured in *7de Laan*) is a public place which also functions as a setting in which the private lives of the characters play

out and within which mainly characters from the casts interact (ibid). These public, yet private, spaces contribute to the creation of a boundary between the soap opera world and the world “out there”, minimising the danger of interaction with the Other (ibid).

Because of the absence of the outside world, the representation of democratic institutions in *7de Laan* is almost silent. The only regular public place is the hospital. A law enforcement officer only appears on a rare occasion when a crime has occurred, or if there is a court case, the court chambers. In these three instances, the face of these public institutions are white people, with Matrone as the administrator of the hospital. The hospital, for example, is very clean and orderly, and through the character of Matrone, the viewer is not exposed to issues of filth, lack of equipment, strikes and maladministration that have engulfed public hospitals in South Africa. The real Johannesburg characterised by the chaos of power sharing between the DA and EFF, does not exist. This is a completely parallel universe that misrepresents the democratic institutions through omission. This false portrait of orderly public places, together with the general positioning of the soap opera as having been overdetermined by white Afrikaans social order, seems to suggest that the country works better when white people are in power. It pretends to be a political idealist take on the new South Arica when it is in fact a silent commentary on contemporary political situation fuelled by a nostalgic longing for a white controlled society.

Just like in *Muvhango*, this is an instance where resistance to SABC’s editorial guidelines came from the producer’s side. The difference to *Muvhango* though, is that this resistance comes from the conservative Afrikaans sentiment. As Marx-Knoetze reports, Danie Odendaal confirmed that during deliberations with the SABC, it was concluded that *7de Laan* was not keeping up with the changes in the South African society. She also quotes Kaizer Kganyago as having added that the soap opera needed to include more current issues in its narratives (Marx-Knoetze, 2016: 150). The SABC official interviewed mentions that following the initial

changes to the soap opera, the SABC experienced a lot of negative publicity from the Afrikaans press. Marx-Knoetze notes:

> According to *Huisgenoo*t, the SABC was forcing affirmative action on *7de Laan*'s producers. It is anticipated that said affirmative action would have an impact on casting, intrigues and narratives. The goal of the requested changes is to make "Hillside more representative of all South Africans". This pertains to not only the actors and storylines, but also the producers and writers (Marx-Knoetze, 2016: 150)

Non-white characters in *7de Laan* have to fit into the soap's version of constructed Afrikaans culture as discussed above. When they enter *7de Laan*, they have to leave behind their background and history and simply assimilate. Example is Fikani who in season 18 gets introduced as a businessman who settles in Hillside. He is an outsider with no history and coming to Hillside he has to cut his roots and previous social links. He now just exists without any historical context and as a result, his character lacks depth. When he bought T&T, an existing sports business in *7de Laan*, he had the opportunity to rebrand it and write himself into the Hillside landscape. Instead, he decides not to rebrand it due to its history, heritage and tradition, thus once again preserving the Afrikaans and white heritage on Hillside's geography. As much as there is an equal ratio of black and white in the series, the milieu remains the white people's world. White and coloured characters' only linguistic alternative is English – a continuation of apartheid-era linguistic divisions. None of the white characters speaks any African language except for Marko who occasionally speaks Zulu. Marko's ability to speak Zulu does not, however, create any opportunities for bridging the cultural gap between him and other characters, nor does it give him any added benefits over others who do not. In other words, his Zulu proficiency does not have any bearing over the social dynamics in the soapie. This way, non-white people in *7de Laan* may have been included, but do not belong. They live in Hillside on white people's cultural terms. Coloured characters, who have been part of *7de Laan* since inception, have long been assimilated into the Afrikaans culture. They speak and behave in the same way as their white counterparts. They have been brought into the soap ready-made and

have not had to adapt over time. The rich culture, heritage and the colourfulness of their Afrikaans dialects are muted. The moment they entered this Hillside, they were culturally rebooted and reactivated according to the wishes of their creator. For them to belong, they had to cease to be themselves.

Continuing the discussion on Afrikaans, Hannelie Marx-Knoetze notes that in South Africa, there are more non-white than white Afrikaans speakers and yet the dialect of the language is determined by 'whiteness' (Marx-Knoetze, 2016: 146). The idea of Afrikaans as whiteness has been explained by Adrian Steyn who argues that after the then National Party lost state power in 1994, and by extension guardianship over the Afrikaans language, the organising force behind Afrikaans is now private media companies (Steyn, 2016: 483). Steyn argues that Afrikaans private media companies have harnessed the fear of a demise of Afrikaans after apartheid, to mobilise a migration back into "a *volkstaat* (nation state) of the mind" (ibid: 500). From this point of view:

> The consumption of these commodities could easily be transformed into a sort of collective pseudo migration: a gradual emotional detachment and withdrawal from South Africa, its realities, the state and the "rainbow nation (Steyn, 2016: 500)

The type of Afrikaans spoken in *7de Laan* also says something about the whiteness overdetermination of culture in *7de Laan*. Different characters, although not all white, speak standardised Afrikaans and different dialects are neutralised as much as possible (van der Merwe, 2012: 38). Marx-Knoetze further notes that the language is, furthermore, politically and ideologically connected to whiteness owing to apartheid and its concomitant language policies (2018: 25). Moreover, since the Afrikaans debate is often driven by white Afrikaner cultural organisations, there is a tendency to confuse Afrikaans as "belonging to" white Afrikaners (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 25). In *7de Laan*, however, the sole use of standard Afrikaans is classified by Milton as "deterritorialisation" and "the lack of intralinguistic diversity ultimately contributes to a homogeneous construction of Afrikaans-speaking South

Africans, which is contrary to the actual diversity of its speakers" (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 28). Adriaan Steyn argues that the Afrikaans cultural practitioners (such as filmmakers) have used the construction of fear as a segregationist tool:

> Instead of being an emancipatory force, facilitating Afrikaans speakers' forceful integration into a new South Africa and "rainbow nation," it has succeeded in reaffirming and naturalising the imagined boundaries of Afrikanerdom (Steyn, 2016: 483).

From its strange character as an inward-looking, private, and closed-off community, *7de Laan* can be seen as playing into this Afrikaans-as-white narrative. The presence of an almost equal number of non-white characters in the soap opera can be seen as part of the same strategy of "buying legitimacy under the current political regime" (Steyn, 2016: 492) as practiced by the greater Afrikaans culture industry.

9.11 Conclusion

7de Laan presents a utopian state in which citizens are colour blind and where peace and harmony prevail (Milton, 2015: 261). This approach has been seen by some (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 26) as an example of ideal democracy at work. A well-known television critic, Thinus Ferreira remarked that changes in *7de Laan* indicate that "the public broadcaster, for all its faults, is actually quite progressive" (Van Der Walt, 2017). However, a closer look reveals a skewed representation of race and an attempt to preserve a conservative culture that resists more sustainable and progressive change. The cases of black, gay and transgender characters show that the lack of commitment to honest representation of these groups is a disservice to democracy itself. These 'anomalous' storylines and characters tend to disappear over time like a flash in the pan – after all, in the soap opera, Hillside always restores itself by ridding itself of outsiders who threaten the status quo.

The only new family that remains intact despite normal everyday problems is the Welmans. The interracial relationship also attests to a story that is more interested in proving that such relationships are dysfunctional and will never work. This way,

7de Laan is an “uncritical version of the South African rainbow nation ideal” (Marx-Knoetze, 2018: 26). For fans and producers who appear to resist change in *7de Laan*, the soap opera still, to some degree, functions as a site of resistance to change which is necessary in the new, all-inclusive, democratic South Africa. Like *Muvhango* therefore, it offers little or no value for democratic citizenship on the public service broadcasting platform.

10 Findings and conclusion

10.1 Summary of key findings

This chapter follows on the discussion conducted in the previous three chapters wherein the analysis of the three aspects (social context, discursive practice and textual analysis) of media's role in democratic consolidation was conducted. It was clear from literature review that democratic consolidation could only be better understood within a framework of a maximalist view of democracy. This means that the five attributes of a consolidated democracy – which are peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability, and active citizenship – had to be brought to the fore and be used to define the social practice of democracy in South Africa. This is then approached with the MCDA method, for it not only enabled the exploration of text in its multimodal form, but also placing text in its socio-political (democratic social practice) and production or institutional context (discursive practice).

From a socio-political perspective, the assessment of South Africa's democracy conducted in Chapter Six has shown that, while formal aspects of democracy (e.g., voting, political parties, national assembly debates, etc.) are present, the other softer aspects that speak to a democratic culture are lacking. Dominant one-party state has resulted in unfettered waste of state resources and lack of service delivery while structural inequalities have exposed the vast majority of South Africans to structural violence. From this point of view, some analysists have concluded that "it cannot be said that South African democracy has been consolidated" (Kotzé & Loubser, 2017: 49-51). This state of democracy has impacted deeply on the SABC as an institution of democracy. Moreover, the assessment of the discursive practice of the SABC in Chapter Seven has revealed that as a democratic institution, the SABC has been weakened by political interference and mismanagement. This is almost a classical textbook characteristic of hybrid regimes' victimisation of the media as revealed in the literature review, especially public service broadcasting.

The analysis of text has revealed that *Muvhango* and *7de Laan*, the two popular soap operas on SABC2, shows a missed opportunity to engage the public on issues that could drive positive social change and contribute meaningfully to democratic consolidation. The soap-operas' indifference to South Africa's real social dynamics, which is contrary to the editorial codes in SABC's entertainment programming, robs the public of the opportunity to be empowered as citizens. In this light, the general assessment is that *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* were indifferent at best, and oppositional at worst, in their roles in the creation of a political culture conducive to democratic consolidation. For those reasons, the SABC has been complicit in 'supporting' a government that is not committed to the pursuit of democratic ideals.

Another finding, perhaps unanticipated, is on the dynamics of the production of text. It was originally assumed that the final text on the screen, consumed by viewers, was a pure representation of the wishes of the broadcaster. However, a closer inspection of the discursive practices of both the producers and the SABC revealed factors that contributed towards compromised implementation of the SABC's editorial objectives. The SABC's financial problems, together with excessive political interference as embodied by their COO, created a condition unsuitable for producers to optimally do their work. The research also revealed that the producers did not always take the SABC's directives lying down, but often negotiated, pushed back and sometimes openly defied the public broadcaster. Furthermore, the audience's social practice, extended by the increasing availability of smart mobile devices, created a platform for the negotiation of meaning in the text beyond face-to-face interactions. In a similar vein to Hall's theory of "encoding/decoding," (Hall, (1993: 517) these viewers accepted, remained indifferent to, or rejected the soap's "preferred reading" (Hall, (1993: 515) offhand. Example of this is how some of *Muvhango*'s viewers rejected the soap's value proposition of African history and heritage, saying that the witchcraft and black magic were simply unreal and do not represent what being African is about. Some of *7de Laan*'s viewers, on the other hand, rejected some of the soap's progressive

storylines featuring interracial kiss and LGBQTI themes even when these are everyday South African realities.

In her analysis of SABC channels in general, Woudri Botha commented that the restructuring of the three SABC national television channels into “distinctive social groups follows a logic that may be working against the idea of a unified nation” (Botha, 2010: 3). The cases of *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* have exemplified how, at intra-channel level, SABC2 has continued to create discreet, separate ‘publics’. The reflected worlds, style, character-types and social issues raised are like a representation of two distinct countries instead of being parts or aspects of one whole. At intertextual level, *Muvhango* references black African televisual texts while *7de Laan* references white Afrikaans texts. This lack of reference to one unified South Africa runs contrary to the creation of a unified South African ‘family’ in line with the channel’s positioning statement undergirded by its slogan, “You Belong”. This “diversity without unity” (cf. Brown, 2016) has given in to the pluralistic approach which has unfortunately created silo identities which run contrary to peace-building and shared-identity envisaged in the South African Constitution. This way, SABC2 is not ‘inclusive’ in line with its new channel identity, rather it is pluralistic in line with the capitalist logic where plurality in the marketplace of ideas is deemed enough to create a democratic public sphere. As argued in earlier chapters, pluralism has limitations as it has no interest in the nature and quality of content in question. From the above stated points of view of text (content), the SABC has fallen short of fulfilling its role as a cultural public sphere.

When taken together, the poor representation of race relations in the two soaps go hand in hand with the way in which the then President Zuma sought to drive a wedge between black and white people. The president might not have issued a directive for such a portrayal of race relations on television, but the situation of editorial chaos within the SABC certainly furthered his objectives.

10.2 A look back at literature review

Literature review has revealed that most democracies of the third wave were stuck in political grey zones and have become hybrid regimes. From the analysis of South African democracy, it is argued here that as a result of South Africa's failure to consolidate, the country has remained in this category of democracies. Hybrid regimes are characterised by corruption by the economic and the ruling elites, hostilities towards political dissent and the weakening of democratic institutions. The general population in these regimes is exposed to structural inequalities, as there is a lack of economic prosperity and social wellness. From the media perspective, some hybrid regimes have tended to stifle media freedom, and this has been followed by some complicity by the media elites to collaborate with the government of the day for their own commercial survival. The review of literature has also revealed that public service broadcasting is in an unfortunate situation of being at the mercy of the state in terms of legislative control and funding. This exposes this important institute of democracy to political interference by the ruling elites, thus compromising its ability to act as the watchdog and society's conscience.

10.3 Original assumptions

The initial assumption was that popular entertainment content within PSB would not be much of a concern for the state because of its assumed political insignificance. However, the study has found that public entertainment content is equally targeted as exemplified by the then COO's illegal 'decree' giving himself the final say in all editorial matters of the SABC for both news and entertainment programming. Still, the assumption was that the control of entertainment content would come directly from the office of the COO. However, interviews with some key officials at the SABC provided no evidence that there was any direct interference with the selected case studies of *Muvhango* and *7de Laan*. It appears that the general environment of fear among the SABC personnel may have resulted in instances of self-censorship where officials took decisions which they thought would please their masters just to stay safe. The control of entertainment

content was also assumed to be the exclusive function of the political forces from the SABC's side. The process of 'message encoding' was, in this view, assumed to be linear and unidirectional. On closer inspection, however, it was found that the SABC's poor standing as an institution, including its poor financial position, compromised its own ability to carry out effective editorial oversight. In addition, production companies behind the two soap operas were observed to have, at least on a few occasions, contested and resisted the SABC's editorial guidelines. These two factors have frustrated the SABC's efforts to effectively implement the democratisation objectives of the broadcaster's editorial codes.

10.4 Findings

What follows below is the discussion of how democracy has been represented in the texts of *Muvhango* and *7de Laan*. The study started by developing the democratic constructs, namely peace, civil liberties, democratic institutions, accountability, and active citizenship. It then looked at the SABC's editorial and governance policies and found that, at least on paper, the SABC's objectives were in line with the values of democracy. Table 5 in Chapter 7 sums up the correspondence between attributes of a consolidated democracy, SABC's editorial values and the broadcaster's programming (or entertainment) approach. These will not be repeated here. Through this analogy, it was determined that the SABC's editorial values were, at least in intention, aligned to the country's democratic consolidation ambitions. By assessing the extent to which the entertainment content case studies adhered to the broadcaster's editorial policies, it was possible to determine the extent to which the SABC played its role as a cultural public sphere, and by extension, as an agent of a political culture conducive to democratic consolidation.

10.4.1 Civil liberties

Civil liberty is the right only afforded to those included and recognised as citizens. By including minority citizens on television, *Muvhango* sought to bring truth to SABC2's slogan – 'You Belong' (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 7).

Democratic concepts	SABC Editorial Values	Entertainment Programming Approach
Civil liberties	Equality	Freedom of speech/expression.

Table 9: SABC editorial's correspondence to civil liberties

Literature review conducted in Chapter Two has revealed that civil liberties is the cornerstone of a fully consolidated democracy. For this to be possible, all citizens must enjoy equal status. This equality has been embraced in the SABC's editorial values. In communication, this is manifest in citizen's enjoying freedom of speech and expression. The SABC has furthermore specified freedom of speech in their approach to programming (i.e., popular entertainment).

This study, however, has found that *Muvhango* is out of line with the SABC's editorial values by excluding certain social groups, for example, white people and LGBTQ people. This exclusion is a symbolic and cultural deprivation of some people's civil liberties. A lack of visibility or presence in any democracy means one can simply not exercise all their rights as a citizen. In *Muvhango*, almost nobody lives in Johannesburg even though they work and spend most hours of their day there. As migrants in this "land of opportunities" (*Muvhango* Series Bible, 2017: 7), they all have a homeland somewhere outside – young characters come from and live in Soweto. The Mukwevho's come from Venda, the Mokoena's come from Lesotho, and the Nkosi's come from Kwazulu-Natal. Migrants anywhere in the world have limited rights as citizens compared to the natives who have better knowledge of, interest and participation in local issues.

In *7de Laan*, there is an equitable representation of all races and sexes. From this point of view, there is inclusion. However, there is a level of cultural homogenisation attempted by the soap opera. The organising principle for this homogenisation is the white, Afrikaans culture. Characters who enter the soap opera from the outside (e.g., Fikani Chauke) have had to conform to this culture, and leave behind their previous identities – their backstory, history and the whole of their 'existential context' - that inform who they are. They are simply forced, by the mighty pen of the scriptwriter, to do in Rome what the Romans do. The study

has observed the use of language in *7de Laan* as one of the salient instruments of this homogenisation. The Afrikaans language used in the soap opera is a formal, standard version. As Marx has observed, other Afrikaans dialects, even though they exist in various Afrikaans communities in South Africa, are not represented in the soap. This homogenisation also rids itself of cultural difference and contradictions which are often catalysts for citizen engagement. Therefore, characters in *7de Laan* are asocial constructs with no capacity to exercise civil liberties. They live in a part of the city which has no connection to the greater Johannesburg or South Africa.

10.4.2 Democratic institutions

As an example of democratic institutions, political interference is perhaps the biggest factor resulting in the weakening of the SABC. The SABC's COO's undue interference in editorial decisions has given credence to Colin Sparks' theory of elite continuity (Sparks: 2011: 7). Self-censorship, as well as the series producer's resistance against full implementation of the SABC's editorial policies, have also assisted this political interference.

Democratic concepts	SABC Editorial Values	Entertainment Programming Approach
Democratic institutions	Independence	'Risky', innovative programming

Table 10: SABC editorial's correspondence to democratic institutions

Literature review has also revealed that a fully consolidated democracy is one in which there is a presence of strong, independent democratic institutions amongst which is the country's PSB. In the absence of a truly independent PSB, the SABC's encouragement of risky and innovating programming would not be possible. The study has, however, shown that the political interference from at least a particular faction of the ruling party, compromised the SABC's independence.

From a textual (content) point of view, the houses of traditional leadership and local government in *Muvhango* are the major representations of democratic institutions on the screen. The house of the Chief of Thathe is a place where traditional authority and power is exercised, but it does very little to show how this type of

leadership advances democracy and drives citizen empowerment. The office of the mayor is another example. The office has no encounter with ordinary citizens, and the mayor does not grapple with any political and/or legislative matters. The office of the mayor gives no clue as to how this important democratic institution works. In *7de Laan*, the greater SA does not exist, therefore the soap opera is simply indifferent to democratic institutions. In this utopian view of Afrikaans-speaking community, politics and serious social issues are avoided. It is from this point of view that Hannelie Marx-Knoetze (2016) criticises *7de Laan* as one of the avenues used by white societies to maintain "ignorance contract" amongst its people, which ultimately maintains their hegemony (2016: 28). It is therefore not surprising that democratic institutions simply do not exist.

10.4.3 Peace

As Johan Galtung maintains, peace is not only the absence of violence (negative peace), but also presence of social justice (positive peace) (1969: 111). In media and cultural studies, symbolic violence and symbolic justice are as significant as physical ones. Social equality therefore is one of the components of 'positive peace' - hence, the importance of just and fair representation of social groups, especially on PSB.

Democratic concepts	SABC Editorial Values	Entertainment Programming Approach
Peace	Human dignity	Respect and non-discrimination
	Nation building	Shared experience/identity

Table 11: SABC editorial's correspondence to peace

The SABC's editorial values embrace peace by seeking to protect human dignity and promoting nation building. In entertainment (programming) content, they do this by creating content that is respectful and non-discriminatory (SABC Editorial Policies, 2004: 11). In *7de Laan* gender seems to be well balanced, as there are almost equal number of men and women, and they enjoy almost similar weight in terms of their roles. The men are not presented as macho as is the case with rugby as the indicator of conventional Afrikaans masculinity (Marx, 2007: 108). The seemingly most conservative character on *7de Laan*, Oubaas, who criticised a

character that does not play rugby as a 'moffy', is no longer in the soap opera (ibid). However, the research found that in *Muvhango*, women have been relegated to secondary citizens in service of, and subservience to, men. The other example is violence against children on *Muvhango*. Children in this soap opera tend to be given a violent send-off, which often results in their death.

10.4.4 Active citizenship

Active democratic citizenship does not only entail the exercise of rights, but also the carrying out of responsibilities towards the common good (Hermes, 2006: 33). Responsibilities may mean being courteous to others and allowing others to exercise their rights too. The role of entertainment content in a democracy is, among others, to empower the citizen. Within the context of soap operas, the engagement and activation of the citizen is not usually done in an agitative manner. Instead, the melodrama is used as a didactic tool (cf. Gripsrud, 1992).

Democratic concepts	SABC Editorial Values	Entertainment Programming Approach
Active citizenship	Diversity	Diverse stories & plural views

Table 12: SABC editorial's correspondence to active citizenship

To bring the democratic concept of active citizenship to life, the SABC's editorial values encourages diversity of representation, as well as diverse stories and plural views. *7de Laan* and *Muvhango* are diverse in the way in which they have different social groups and languages. In *7de Laan*, the community is the terrain in which citizens would exercise their rights and responsibilities. However, this research has found that this community is a world where a particular brand of Afrikaans culture and language dominates. By contrast, South Africa has a diverse and multiple communities of Afrikaans speakers. These communities have different dialects, accents and idioms different from formal one predominantly used in *7de Laan*. In *Muvhango*, the community does not exist – instead what exists is the family. However, the family is a private, inward looking form of social organisation that does not have a place for 'citizenship'. In *Muvhango*, therefore, people must bow to the king and conform to family rules and traditional customs. From this perspective, both soaps do not address themselves to the public whose interests

must be addressed by PSB. The public rather becomes the uncritical mass audience who must be sold to advertisers.

10.4.5 Accountability

Soap operas, with their high entertainment value, still reflect social issues, and have a social change (Tufte, 2003) or 'democratising' potential. The thesis has shown examples of such soap operas around the world. However, the two soap operas under review seem to have shied away from reflecting SA socio-political reality, and engaging social issues head on.

Democratic concepts	SABC Editorial Values	Entertainment Programming Approach
Accountability	Accountability & transparency	Fulfil everyone's audience needs

Table 13: SABC editorial's correspondence to accountability

The SABC's editorial guidelines give credence to the democratic concept of accountability by promoting accountability and transparency in the way in which content is procured, and in the way in which choice of stories and general representation is accountable to the public who consume them. This is meant to help the SABC to fulfil citizens' viewership needs. However, *Muvhango*'s presentation of fantasy elements of African myths and magic as fact is problematic. This exonerates the series from being accountable to the viewers as the public on the real issues facing them as South Africans. It is a missed opportunity to (indirectly) educate the public, thus producing empowered citizens needed for the advancement of democracy. For the story of Azwindini, the public could have possibly learned a thing or two about the processes of electing or crowning the traditional leadership. There are also laws in the constitution that govern this process. This way, *Muvhango* has failed to respect and impart proper knowledge to the public to whom the soap opera should be accountable.

7de Laan is not too different to *Muvhango* in terms of accountability, for it exists in a completely parallel universe to the social realism of South Africa. In exonerating *7de Laan*, some analysts have praised the soap opera for attempting to reflect the ideal of the rainbow nation – a sense of how the country could be without racial

tensions or undesirable social and political issues. However, without any engagement of real social issues, this utopian and indifferent world does not help the very process of democratic consolidation. In Johannesburg where *7de Laan* is set, there are regular service delivery protests, high crime rate, racial polarisation, declining quality of life and violence against women and children. A creative social engagement, as exemplified by cases in Brazil (cf. Tufte, 2003), can also enrich the soap opera and improve its audience rating. One of the creative ways of tackling serious issues is by showing how communities can overcome racism, be more tolerant of those who are different to them or provide contextualised storylines on how communities can help each other achieve the common good.

10.5 Conclusion

Through the analysis of the identified democratic constructs, it has been shown that South Africa's democracy is not yet consolidated. The media, especially public service broadcasting, has the responsibility to contribute towards the culture conducive to consolidation. The SABC specifically has the legislated mandate to carry out this role, and by its content editorial policies, seems to have a clear intention to do that.

In evaluating the extent of the SABC's role in the consolidation of democracy, this study examined the SABC as an institution of democracy and assessed how democracy is represented in two of the broadcaster's main soap operas. However, the research has found that, as the country's democracy tried to mature and consolidate, the SABC has fallen victim of political interference that has left this important institution of democracy too weak to carry out its mandate. Also, an examination of the two popular soap operas on SABC2 has revealed a missed opportunity to engage the public on issues that could drive positive social change and contribute meaningfully to democratic consolidation. Both soaps enjoy enormous budgets and large audiences and attract a lot of revenue for SABC2 – which means that they are simultaneously veritable platforms for the exploration of democracy building and citizen activating themes.

The soap-operas' indifference to South Africa's real social dynamics, which is contrary to the SABC's entertainment programming editorial codes (on paper), robs the public of the opportunity to be empowered as citizens. The significance of these programmes cannot be over-emphasised because they are two of the six long running soaps on the SABC platform that command large audiences and contribute significantly to the broadcaster's bottom line. In the absence of dedicated democracy-building dramas due to the SABC's financial difficulties, these soap operas should be closing the gap. In this light, the general assessment is that the *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* were indifferent at best, and oppositional at worst, in their roles of creating a political culture conducive to democratic consolidation. They have failed to assist the SABC in playing its role as the cultural public sphere in the consolidation of democracy. For those reasons, the SABC has been complicit in 'supporting' a government that tended to sway away from the pursuit of democratic ideals.

On the quest to contribute answers to the question of the role of the media in democratic transitions, this study asks questions with regard to the role of popular entertainment as opposed to news media. Carpini had hypothesised that entertainment media's role in this context would be to reinforce the prevailing hegemonic order, act as a distraction or act as a meaningful alternative source of political engagement (2012:11). McGuigan's uncritical populism and critical intervention (2005: 438) seems like Carpini's 'reinforcement of the status quo' and 'alternative source of political engagement' respectively. McGuigan's third position, which is radical subversion, becomes the fourth possible way in which popular media can impact politics (in the combined typology). The study found that *Muvhango* and *7de Laan* have tended to be on the side of uncritical populism/reinforcement of the prevailing hegemony, and through them, the SABC has abdicated their responsibility as the public service broadcaster. The curious case of the cancellation of *Yizo Yizo* and *Zone 14* as observed by Woudri Botha (2010) does not appear to be an isolated incident. This finding supports Müller and

Hermes' assertion that some texts may have more potential to support the performance of cultural citizenship than others (2010: 194).

The finding makes the SABC central and indispensable to South Africa's efforts to consolidate its democracy. In the context of contemporary scholarship that tends to question the relevance of public service broadcasting (cf. Michael Tracey, 1998), South Africa's case underscores the need for a well-functioning PSB in the democracies of the third wave. The SABC, in the disbursement of its entertainment programming, must function as a true cultural public sphere. It must not think of the public as audiences who must be mobilised for commercial gain. In the words of Ien Ang:

> The audience as public … consists of citizens who must be reformed, educated, informed as well as entertained … to enable them to better perform their democratic rights and duties (1991: 29).

This is a call for the SABC to, in the words of PJ Fourie, "return to its original values" as the public service broadcaster (2003: 148).

10.6 Further research directions

This focus of this study was on SABC content during the period of democratic consolidation under the Jacob Zuma administration. It is too early in the new administration under Cyril Ramaphosa to see if there are any changes. The SABC has just been bailed out and it remains to be seen as to what this means for the new administration from the point of view of media freedom. Will there be a change? A comparative study might be helpful to see if indeed the PSB continues to be under political interference going forward.

This study made a rather surprising finding about the tension that exists between broadcasters and their content producers. It would be interesting to study this further, especially in the context of South Africa and the evolution of the relationship between broadcasting platforms and content suppliers in the digital era.

Studies in the critical tradition (such as this one) tend to neglect audience studies, and specifically, audience reception and negotiation of media texts. If it is the audience as public that PSB is meant to empower, then perhaps a study on the responses of this public to entertainment contents might be useful. Such a study can focus on levels of social responsibility in other genres on other channels even beyond PSB (e.g., commercial and pay television channels).

Finally, that private media channels are not PSB does not mean they have no 'responsibility' in a democracy. Like the SABC's editorial and channel positioning statements, private broadcasting organisations have corporate mission statements and channel positionings that communicate their standing as good corporate citizens. In this light, future research can focus on how the private media are trying to reconstitute the SA public? Given the mass consumption and popularity of content on their platforms, what is the impact of these on democracy and what does this mean for public policy?

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