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**THE BRETTON WOODS SCHOOL  
OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AS AN 'AGENT'  
OF MODERNISATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

by

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A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of

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*This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.*

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

## ABSTRACT

### **The Bretton Woods School of Development Communication as an ‘Agent’ of Modernisation in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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A literature study investigating the role of communication within the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication as an agent to achieve social and economical change in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study presents social and economic change as intended outcomes of modernisation as supported by this school of thought. It grapples with Western modernisation discourse that was advanced by Bretton Woods institutions as well as the instruments of communication (media) applied to achieve the intended developmental outcomes. It suggests that the presumed lack of modernisation in Sub-Saharan Africa is based on subjective development criteria and the applicability of ineffective communication and governance methods that failed to consider the region's cultural and socio-economic diversity. In a postmodern world, the study suggests that there should be a gradual move away from the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication-thought and that the focus should rather be to enable the region to establish communication, development and governance models that are African in character.

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A great gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. John Akokpari, who trusted me enough to allow me to follow my instincts and passion to investigate and merge my two interests: communication and politics.

*“...economic growth, development and black economic empowerment  
are complementary and related processes.  
The empowerment we speak of is an inclusive process and not an exclusive one.  
No economy can meet its potential if any part of its citizens is not fully integrated  
into all aspects of that economy.  
Equally it follows that any economy that is not growing  
cannot integrate all its citizens into that economy in a meaningful way.”*

— THABO MBEKI

## Chapter 1

### RESEARCH AIMS

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the role of communication in achieving the goals of modernisation. It does this by investigating the priority given communication by the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication, a school based on liberalist principles that has direct ties to the Bretton Woods Conference held in 1944. During this conference, the foundations were laid for a movement towards a global economic order that called for an international move for undeveloped societies (termed traditional societies) to achieve the socio-economic, political and infrastructural changes to assist them to operate in, and become, a modern, industrialised society.

This suggested eradication of traditional societies was termed “*modernisation*.” The Bretton Woods School of Development Communication, informed by theorists Lerner, Lipset, Rogers, Schramm, Everett and Rugels, argued that communication methods could assist in achieving modernisation by advancing the goals of this paradigm. Theories advanced by these researchers all relied on the power of communication to assist in development. It was argued that through the dissemination of modernisation discourse a society would adopt modernisation innovations that would place them in line with the socio-economic and political development of wealthier countries; where within this paradigm political development is viewed as the advancement of democratic governance systems.

In short, in order to achieve modernisation, traditional governance methods and socio-economic structures were scrutinised and it was concluded that the media could play an active role in having undeveloped nations adopt the will to achieve democracy and overall social upliftment.

Therefore, the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication acts as an agent of modernisation by prioritising communication in the stages of development. By looking at modernisation, its associated goals of socio-economic and political development as well as the communication structures applied in forwarding these goals, this dissertation aims to serve as an introduction to the theme

of development communication by highlighting general assumptions and critique associated with the theme. It is assumed that modernisation paradigms did not deliver the expected results in Sub-Saharan Africa and that the reason for this is the presupposed fact that Sub-Saharan Africa does not have the infrastructures needed to support the advancement of media technologies and therefore, its accompanying influences of socio-economic and political development.

It is postulated that international communication policies were too readily applied to developing nations without necessary '*domestication processes*' that would have adjusted the modernisation paradigms (and its accompanying communication systems) to make them more applicable to developing countries.

Firstly, the argument is approached by examining international theories of modernisation – supported by the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication – and the prioritisation of communication within this context.

The Bretton Woods School of Development Communication is informed by theorists Lerner, Lipset, Rogers, Schramm, Everett and Rugels who argued in favour of the integrative and interactive capabilities of the media, and in turn postulated that modernisation could be achieved with the dissemination of modernisation discourse via communication systems – mass media – that would lead to traditional societies adopting the innovations of modern, capitalist societies.

Within this realm political development referred to wider political participation and the general advancement of democratic governance systems.

The Bretton Woods School of Development Communication is thus an overall westernised approach to achieving development in Africa – from the methods of message dissemination to the message content. All theories supporting this School are aimed at achieving socio-economic and political structures that are Western in character – and arguably aimed at maintaining the hegemonic status of the United States (US) through structures with ties to the Bretton Woods Conference like the World Bank and IMF.

Secondly, African realities that challenge the successful transmission of modernisation messages in communication are presented.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

If communication had to assist in achieving certain socio-economic development goals, then, in light of United Nations Human Development Report on Democracy (HDR 2002) and other aggregate data on individual countries within the Sub-Saharan region, one has to ask why the theoretical approach of Bretton Woods School of Development Communication - using the media to assist in the diffusion and adoption of the values, principles, and models that ensured socio-economic advancement in wealthier countries - did not deliver the expected results in this region.

In order to gain a holistic view on the subject matter, one has to pay attention to the paradigms that characterise the field of development communication. (Where paradigm in this context denotes *“a set of practical theoretical beliefs that assist us in interpreting the world around us, and shapes the practical applications in the struggle toward betterment”* [Guba 1990 in Mefalopulos 2008: 44]).

Therefore, in order to address the research aim one has to address the underlying concepts, applications and overlapping boundaries that sustain the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication. (See: Illustration 1) Development goals are presented as being within a triangular relationship where communication, development and governance operate within an influential sphere -- i.e. changes in one was shown to have an effect on the other. This was substantiated at the hand of various theorists, notably Lerner, Lipset, Rogers and Schramm who, during research, illustrated the influential relationship between effective communication and development on the one hand and democracy on the other. These theorists and theories informed the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication who applied this research in modernisation efforts aiming at decreasing the gap between traditional and industrial societies.

It is important to illustrate what modernisation set out to achieve; the general resistance it received from Sub-Saharan countries; and how and why communication methods failed to assist modernisation as envisaged by the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication.

**Illustration 1:**

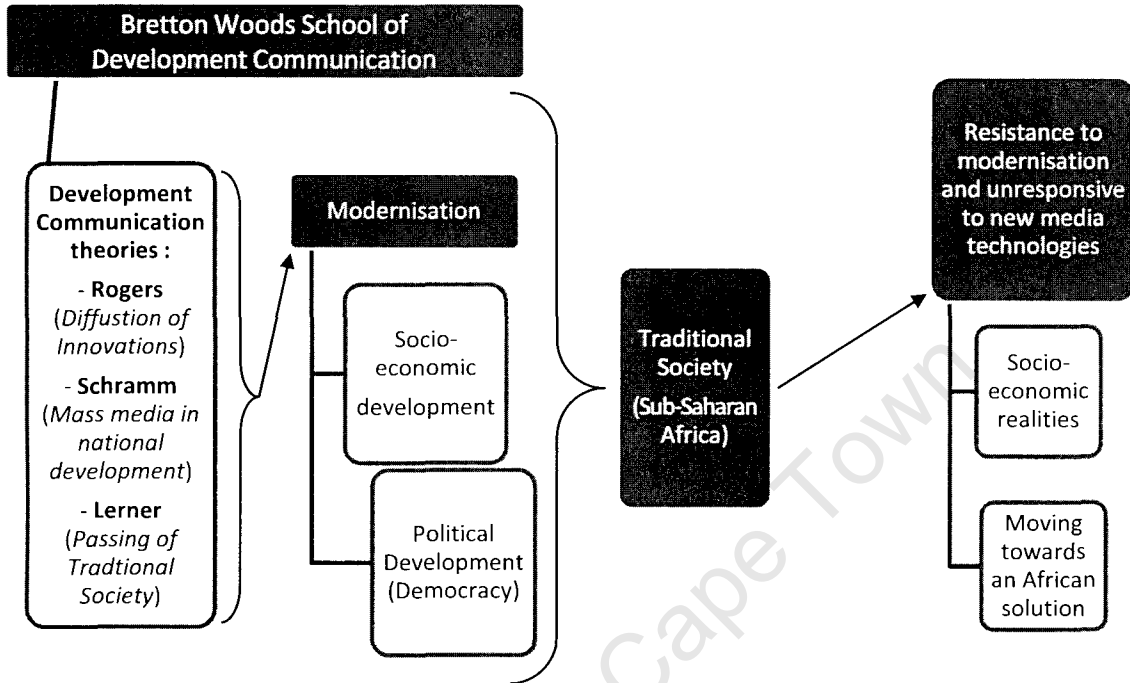
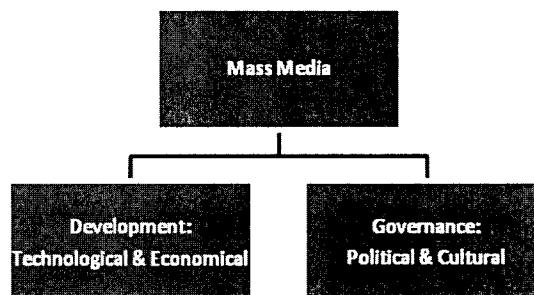


Illustration 1:

The Bretton Woods School of Development Communication is informed by leading theorists Rogers, Schramm and Lerner, who published major works on communication assisting modernisation; specifically within socio-economic and political development spheres, where political development is viewed in the liberalist perspective as the advancement of democratic principles. These theories were applied to Sub-Saharan Africa (a traditional society) by the School via Bretton Woods' institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to achieve modernisation in the region. However, the region showed a general resistance to modernisation paradigms – illustrated at the hand of current socio-economic realities. Therefore, it is suggested that there should be a move to achieve a regional solution that is more 'African' in character.

Following this, it is important to understand the overarching concepts. These are: communication as a tool in the dissemination of Western modernisation discourse and modernisation as an ideal that incorporates socio-economic and political development goals based on a doctrine of liberalism and the adoption of democratic systems characterised by wider political participation. (See: Illustration 2).

## Illustration 2:



The mass media acts as an umbrella influencing both technological and economical development, as well as effecting changes in government.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Since a literature study can, at best, only summarise and organise existing scholarship, it will not produce new, empirical insights. It can however highlight arguments and make suggestions for future studies on a more advanced level of study e.g. doctorate degree. Because this review forms part of a Masters' mini-dissertation, timeframe and word count makes it impossible for this study to treat all issues with the same level of depth. Therefore, this study should be treated as an introduction to the field of development communication as understood and forwarded under the auspices of the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication, rather than an all-encompassing work.

In reviewing the articles, it became clear that this field of study has an array of interlinking subfields that substantiate some of the arguments touched upon in this work – the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) being a prime example. However, within the realms of the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication, the review was limited to studying the paradigms that characterise this particular school of development communication and to study its influence on Sub-Saharan Africa.

As a result, the NWICO, a radical move by African countries to address matters relating to the imbalanced international flow of news, as well as unequal distribution of media structures, and unequal access to information (a key area of concern) does not receive in depth coverage. The NWICO and resulting policies presented a too intricate topic to cover substantially – as this would have

modernisation paradigm that seeks a movement away from traditional societies (also lesser developed countries or LCD's) towards urban, capital-driven, developed societies. This goal is reflected in communication theories that support the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication – also in the libertarian theory of the press, the main press (i.e. communication) model that is widely used in many countries.<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Lerner (1957 cited in Winham 1970:811) for example, highlighted the importance of literacy and urbanisation in development. He indicated how the relationship between certain socio-economic variables such as urbanisation, education and communication influences political processes. This relationship was tested and supported by Lipset (1959 cited in Winham 1970:811). Lerner further developed the role of communication in development by conducting a study on a traditional village where he found inhabitants were readily exchanging the security and rigidity of traditional culture for the “*uncertainty and opportunity of the twentieth century industrial age*” (cited in Hyden et al 2002:3). In addition, Wilbur Schramm published a preparatory work for UNESCO called *Mass Media and National Development*, in which the dismal state of communication in Africa was noted, but nevertheless emphasised the potential of communication to make a difference in agricultural development and health care.

All these changes, or influences, were essentially based on diffusions of innovation-theory, which emphasises the power of communication effects. Communication, it was postulated, could support modernisation by creating media messages that sustain and enhance knowledge of new practices, whilst persuading the audience to adopt external innovations linked to development. This theory was developed by E.M. Rogers (1962).

However, later studies done by these theorists confirmed that the move towards modernisation and accompanying goals was being hampered by socio-economic factors within traditional societies not previously taken into account.

Therefore, in light of scrutinising Western modernisation discourse from a developing nation's perspective the theoretical approach that is followed is two-

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<sup>1</sup> To expand on this a short chapter on the four theories of the press is presented that illustrate that Africa, in reality, hosts a combination of communication theories that preside within the borders of cultural and political realities.

fold. A developmental state perspective analyses how modernisation theories were implemented during key transformations in the international realm – most notably towards the end of the Cold War (1989 – 1991), and during the expansion of US ideals and ambitions after World War II. Whereas cultural regionalism calls for the development of regional structures and institutions, and in light of the post-cold war era, hints at the role of societies in having to construct their own identity that has previously been ignored by Western paradigms such as modernisation. Looking at territorial, rather than global solutions is suggested.

In scrutinising modernisation paradigms, the argument also relies on dependency theory, which argues that the periphery, or Third World, was undeveloped and, to a large extent undermined by activities that only benefited capital societies. More than making countries dependent on capital societies, by imposing political ideals (democracy) and socio-economic goals modernisation has also been cultivating a dependence of Third World nations on the cultures and accepted forms of governance of the West, resulting in not only economical, but cultural and political dependency as well.

Although the notion of modernisation is criticised, is not the goal to reject modernisation in its entirety. It is argued that the manner in which it was applied to developing countries was defective and that the paradigm should reconsider goals that are in line with cultural, economic and political realities – therefore, democracy as an accepted form of governance is criticised.

Realising this, it is also accepted that within a global network, no nation can function without some or other form of relation with another. International goals and imposition is a reality of the global realm. Therefore, modernisation cannot be rejected – what is argued is the fact that the communication methods that have been applied to forward this paradigm has not been domesticated, and perhaps are in need of reconsideration.

It is not the goal of this dissertation to provide these domestication methods. It is the goal of this dissertation to act as a precursor to a field of study that should receive attention.

## CONCEPTUALISATION

An extensive literature study provides the structure to this dissertation and examines the prioritisation of communications in the universal application of modernisation paradigms, as informed by Bretton Woods' institutions.

In order to fully understand the concepts of modernisation and communication, which are the focus of this dissertation, the underlying concepts that join them together, namely development and governance, have to be understood.

The overarching concepts of this dissertation are thus: modernisation, development, communication and governance.

As stated *supra*, the issues relating to this dissertation are complex and intricately interlinked. The definition and boundaries of these overlapping interdisciplinary areas cannot be separated from one another. Authors have noted that ongoing changes and transformations in the international realm, such as the polarization along ethnic, religious and national lines, have increased transnationalisation, as well as increased information flow and influence. A growing consciousness of marginalised groups and diminished resources, have all added to the complexity of this subject (Melkote 2003:130).

Communication is defined as the transportation of messages, ideals, views, whether of the populace or government in broadcast or print.<sup>2</sup> Development includes the priority of communication that refers to the development of communication systems; whether existing or new, the development of systems that teach people how to correctly decipher messages, and socio-economic development that would enable people to access messages. These messages could have various goals, but in modernisation theory, as supported by the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication, it meant the dissemination of information with one goal namely to achieve modernisation or to stimulate the will for modernisation. In other words, development communication has one goal: to promote social development.

Throughout modernisation remains the interlinking theme, since this paradigm introduced historical and conceptual biases to development communication that are still prominent today. For the conceptualisation of these overarching concepts, this dissertation relies greatly on Melkote's (2003:130) systematic definition: *Modernisation*

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<sup>2</sup> Traditional methods of communication also receives emphasis in the paper.

*is based on neoclassical economic theory, which supported capitalistic economic development. This perspective assumes the Western model of economic growth, developed during the Bretton Woods Conference, to be the ultimate goal and that the method to achieve this, is by a transition from traditional ideas and practices towards modern, urbanised practices.*

To critique this assumption, this dissertation challenges the influence of modernisation and the impact of cultural expansionism on developing, but overtly traditional, societies.

Development is not viewed as separate from modernisation. Rogers (1976 cited in Moemeka 1994:10-11) defined development as “*a widely participatory process of social change and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment.*” It is an outflow of modernisation, and is subjected to similar critique.

The overarching concept of governance is approached from the perspective of liberation, which emphasises freedom in all aspects of society, whether personal or communal. Once again, a critical approach to this view is followed, and the dominance of Western constructed forms of governance, e.g. democracy, is challenged and it is argued that a reappraisal of democracy is needed if equity is not to be replaced by development. In line with the research aims the presentation of Western models of democracy in communication theory (notably the libertarian and social responsibility theory of the press) is challenged.

Finally, communication is presented as the binding concept that links the above-mentioned concepts with one another. This dissertation illustrates that communication was awarded a certain degree of prioritisation in all these paradigms.

In addition to other definitions of communication presented *supra*, which defines it as all forms of communication, whether broadcast or print media, emphasis is placed on the importance of traditional forms of communication, such as the oral transmissions within Third World countries since communication is not viewed separate from culture and social change.

## INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

During 1944, shortly before the end of the Second World War, forty-four countries met with the common goal of restructuring the world economy. At a convention that later became known as the BRETTON WOODS CONFERENCE, the foundations were laid for a global shift towards one economic order.

In order to achieve this worldwide shift, members realised that drastic measures had to be taken if all countries were to be included in the economic restructuring programme. This was reflected in the summary of the conference agreements: *“It is in the interest of all nations that post-war reconstruction should be rapid. Likewise, the development of the resources of particular regions is in the general economic interest. Programs of reconstruction and development will speed economic progress everywhere, will aid political stability and foster peace”* (Bretton Woods Conference 1944).

These programmes were to be executed by three mighty global institutions that were established during the conference: the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Trade Organisation (ITO), who in turn gave birth to other global institutions, which supported the common goal of one economic order, as envisaged during the conference.

It was realised that one of the first steps to achieve reconstruction was to bring all countries to more or less the same level of development, since a certain level of advancement meant that the necessary infrastructures were in place to support economic markets and global initiatives expressed during the convention.

A massive effort to “cleanse” the world of “backward” infrastructures ensued. In an attempt to move away from rural societies towards urbanised developed societies, programmes were put in place in order to achieve what became known as modernisation. These efforts were also applied to Africa.<sup>3</sup>

Although efforts to achieve modernisation took on various forms, communication methods as agents of change remained the key area of support within the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication. This support was informed by studies advocating a causal relationship between communication and socio-economic change. Within the development communication realm, these

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<sup>3</sup> Although reference to Africa here is meant in a continental sense, the argument of this paper overall applies to Sub-Saharan Africa.

studies (discussed later in the dissertation) also became a backbone to Western modernisation discourse forwarded under the auspices of the IMF and WB.

One component of the programmes that were aimed at achieving the envisaged move away from tradition towards modernity was development communication. This component was, in turn, interpreted by Bretton Woods institutions and applied in modernisation efforts. As conceptualised supra, these ideologies in conjunction with certain international institutions like the IMF and WB have been termed the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication.

Efforts to modernise the African continent are not new. Since the Second World War international efforts and ideals to achieve a shift from the traditional to the modern have been packaged and repackaged under new policies and agreements which have all achieved marginal success. Development thinking in general has been criticised for being one-sided, biased, Western and generally out of touch with the realities of Africa. Some authors go as far as to describe African modernisation as merely a Western 'experiment' that has gone miserably 'wrong' this blame is wholly justified, and indeed this dissertation does dispute the total disregard often expressed towards international relief efforts (Ayish 1993:487-510).

Instead of modernisation efforts achieving the desirable outcome of development, the continent has merely stagnated and, some would argue, even degraded. Africa's underdevelopment and overall lack of development is often blamed on decades of Western-prescribed development efforts. More specifically, this blame is sometimes aimed at international agencies such as the IMF, the WB, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It can be debated whether this blame is wholly justified, and indeed this dissertation disputes the total disregard often expressed towards international relief efforts, and further illustrates how blame is often aimed at the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS) – a brainchild of the IMF – which were applied to Africa without the necessary domestication processes. This is discussed in more detail *infra* under '*African resistance to Modernisation paradigms.*'

As stated the IMF and WB were born out of negotiations during the Bretton Woods Conference, and UNESCO, UNDP and other relief agencies had direct ties to these Bretton Woods institutions and were developed, in essence, to

support and further the international vision of sustainable development geared towards the creation of a single economic order.

Even though Bretton Woods, as an institution, was disbanded in 1971, its ideals, members and core institutions remained, trying to maintain rapid development and a global shift from traditional to modern societies.

Although the idea of modernisation was not initially envisaged during the Bretton Woods Conference, it became an active concern as a result of it. The goals of modernity were informed by earlier models of development where tradition and modernity were juxtaposed in an *'ideal'* versus *'non-ideal'* system. Traditional societies were viewed as non-ideal societies that had to be transformed to ideal, modern societies by moving along certain stages of growth as proposed by W.W Rostow (1979).<sup>4</sup>

In terms of these earlier theories, traditional societies were regarded as small, rural, collectivist nations where interpersonal ties were strong. Modern societies, in contrast, were characterised as large, urban, individual-driven nations where ties among members were rather impersonal. Earlier efforts to define modernisation saw traditional societies being compared to earlier stages in European development.

These 'bipolar' theories were reflected in development plans of Bretton Woods institutions. Most of these theories had relations with or reflected the ideals of the Marshall Plan, which was also known as the Europe Recovery Programme. This programme was launched by the US after World War II to reconstruct a war-torn Europe. This was the first, in what would become a host of other, government-sponsored foreign assistance projects.

The significance of the Marshall Plan for Africa should not be disregarded. While it gained momentum and showed success in Europe, the US was busy expanding on a global scale, expanding its markets and furthering US policies and ideals, cushioning the world with its humanitarian assistance in the form of providing credit and loan assistance. Africa in the middle '50s was an untapped market, and according to the US, would have remained untapped by world

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<sup>4</sup> See Rostow (1979) *Getting From Here to There*, in which book he describes modernisation as a linear process that is achieved through stages of growth. A further discussion of this follows in 'Modernisation main assumptions'.

markets if the continent did not show a level of development – at that stage Africa was generating a mere 15% of the world’s income (Melkote & Steeves 2001:51).

In order to implement the Marshall Plan in Africa, a roll-out programme had to be structured in such a way that it would provide Africa, regarded as an income deprived continent, with the necessary funds to develop, in order for world markets to penetrate it. This meant that Africa had to be provided with the necessary funds to develop structures that would support an international ideal.

The Bretton Woods conference established the World Bank (WB) as one of these structures as the key loan and credit providing agency for Third World countries.<sup>5</sup> The Marshall Plan was repackaged under a Four Point Programme. The fourth point of this programme focused on a “*new program of modernisation and capital investment*” (Truman cited in Melkote & Steeves 2001:51). Thus, modernisation was designed by US/European ideas and concepts of advancement – most of them out of touch and focus with African realities. What followed was plan upon plan, policy upon rehashed policy, achieving marginal successes.

An overall deconstruction of these plans would require a book, and indeed many have been written on the subject already.

This dissertation therefore instead focuses on one section of these development plans which are often underestimated or disregarded, viz. the prioritisation of communication in the stages of development and its ongoing prioritisation in the developed world, where communication is viewed as a method to communicate the ‘will’ for development as proposed by Rogers’s (1974) “*diffusions on innovations.*” The Bretton Woods institutions paid attention to the area of communication and many policies to promote modernisation via communication were put in place in accordance with the support of its various institutions.

Modernisation required the dissemination of modern ideas and practices. In theory, changes in individuals were expected to lead to an overall change in the larger system, since individuals would seek ways to advance their needs and expectations for modernisation. As Whiting noted, “*new demands and new opportunities make the traditional orientations inappropriate and, to a degree, dysfunctional*” (Whiting 1971:211).

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<sup>5</sup> Together with the WB, the IMF and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) were created, initially to help rebuild Europe, but focusing on the greater expansion of US markets.

It was envisaged that people in Third World nations were thus first to acquire a thirst for modernisation in order to mobilise a movement towards change. In practice, this emerged as one of the first steps in Rostow's stages of development. Communication would thus mobilise and reinforce economic development. Therefore, countries' communication policies, both internationally as well as nationally, had to reflect the goals of development plans in order for Third World nations to participate in the global economy as envisaged at the Bretton Woods Conference.

Ideas, theories and goals were developed to achieve the intended stages of modernisation and these were all captured and reflected in the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication.

In order to achieve a holistic deconstruction of the ideas, theories and goals as set forth and developed by Bretton Woods' institutions, a sectional breakdown of the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication would provide the most appropriate structure and method for this.

Study and research for this dissertation, revealed how leading theorists' theories supported and/or departed from the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication. This dissertation reflects upon and illustrate these theories. Emphasis are placed on the leading theories that informed this school of thought, and it is illustrated how theories they developed, supported the ideals and goals of modernisation.

Communication processes in the Third World and its influence on modernisation outcomes is one that triggers ongoing research within a modern era – but it is notable how new research is informed by a critique of past policies, a case of *Historia est Magistra Vitae*.<sup>6</sup>

In a postmodern world institutions are still informed by the Bretton Woods conference – and even though it was disbanded in 1971, an array of institutions still exists today with direct ties to the Bretton Woods conference.

It is submitted that an independent discussion of each of these institutions is unnecessary, as this dissertation will clearly illustrate how Bretton Woods' thought processes and its founding institutions are interwoven within the domain of development communication.

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<sup>6</sup> Cicero: History is life's teacher.

Of greater importance to the theme of this dissertation is a breakdown of its related key concepts and theories. It is submitted that this will be the most effective way of scrutinising the institutional approach towards development communication and to address the **problem statement** associated with the theme which is: What did modernisation set out to achieve? What were / are the main antagonists challenging the modernisation paradigm in Sub-Saharan Africa? If communication methods failed to assist modernisation as envisaged by the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication which factors imposed on the paradigm's successful application and what are the more effective application measures that should be investigated?

University of Cape Town

MODERNISATION AND THE BRETTON WOODS SCHOOL OF  
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION:

2.1 CORE INSTITUTIONS AND THE MODERNISATION IDEAL

*2.1.1 Modernisation: Main Assumptions*

Modernisation can be viewed as one of the most influential paradigms to appear after World War II, in that it had enormous social, cultural and economic consequences for all developing nations (Melkote & Streeves 2001:130).

Developed into a theory in the later 1950s and early 1960s, supporters of modernisation envisaged metamorphoses from one system to a more advanced system. In broad terms the transition implied a change from a traditional system to an industrialised, specialised system. Mostly focussed on socio-economic development, the modernisation paradigm encapsulated numerous evolutionary functions or trends, based on industrialisation, urbanisation, modern education and the spread of the market economy (Hyden et al 2002:2).

Huntington's construction of the modernisation concept highlights the impact of modernisation on the study of politics:

*"The theory of modernisation was embraced by political scientists, and comparative politics was looked at in the context of modernisation. The concepts of modernity and tradition bid fair to replace many of the other typologies which had been dear to the hearts of political analysts: democracy, oligarchy, and dictatorship; liberalism and conservatism; totalitarianism and constitutionalism; socialism, communism, and capitalism; nationalism and internationalism"* (Huntington 1971:285).

Modernisation emerged as the paradigm that would juxtapose social realities against one another. 'Advanced' was intended to replace 'primitive' in all spheres. Society was viewed as a 'perforated' system that would collect all the constructive particles of change – in this case, the process of increased social differentiation, integration and adaptation – eventually to 'grow' into an industrialised, modern society. Modernisation, thus, from its beginning stages, was based upon certain stages of development as if it was some form of ABC that could be applied to all countries everywhere.

Tradition became the foundation that had to be replaced in order to wipe out other characteristics that were not in line with modernisation. Bert Hoselitz,

for example, argued that developed countries exhibited higher levels of universalism, achievement orientation, and functional specificity, whilst the underdeveloped societies of Africa were characterised by particularism, ascription, and functional diffuseness. He argued that, in essence, cultural eradication was necessary in order to successfully transform into a modern state and to achieve economic growth (Abrokwaa 1999:649).

WW Rostow (1971) provided perhaps one of the most linear approaches to modernisation. He argued that modernisation was related to stages of development. He identified five stages that would serve as rites of passage to modernisation:

- *traditional society;*
- *preconditions for takeoff;*
- *takeoff;*
- *the drive to maturity;*
- *and the age of mass consumption.*

During each of these stages a society – growing from a traditional base – would acquire certain levels of growth that would allow it to ‘graduate’ into the next stage of development. The final step would see the society as a modern state – an ‘ideal society’ that has achieved the goals of modernisation. This model, like many others, proved to be too Eurocentric and foreign to African realities. Many terms were associated with a similar idea. The move from one system, whether termed ‘traditional’, ‘agricultural’, ‘developing’ or ‘primitive’ towards a more ‘urbanized’, ‘modern’, ‘developed’ or ‘advanced’ state have all become associated with modernisation. Huntington refers to Frank Sutton’s (1955) identification of key characteristics that distinguishes a ‘traditional’ from a ‘modern’ society (Huntington 1971:286):

**TABLE 1:**

<b>(Agri)Cultural society</b>	<b>Modern industrial society</b>
Predominance of ascriptive particularistic, diffuse patterns	Predominance of universalistic, specific and achievement norms
Stable local groups and limited spatial mobility	High degree of social mobility (in general – though not necessarily in a ‘vertical’ sense)
Relatively simple and stable ‘occupational’ differentiation	Well-developed occupational system, insulated from other social structures
A ‘deferential’ stratification system of diffuse impact.	‘Egalitarian’ class system based on generalised patterns of occupational achievement
	Prevalence of ‘associations’ e.g. functionally specific, non-ascriptive structures

Frank Sutton’s (1955) identification of key characteristics that distinguishes a ‘traditional’ from a ‘modern’ society (cited in Huntington 1971:286).

In short, Huntington (1971:287) postulated that the difference between traditional and modern society lay in the way in which man exercises control over his natural and social environment in relation to the expansion of scientific and technological knowledge.

Modernisation was not limited to economic growth however. It also encapsulated governance in the move towards modern societies. A link was suggested between economic development and political development. In this manner, the prerequisites for modernisation became the foundation for democracy.

Later studies testing this causal relationship found communication to play a key role in achieving certain variables.

Daniel Lerner (1957 cited in Winham 1970:811), for example, highlighted the importance of literacy and urbanization in development. He indicated how the relationship between certain socio-economic variables such as urbanization, education and communication influences political processes. This relationship was further tested and supported by Lipset (1959 cited in Winham 1970:811). He took a sample of 50 nations from Europe and Latin America and divided them into two camps: stable democracies and unstable democracies or dictatorships. By comparison, the democratic nations also showed a higher level of urbanisation, better communication structures and higher levels of education. The study was not without critique, however, and most of it was aimed at Lipset's strict definition of democracy.<sup>7</sup> Lipset's theory further postulated that if these trends were developed, conditions would arise that would favour democracy. In short, modernisation would bring about development, which in turn would create favourable conditions for democracy to flourish.

Others, such as Lerner (1957), supported Lipset's findings (Hyden et al 2002:2). Lerner, however, expanded the instruments of modernisation to include mass media. He conducted a study in Balgat near Ankara, the Turkish capital. He found that in the village of Balgat, villagers were readily exchanging the security and rigidity of traditional culture for the *"uncertainty and opportunity of the twentieth century industrial age"* (cited in Hyden et al 2002:3). He argued that empathy was a catalyst to modernisation, because empathy enables individuals to see themselves in the position of others. Empathy, according to Lerner, was acquired by travelling

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<sup>7</sup> In Lipset's study (1959), nations were either a democracy or not, and democracy was not viewed as being on a continuum.

or with exposure to encounters with other cultures and civilisations through the mass media (ibid). Deutschmann conducted a similar study in an Andean Village in Colombia and found that exposure to mass communication systems were effecting changes in the villages. This, according to Deutschmann, pointed towards a shift from traditional ways toward what “*might appropriately be termed scientific and technological ways*” (Boadu 1981:194-195). He also observed a shift from oral-traditional ways to mass communications.

These theorists informed the assumptions around modernisation and illustrated the possibility of communication acting as the catalyst for change: the eradicator of tradition that will catapult societies to endorse and support modern, industrial workings.

## 2.2 CRITIQUE OF THE ASSUMPTIONS OF MODERNISATION

Did modernisation merely replace colonialism? The occurrence of modernisation theory during the post Second World War period of ‘*colonial cleansing*’ – granting colonies their independence - across the Third World seems too incidental. Indeed the prescriptive tone of modernisation and its ideological cousin, development, does echo many of the ideals of colonialism.

Political and economic development are concerned with how to ‘*modernise*’ Third World countries and how to transform ‘*traditional*’, ‘*primitive*’, ‘*barbaric*’ and ‘*backward*’ African societies by imposing Western ideas of what civilization and modernity should look like (Dibua 2006:1).

Political scientists analysing modernisation by way of the structural-functional approach emphasised the “*erosion of traditional social institutions as crucial indices of political development*” (Dibua 2006:1). Weber who divided societies into either traditional or modern groups further developed this idea. Weber’s divisional analysis of societies lies at the core of criticisms that highlight the almost pedantic approach followed by modernisation paradigms in Third World, or developing, nations. As noted, Weber divided societies into non-ideal and ideal societies. Africa was categorised as a non-ideal type, whilst Western nations represented ideal societies. In his argument, Weber further postulated that for non-ideal societies to cross the ‘canyon’ to rational, modern societies, they would have to discard their irrational, traditional features and attain:

- *Industrialisation*
- *Mass production*
- *Rising per capita income*

- *Dominance of science based technology*
- *Military hegemony*
- *Bureaucratisation*
- *Secularisation*
- *Urbanisation*

When this is obtained, according to Weber and supporters of modernisation, a society can be classified as modern and the metamorphosis of developing to developed nation will be complete. Although this theory was developed during the early 1900s, many African societies have barely made the jump to the Eurocentric model and, according to Western classification and theory, have thus failed to modernise successfully.

Modernisation and its allies have been met by great criticism from Dependency scholars who argue that the application of modernisation paradigms in Africa has led to the continent being dependent on capitalist societies without enjoying the same status as Western nations in the international realm. Market and other economic forces have resulted in Africa not being able to compete fairly on the import/export front for example. At the same time, states on the African continent are blamed for promoting anti-market development policies (Dibua 2006:18).

Furthermore, embedded paradoxes in modernisation have resulted in overall confusing and destabilising policies.

Contradictory conditions were set for the successful application of development policies aimed at achieving modernisation. Initially, with the introduction of modernisation, it was felt that the movement from traditional towards modern should be led by the state. Authoritarian states were seen to have the mechanisms in place to command and steer societies to accept and abide by development policies. In the 1940s and early 1950s, development economists were of the opinion that a strong and authoritarian developmental state would lend great support to economic development (ibid:25). This idea was promoted by various studies, notably Alexander Gerschenkron's work on European economic history. Based on Gerschenkron's studies, development economists argued from a comparative perspective that, since analysis of the late industrialized countries of Europe (notably Germany, Russia and other eastern and southern European countries), had demonstrated little compatibility

between democratic principles and development, there was no reason to believe that Africa should be different (ibid:25).

By equating the characteristics of post-colonial Africa with those of early modern Europe, the continent's ability to transform to capitalism in the postcolonial era was seen to be on par with European history. State intervention was regarded as crucial in the development of capitalism in Europe – hence, in Africa with its patrimonial tendencies, it was interpreted as lawful to be corrupt, as long as it was promoting and protecting the national capitalist class – or the bourgeois social order, as in Europe. This argument was also supported by arguments based on Weber's studies, highlighting Africa's binary nature. In terms of this argument, Africa is divided into two realms: *'public'* and *'private.'* The private realm is constructed out of communal and ethno-regional sectors, whilst the public realm consists of the governmental sector. In the same argument, it is postulated that moral principles are applied in the private realm, while the public realm is governed by immoral principles, which subject it to irrational practices, such as exploitation and corruption (ibid:6). Because of the patrimonial nature of African governments, the cultural inclination to satisfy the individual and his/her communal group was a soft target and easily exploited by international agencies who wanted to become involved in Africa for capitalistic expansion purposes. Even with a shift towards a society-led application of development policies, certain Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) still relied on governments to implement some policies forcefully – which led to further corruption and ultimately subjected these SAPs to severe criticism.

Modernisation ideas being 'imposed' on Sub-Saharan Africa, whilst at the same time maintaining exclusive market-related brackets, contradictory conditions for the execution of development policies that merely enhanced authoritarian rule and unfair comparison with European stages of development – all of these cast a shadow of distrust over development programmes and the institutions behind them. This resulted in African nations developing a reserved approach towards modernisation policies, and ultimately in the waning credibility of modernisation.

### 2.3 AFRICA'S RESISTANCE TO MODERNISATION PARADIGMS

During the 1980s, the implementation of modernisation policies and ideals was well underway in Africa. However, the Sub-Saharan region remained in a dismal state, showing little of the envisaged development. The continent, which

was characterised by authoritarian governments, was increasingly experiencing ever more fervent economic crises.

Once again, the World Bank and the IMF stepped to the fore, suggesting a 'revisit' of previously adapted modernisation policies.

Excessive state intervention was blamed for the low success rate of modernisation policies and the continent's overall lack of development.

It was suggested that an overall restructuring of government-led development policies should take place. Authoritarian governments had to be overthrown and neo-liberal democracy had to be instated in their place. This, according to Bretton Wood institutions and followers, would provide a solution to Africa's economic crisis.

This idea was put forward under the guise of SAPs. Even though development programmes had failed in Africa, modernisation continued under the guise of SAPs. Where a shift did occur, however, was within the neo-liberal policies now being imposed by these SAPs in conjunction with international agencies like the World Bank.

When it became evident that several states in Sub-Saharan Africa were growing increasingly disillusioned with modernisation, the role of these SAPs was, amongst others, to implement political conditions and ideological policies, that, when met, would result in the provision of grants to states. These conditions were an attempt to re-construct Africa in the Western image and to assist the continent to move away from the *'irrational'* towards the *'rational'*. These *'conditions'* included good governance, democratic principles and the alleviation of poverty whilst empowering grassroots. These policies also emphasised the *"minimisation of the role of the state, massive devaluation of national currencies, drastic reduction in state expenditures especially on social services, privatisation of state-owned enterprises, liberalisation of the trade regime and democratisation"* (ibid:27). This distinct move away from authoritarian-led modernisation has been termed post-modern liberalism, and it is this trajectory that has been applied in Africa until the present.

The execution of the theory proved to be less straightforward than a mere clinical approach to the theme could provide. Initially, it was expected that rapid economic transformation would occur in developmental countries with authoritarian political organisation. This state-centrist approach was dominant in the 1960s and 1970s before it was overthrown by a new SAPs-driven orthodoxy that proclaimed liberal democracy and good governance as agencies

for economic development. This new orthodoxy was championed by agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which provided aid with democratisation as a prerequisite. This worsened rather than improved the situation in African countries. The blame for the failure of SAPs was attributed to Africa's internal factors, such as "*poor implementation*", "*neo-patrimonialism*" and "*corruption*" (ibid:3).

Arguments opposing modernisation and neo-modernisation were, and still are, loaded with the notion that the implementation of the modernisation theory has failed because it failed to consider African reality. Ignorance of Africa's realities, as noted by James Ferguson (1994 in Dibua 2006:3) has become the key denominator when analysing Africa's development (or lack thereof).

In Africa, for instance, experts have noted that the problems revolve around two broad themes: the state and individual/collective values (ibid). These themes reflect Weber's perspective on modernisation, and highlight the fact that international and regional approaches to the theme have become increasingly intertwined.

Whilst the application of Western infused universalistic models in Africa have elicited critique from opposing scholars, very few of these suggest ways in which modernisation can be measured in Africa.

Those who venture to do so are often too Western, and so are their theories it would seem. Kwesi Yankah argues that Western-based scholars have become alienated from the African reality since the Western academy dictates "*the paradigms and meta-language in which ... (African) reality should be ordered, as well as controls the strategic outlets of knowledge dissemination*" (1995 in Dibua 2006:4). This view is supported by Tiyanbe Zeleza who argues that "*the historical and contemporary relations of domination and dependency between Africa and the West, will result in knowledge being related to the structures of power*" (1995 in Dibua 2006:4), e.g. the West.

Suggestions to analyse modernisation by comparing African reality with a comparable stage in modern European history have also been greeted with disdain: "*These comparative studies have only further distorted African realities because their perspectives were of a racist and imperialist nature, which denigrated African culture and negated the role played by indigenous factors in Africa's development*" (Dibua 2006:5). Through this liberal/neoliberal approach, the development crisis in Africa has been aggravated rather than reduced (ibid).

In short, critique levelled at modernisation in Africa, holds that the liberal/neoliberal political economy of markets and liberal democracy do not comply with African realities and that it should be revised. Modernisation has become a way of keeping Africa subservient to the international capitalist system and that this severely hindered Africa's development. Rather than being complementary to African realities, modernisation and its cousins have instead established contradictory relationships with the continent's realities and cultures. It is suggested by Dibia (2006:5) that instead of replicating Western institutions' road to development, Africa should turn to the crucial roles its own indigenous realities can and should play in the development process.

The questions that arise are: what are the realities that the international realm is so worryingly out of touch with? Are these realities not in need of drastic restructuring? Is such a move away from the 'traditional' necessarily negative, if it circumvents a collapse of the socio-economic status of the Sub-Saharan continent?

#### 2.4 INTERNATIONAL IDEOLOGIES AND AFRICAN REALITIES

The incorporation of political prerequisites in the post-modern liberalist paradigm has begged the question of whether this 'new' approach will deliver the outcomes which prior attempts failed to achieve. Will 'good governance' and other political ideologies be valuable and workable substitutes in the development formula that has thus far failed to provide solutions to ongoing underdevelopment in Third World countries? This is even more so as the formula provided for 'good governance' is based on the liberal-democratic polity that is essentially Western in nature. This formula has been fed to cultures and societies across the globe as if it has universal developmental relevance across all cultures and societies (Leftwich 1993:605).

When analysing the strength of governance in development one has to turn to modernisation theory, which postulated during the 1960s that development would lead to democracy. What has occurred with the new approach to modernisation is the idea that democracy might be *a priori* or parallel to development as opposed to being a mere outcome (Leftwich 1993:605).

Questioning the applicability of Western-developed theories and ideas, Leftwich (1993:605) argues the assumption that "... *no special preconditions are necessary for stable democracy and that it can (and should) be instituted at almost any stage in the developmental process of any society, where it will enhance, not hinder, further development.*"

Looking at Third World countries during the 1990s, he highlights the fact that few of the Third World and formerly non-democratic elites have embraced democracy with much enthusiasm, commitment or success. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this situation has not improved, with most former authoritarian Third World states embracing a form of quasi-democracy that is characterised by one-party dominance as opposed to fair competition. Even in South Africa, for many the example of African success, governance is characterised by one-party dominance, with the leading African National Congress (ANC) winning overwhelmingly in all elections. Leftwich (1993:606) warns, in an almost apocalyptic manner, that few Third World countries exhibit the conditions that will sustain democracy, and that this might lead to “... *an era of democratic reversal, not democratic consolidation.*”

This dissertation has highlighted the growing disillusionment with modernisation paradigms during the 1980s. The effect that the post-war, state-led development paradigm has had on Africa, however, still needs some elaboration.

Firstly, adjustment became increasingly political<sup>8</sup>, finding its strength in a neoliberal modernist theory that promoted political liberalisation under the auspices of democracy in order to achieve economic and market liberalisation. This interrelationship is also illustrated in agreements, such as the Articles of Agreement of the new European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) of 1991, which combine economic and political objectives that aim to ‘*promote multi-party democracy, pluralism and market economies*’. Even before this, however, the World Bank highlighted the influence of governance on development. Leftwich (1993) highlights a 1989 World Bank report on Africa that argues that, “*Underlying the litany of Africa’s development problems is a crisis of governance*” (World Bank 1989 cited in Leftwich 1993:610) ... “*Good governance included some or all of the following features: efficient public service; an independent judicial system and a legal framework to enforce contracts; the accountable administration of public funds; an independent public auditor, responsible to a representative legislature; respect for the law and human rights at all levels of government; a pluralistic institutional structure and a free press.*”

As Leftwich notes, these are all characteristics of liberal democracy, even though the World Bank promotes these as “*largely functional and institutional*

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<sup>8</sup> This term is used by Nelson (1989) in Leftwich (1993:607), referring to the, for example, democratic principles, that were, and still are, set as conditions for structural adjustment loans.

*prerequisites of development*” (cited in Leftwich 1993:610). Although not always vehemently expressive about governance policies, the World Bank has always clearly equated good governance with “*sound development management*”, as evident in their statements, as highlighted by Moore (1993) in an article referring to the World Bank’s (1992) approach to governance and development (cited in Leftwich 1993:610).

Critics, like Leftwich (1993:612), would argue that the prerequisites of the World Bank and other international institutions have become part of the emerging politics of the New World Order, and that the foundation of this New World Order is built on Western liberal democracy. For African states, and other Third World countries, good governance (as informed by Western liberal theories) is not easily achievable. This is not because it is not desirable, but because the institutions that are in place cannot sustain it.

When *these* African realities are not taken into account, development efforts founded on the principle that there is a gradual movement through certain stages of development, would not be successful. Political and social structures in Africa are remarkably different from those in any of the European states on which developmental paradigms were founded. Indeed the core part of Leftwich’s (1993) dissertation touches upon this point.

Leftwich’s argument raises the question whether Africa’s seemingly undeveloped economic and political sphere is due to African resistance to Western principles or Africa’s incompatibility with post-modern liberalist paradigms.

Leftwich (1993:617) correctly cites Ekeh (1975) that few African states could be described as ‘*secure*’, since many are “*flawed by low levels of legitimacy, consensus and elite commitment.*” If one adds to this economic crises, ethnic and regional pluralism and conflicts, one-party dominance, declining health care, human rights abuses, the growing gap between rich and poor, lack of loyal opposition and low educational and GDP levels, then one arrives at a very dismal conclusion – that modernisation paradigms did not deliver the expected results. It is generally acknowledged, as noted by Ajulu (2001:29) that the IMF/WB policies have had little success in fostering economic growth. It has been just the opposite. Ajulu (ibid) notes that the intervention of the IMF/WB in Africa over the last 20 years have only led to “*economic stagnation, widespread poverty and the disintegration of Africa’s social fabric on an unmitigated scale.*” Africa’s debt burden continues to grow, whilst GDP levels showed a drop of 42.5% between 1980 and 1990 (UNDP 1999 in

Ajulu 2001:29). The Sub-Saharan region, then, appeared to be underdeveloped, pre-liberal and generally economically and socially flawed.

However, to dismiss all Western theories as if they have no place in the African political realm would be a great academic error. Finding African solutions to African problems may sound grandiose but one cannot ignore the fact that Africa is part of a global body and that this continent with all its states should function in a symbiosis with all spheres of the international realm.

When state leaders, like South African former-president Thabo Mbeki, call for African political renewal and economic regeneration, and African institutions like the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) are founded, then one should be aware of previous experiences (failures and successes) in Africa's modernising past, whilst not condemning African solutions to adjusting the future.

The idea of an African renaissance has trickled into various political and socio-economic realms. '*Africanisation*' has become the idea associated with the general emancipation of the African continent. African approaches, theories and implementations should ensure the '*rebirth and renewal*' of the continent.

This is not a new call, however. Discussions centring on Third World communication policies (specifically in relation to the NWICO discussed later in this dissertation) and democracy has been a less than straightforward debate since the inception of development.

Western governments have traditionally maintained that the diffusion of new communication technologies in a competitive free-market environment would be conducive to a free flow of information and that it would assist in wider political participation in democratic processes (Ayish 1993:498). Whilst the free flow of information was not readily accepted in all African countries that were still mainly operating on an authoritarian or social-authoritarian media system, the call for democracy was echoed by various regional institutions and regional focussed commissions such as the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), the Organisation of Islamic Conferences (OIC), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the UN Interagency Task Force on UNPAAERD (Braue 1990 in Ayish 1993:499).

It would seem, though, that even with the best intentions to '*rejuvenate*' the African continent with solutions that are sensitive to the African context, these African organisations fail to show a higher success rate than any of the international institutions' development and modernisation efforts.

Modernisation is not dead. The term has become contested and neither a regional nor an international solution is coming to the fore. However, theories on communication informing the modernisation theme, as developed by international agencies, have merit and should not be disregarded. It is these theories and its main proponents that enjoy emphasis in the following section.

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## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

This section looked at the modernisation paradigm and illustrated how modernisation theory clearly stipulated a developmental path characterised by the erosion of traditional values and realities and the uniform application of western values and thought systems. Modernisation theory overall assumed that Sub-Saharan Africa should advance in order for the region to participate in the one economic order that was envisaged and signed at the Bretton Woods conference. As an ideal this was fundamentally flawed. If the Bretton Woods conference and its core members had set out to develop Africa's own resources so that the continent could effectively and meaningfully have participated in world markets, this continent's socio-economic landscape would have looked wholly different than it does today.

Due to unequal wealth distribution and a one-minded approach aimed at spearheading Africa to become industrialised, merely caused dependency of the continent on the market forces driving modernisation theory.

The exploitation of Africa for its raw materials by the rich west is often cited in dependency literature as another factor that contributed to the lack of Africa to progress through Rostow's proposed stages of growth. Africa as an underdeveloped continent in many ways contributed to the west's development – the slave trade for example, where slaves were taken from Africa to the Caribbean and were forced to do unpaid labour which advanced sugar and cotton production. These in turn were exported to Europe at huge profits (Joshi 2005:5). Overall development efforts should focus its ideals to cater for the rural dweller for example, assisting him/her with crop production by providing fertilisers and much needed water retention systems before focusing on urban development that only caters for those who are already at a more advanced stage of development – the link between agriculture and modernisation is well documented after all and if this relationship is in balance it will benefit all on various levels of development.

Africa should furthermore be afforded the right and means by the international community to develop its own people and to extract its own resources for its own modernisation as opposed to having international companies expose the continent's resources without its citizens reaping the benefits – as is the case in oil-rich Sudan and Nigeria.

A pertinent factor that is emphasised throughout this dissertation is the fact that modernisation theory was applied to the continent, termed as “*traditional*”, “*primitive*”, “*barbaric*” and “*backward*” by the enforcers (Dibua 2006:1), without taking into account the social realities of the continent that largely rendered modernisation theory, its core ideals and assumptions, obsolete. Apart from the continent’s intricate political-social structures that were disrupted by colonialism, slave trade and western missionary groups, Africa’s structures were also severely tampered with by the trial-and-error approach that was followed by modernisation processes that supported authoritarian governance the one day, and criticised it the next. This judgement error was also not rectified, since the SAPs that were tasked to enforce ‘sound governance’ on a manipulated Africa were met with disdain and criticism from its inhabitants — with good reason.

Africa should never have been compared with Europe as it is remarkably different – its social-cultural structures being just one of many examples. In Nigeria alone, there are 250 tribes that speak different languages and/or dialects. Their interaction and interrelationships are based on vastly different government and socio-economic structures. Nowhere was this the case in Europe. Earlier modernisation theorists who cited Europe as an example to provide development methods disregarded this fact. With regards to Africa this was a gross mistake, which the SAPs were unsuccessful to remedy. The revised conditions of liberal democracy as an agent for economic development echoes the Bretton Woods institutions, like the IMF and WB’s lack of understanding for African realities. Like other conditions, western liberal democracy is an un-African paradigm that is forced on the continent ignoring the local and regional realities.

The following chapter examines the priority communications, which succeeded to achieve the highlighted paradigms of modernisation and democracy, and how the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication failed to take into account certain realities faced by the continent that hampered the effective transmission of modernisation goals and ideals.

INTERRELATIONAL CONCEPTS: MODERNISATION,  
COMMUNICATIONS AND DEMOCRACY

3.1. COMMUNICATION AND DEMOCRACY (AS AN OUTFLOW OF  
DEVELOPMENT)

Hyden and Leslie (et al 2002:2) note that the role of communications in national development received considerable attention during the 1950s and 1960s when modernisation was at its peak. Whilst the focus at the time was not on the establishment of democracy *per se*, democracy was considered a by-product of socio-economic development.

The argument was in essence that democracy would only be possible once society has been modernised. As noted, the conditions that were considered congenial to democracy were: industrialisation, urbanisation, modern education and a spread of the market economy. The link between these conditions and democracy was confirmed by Lipset (1959). During the same period, however, mass media, or communication, was investigated by Daniel Lerner (1957) as a link in modernisation and wider economic and political participation. (See: Illustration 1)

Lerner categorized individual respondents in levels of advancement: traditional, transitional and modern. Similar to the argument put forward in Roger's *Diffusion of Innovations* (1962), Lerner argued in favour of the media's ability to invoke empathy towards certain personalities. In his view media exposure and literacy should have led to economic and political participation.

This is in line with the liberalist approach to communication; which is clearly defined by Siebert et al (1956) in *Four Theories of the Press*. The Libertarian Theory of the Press has over the years evolved into the most overall accepted approach to the media since it supports a Western thought process of democracy and freedom of speech. However, in Africa, a combination of Siebert's theories is applicable. These will be elaborated on later in this dissertation.

Apart from communication's role in developing, and supporting, democracy, communication was also being investigated as an important link in modernisation. For example, findings of Lerner's study titled *Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (1950), in which the importance of mass media as a link in modernisation was highlighted, were published in the same year in which

the United Nations General Assembly called for a programme that combined national development with the expansion of developing nations' mass media. Under the auspices of UNESCO the importance of mass media and development continued to be highlighted in economic development plans (see illustration 3).

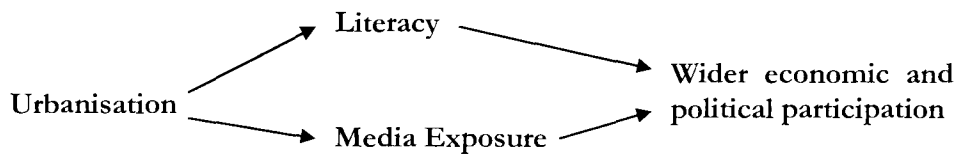
The idea that communications could become the crucial factor that could accelerate the development of Third World nations, as suggested in Rostow's theory of growth, to where they become self-sustaining nations became popular. This theory was put to practice by Wilbur Schramm who was involved in a preparatory work by UNESCO and edited a volume called *Mass Media and National Development*. Schramm's work concentrated on cases from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Whilst it noted the dismal state of communications in Africa, it also emphasised the potential of communication to make a difference in agricultural development and health care – not unlike to what Rogers suggested in his paradigm of the role of mass media in creating a climate for modernisation (table 2):

**TABLE 2:**

<b>Modernising Influences</b>	<b>Climate for Modernisation</b>	<b>Adoption of Innovations</b>	<b>Consequences in more modern behaviour and development</b>
<b>Mass media exposure (combined with subsequent interpersonal communication)</b>	1. Active information Seeking	1. Awareness and correct information about innovations	1. Higher agricultural activity
	2. Favourable attitude toward change	2. Favourable attitude toward innovations	2. Fewer children per completed family
	3. Higher aspirations	3. Adoptions of innovations	3. Better health and nutrition
	4. Perceived self control (rather than fatalism and perceived other control)	4. Continued adoption (rather than discontinuance of innovations)	4. Wider political participation

Paradigm of the role of mass media in creating a climate for modernisation, leading to the adoption of innovations and development, in Rogers, (1947:49).

### Illustration 3:



Sequential and Co-extensive Presentation of Lerner's (1958 in Salcedo 1971:627) Model of Modernisation.

All these changes were in essence based on the theory of the diffusion of innovations that emphasised the power of communication effects. As with state leaders, communications could support modernisation by creating media messages that sustain and enhance knowledge of new practices, whilst persuading the audience to adopt external innovations linked to development. Rogers defined the diffusion of ideas more particularly when he defined development as “*a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capita incomes and levels of living through more modern production methods and improved social organisation*” (Melkote 2003:135).

#### 3.1.1. Constraints to the Effect of Communication on Development Efforts

The theories of Lipset, Lerner and Schramm, together with those of other development optimists, were severely challenged when efforts to incorporate the mass media in development processes proved ineffective. Third World countries seemed to be unresponsive to new media technologies.

It was found that individuals were not willing to readily take risks, as in the case of Lerner's study (referred to *supra*) on the Balgat villagers. This was blamed either on a lack of material resources or on the role of powerful individuals or groups within society that prevented progress. Rogers, Lerner and Schramm acknowledged that their approach to and conceptualisation of development might have been oversimplified by focusing too narrowly on individuals as agents of change, by basing their theories on universal models of evolution, and thus ignoring culture specificity, and by emphasising the mass media (Huesca 2003:214).

Rogers' five stages of diffusion were also greatly challenged in Third World countries. Key to the diffusion paradigm was adoption of new ideas.

During adoption audience members or readers had to decide whether to adopt or reject an innovation. This was viewed as the last step of a linear process consisting of five steps, namely: 1) awareness 2) interest 3) evaluation 4) trial and 5) adoption (Melkote 2003:135). The graduation from one step to another was hampered by socio-economic factors. Diffusion studies found that those more likely to adopt media messages *“were younger, had higher social status, had a more favourable financial status, engaged in more specialised operation, and were equipped with greater mental abilities than later adopters”* (as cited by Melkote 2003:135). Rogers further found that other factors such as limited exposure, message irrelevancy and low credibility resulted in mass media messages having little effect on rural, traditional nations in less developed countries (Rogers 1974:44-54).

He elaborated on what has been established as one of the main concerns in message transmission in less developed countries – the fact that the majority of audience members in developing nations are not exposed to mass media channels:

*“For instance, in less developed nations about one-third of the village audience is not in the audience for any of the mass media, about one-third is reached only by radio and roughly one-third is in the audience for both the electronic mass media, such as radio, and the print mass media, such as newspapers and magazines”* (Ibid:47).

Cost and illiteracy contributed to the limited exposure. Furthermore Rogers (1974) found that the message content was not taking the needs and realities of less developed nations into account. Most message contents were shown to be:

1. *“Consumatory – that is for entertainment purposes – rather than instrumental;*
2. *irrelevant to the information needs of rural, non-elite audiences;*
3. *and devoid of “how-to” information about innovations in agriculture, health and nutrition, family planning and community development”* (Ibid).

Apart from these realisations, another important reality surfaced. Well into the advanced years of modernisation, the government was seen as the main vehicle in executing development. The top-down diffusion of modern ideas and Western principles negated the importance of diffusion from grassroots towards top structures and other sub-systems. It was only later that the international community conceded that government might also be part of the problem and in 1976, Schramm and Lerner proposed a bottom-up participatory development paradigm. This is very important to understand the media environment in Africa today. Governments in developing nations were told to control development

programmes, which included the mass media. People were spoken to, and not allowed to speak. When a new form of development was executed under the auspices of post-modern liberalism, governments were still acting as they were told, controlling the public. This phenomenon is still evident in many African countries today. It seems like the shift from Authoritarian to Libertarian has just not occurred. Many developing countries remain seemingly stagnant in a 'modernising' state whilst being blamed for not developing into a post-modern liberal state. Why has this shift not occurred? Why is there this resistance to move into the post-modern liberal realm and what are the mechanisms that are applied to establish this resistance?

It was realised that communities needed to be empowered to develop and implement messages. Government control over communication systems can create biased agendas aimed at empowering officials rather than citizens, but more importantly, government control over mass media, especially the electronic media can also contribute to communication channels or sources having little credibility in communities. Rogers pointed out that the pro-modernisation theme advanced via the mass media by governments has resulted in the media appearing subjective since there is no plurality of voices (Rogers 1974:48).

Initial studies on modernisation showed that urbanisation held the preeminent position in factors leading to modernisation (Lerner 1965, Hoselitz 1962 in Edeani 1980:63). This view was greatly challenged by Inkeles and Smith (1974 quoted by Edeani 1980:63) who concluded from a study involving six less developed countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America that urbanisation "*was of little or no consequence as predictor variable*" (ibid:63). Lerner, in particular, argued that the developmental sequence went from urbanisation to communication and then political participation (ibid). Since Lerner concluded his study in 1950, Schramm and Rugels (1967) argued that Lerner's theory had become outdated with the spread of technological developments. In 1967, when this counterargument emerged, the area of communication was still '*fairly*' limited, but the use of transistor radios and other factors that supported the spread of communications, such as better roads and rapid transportation appeared. In their study they demonstrated the existence of a positive relationship between "*economic and social developments on the one hand and mass media of communication development on the other*" (Boadu 1981:193).

The key factors contributing to the success of the modernisation process were believed to be due to the integrative and interactive capabilities of the media. With the theoretical notion that *“communication is the basic social dynamic in every society”*, according to Fagen (1966) and Almond and Powell (1966 cited in Edeani 1980:71), the mass media was viewed as the guardians who prevented against the disintegration of society, in a society that has moved beyond the traditional face-to-face communication system to a more developed system.

This theory relies on systems theory in which mass communication is a subsystem that *‘berds’* a differentiating society towards a common goal. Schramm (1963 in Boadu 1981:194-195) elaborated on this relationship:

*“As nations move from the patterns of traditional society towards the patterns of modern industrial society, spectacular developments take place in their communication. From one point of view, developments in communication are brought about by economic, social and political evolution which is part of the national growth. From another view point, however, they are among the chief makes and movers of that evolution.”*

This influential role of mass communication on society was substantiated by Deutschmann (1963 in Edeani 1980:195) who conducted a study on the use of mass media systems in an Andean village in Colombia. Boadu (1980:195) argued that Deutschmann’s findings could provide insight into the pervasive influence of mass media systems in Africa. Deutschmann (1963 in Boadu 1980:195) found:

- 1) *“An observation shift from oral-traditional to mass communication.*
- 2) *Exposure to the mass communication systems were effecting changes in the Andean villagers in ways that point to a shift from traditional ways toward what might appropriately be termed scientific and technological ways.”*

Boadu (1980:195) also noted that the trends visible in Africa suggested that individuals with greater exposure to the media were more likely to show higher levels of knowledge of political, health and educational matters. Also, he added, the attitude of those who are exposed to the media were *“markedly more consistent with national development messages carried by the media, as opposed to those who have very little or no contact with the media”* (ibid). In this sense, the media serves as transformers of society, transforming the values, attitudes and behaviours of traditional society (also noted by West & Fair 1993:91). It was hypothesised that the traditional masses would gravitate towards modern systems with the necessary exposure. This is what Lerner termed the motive force in the *“revolution of rising expectations”* (1967 in Randall 1993:635). Randall (ibid) speculates that the

portrayal of lavish Western lifestyles on entertainment channels that have become widely distributed with the help of satellite TV might move masses to aspire towards more modern lifestyles, or it might simply highlight socio-economic hardships and increase dissatisfaction and frustration among the poor.

The causal relationship highlighted by these studies underscores the main ideas of communication and modernisation theory: that communication serves as a complex system, fulfilling certain social functions, and that it is not merely an interplay between source and receiver (Melkote 2001:133).

Rogers, however, challenged this view, arguing that although media exposure might lead or assist in development, the necessary socio-economic factors are not always in place to allow this exposure to take place. He cited some variables that might intervene in this much needed exposure component. Boadu (1981:196) highlighted the following conclusions from Rogers' study (1956 – 1966):

- 1) *“Mass media exposure appears to be associated positively with such variables as socio-economic status, functional literacy, urbanization, occupation, empathy, opinion leadership, knowledge and innovativeness.*
- 2) *Certain variables may be conceived and found to be antecedent and consequent to mass media exposure and mass media exposure in one instance might be regarded as an intervenor.*
- 3) *Mass media exposure is only an arbitrary beginning of a diffusion process; the ultimate consequences in part depend on the configuration and nature of socio-economic networks beyond the points of contact.*
- 4) *Mass media effects on the modernisation of a community can be of considerable weight and highly relevant to other variables involved in modernisation.”*

It is very important to highlight Rogers' conclusion that certain antecedents allow individuals to enjoy greater exposure to the media, which in turn will lead to modernisation. If these antecedents are missing, modernisation would be hampered. These antecedents were shown to be predominantly socio-economic related – functional literacy, education, social status and age – all variables that remain a problem in Africa.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.2 THEORIES OF THE PRESS

When discussions surrounding the relationship between the media and government arise, the theories developed by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in 1956, perhaps provide the most comprehensive guide between the different theories underlying the complex rationale that affects

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<sup>9</sup> This fact is highlighted throughout the dissertation in various sections. Take note of the factors hampering media's link with democracy on p.47. This is also elaborated on in the final chapter on traditional societies especially under the heading “Communication in Developing Nations: The Great Divide” on p.57.

*“relationships between individuals, the media, institutions and the state within Africa itself”* (Siebert et al 1965 cited in Ocitti 1999:7). Siebert (et al) analysis’ of the four theories of the press (treated as the media in general and not limited to newspapers) provides a framework of different media theories and their intriguing interrelationship with other sectors of society, whether tangible or philosophical ideals. It also notes that differentiating media landscapes would exhibit a stronger support for one single theory or a combination of all or few. Africa’s landscape, for example, does not only reflect the Libertarian Theory, instead it also includes the Authoritarian Theory, Social Responsibility Theory and the Soviet Communist Theory.

These theories are well documented and an in-depth analysis of all is not necessary for purposes serving this dissertation. In short it can be noted that the Libertarian Theory of the press has over the years evolved into the most overall accepted approach to the media since it supports a Western thought process of democracy and freedom of speech. It is also this theory that is most severely scrutinised in this dissertation due to the manner in which it has been uniformly enforced in Africa.

However, since Africa hosts a combination of all four theories, one will note that (some) media in (some) African countries also reflect strong ties to government advancing the rules of the ruling system, characterised by dictatorship, military rule, one-party systems and lack of democratic consolidation (Authoritarian), much likened to the Soviet Communist Theory, the media in these states can often stand in service of the ruling party or state, by means of self censorship or government censorship.

Lastly, the Social Responsibility Theory is very much an outflow of the Libertarian model, since media and social developments refocused on the consumer and the media’s relationship towards its receiver. The media as educator, informer and entertainer emerged. Indeed the factors used to measure the efficiency of the media in most countries have been based on a combination of the Libertarian and Social Responsibility theory of the press. This hybrid asserts liberal principles, supporting ideas and notions that are democratic in character, such as pluralism, participation and unification of the masses. This model of communication has become the most prominent and almost exclusive version of communication. Since little legitimacy has been given to an Africa-sensitive model, measurement of media-efficiency still occurs using the libertarian model of the press as a barometer.

The main assumptions of this model are:

- *The media is a fourth branch of government, acting as a watchdog to keep the other branches of government, and other institutions accountable for their promises and actions.*
- *The media should keep people informed to enable them to make informed choices.*
- *The media should create and maintain a sphere of political discourse.*
- *The media should educate the public so that the public can hold government accountable.*

The Libertarian Model of communication, like the ideals of modernisation and development, is Western in nature. It is not surprising, then, that the general international feeling (as expressed by authors Merrill (1974) and Jakubowicz (1995) both cited in Agbese 2006:18) that the ultimate goal of transitional media systems is to become westernised. It is seemingly suggested by them that the mass media will only be able to assist in political transition if these libertarian principles, informed by the Libertarian Theory of the press, are in place. In order to achieve these principles fully, the media should be free from censorship and government scrutiny. A free media and democracy are often quoted as pairs. Historically all these press theories are of variant importance to the issue of development but Ocitti (1999:11) notes that future developments increase the relevance of theories as advanced by McQuail (1994) namely the Development Media Theory and the Democratic-Participant Media Theory.

Both these theories support suggestions that Africa does not have the infrastructures needed to support the advancement of media technologies and its accompanying influences e.g. development and democracy.

### 3.3 MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

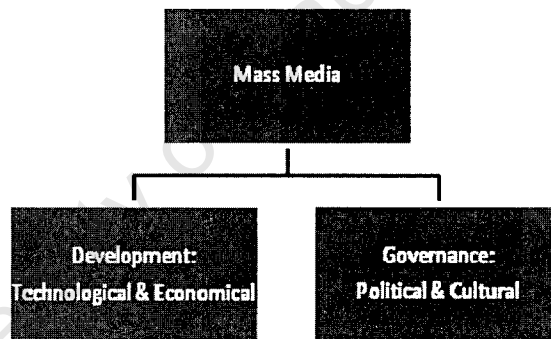
Once the connection between modernisation, or post-modern liberalism, and democracy is established, the role communications play in the process can be investigated. The assumption that the media plays a very influential role in shaping and supporting democracy is not disputed. What is questionable, however, is whether the communication systems used in this constructivist and supportive role in developing countries should be similar to those existing in already developed, industrialised countries.

The causal link between democracy and development has been noted and debated. The focus of modernisation during the 1950s and 1960s was shown to be

on socio-economic development first and democracy second. Democracy was regarded as a product of a combination of industrialisation, urbanisation, modern education and the spread of the market economy. A study by Lipset was briefly quoted to substantiate this theory. In a review of a study by Leftwich (1993), it was shown that the causal relationship could also work vice versa, with democracy influencing the level and speed of development. The flow of this relationship is not of cardinal importance to this dissertation. It is anticipated that both variables have an influence on one another, and that the flow is not one-directional.

What is important is to note that it has been argued that the media has an influence on both variables. The media thus acts as a type of umbrella over these terms, influencing both, and with these variables in turn influencing each other. The effects of this relationship then trickle down to other sectors of society (illustration 4).

**Illustration 4:**



The mass media acts as an umbrella influencing both technological and economical development, as well as effecting changes in government.

Hyden et al (2002:7) note that the relationship within this causal diagram is even more complex: *“What happens in one domain, however, is not isolated from what goes on elsewhere ... For example, modern information technology may shape both media ownership patterns and cultural tastes, while also being subject to political manipulation by either state or societal actors. Similarly, an expansion of freedom of expression may enhance the confidence of citizens to participate in the political process, but it may also create its own backlash in resulting in politically more repressive regimes.”*

By implication, the relationship between governance and development is not characterised by a downward flow alone, but also by an upward flow in which the causal relationship reciprocates with its own influence on the other boxes.

Arguments, views and publications on the role of the media in politics, and specifically the role of the media in development in Africa, all reflect a very strong call for an African character – a call for an African approach to the theme. Furthermore, a general struggle with bridging the gap to modernity without sacrificing certain cultural behavioural patterns seems to dominate the debate (West & Fair 1993:91-114, Bofo 1986:35-47).

As was noted in Chapter 2, it was initially thought by western supporters of development that an authoritarian government would have more success in executing development policies. In reality, however, these governments not only exercised power over development policies but other branches of society as well. The notion of press freedom was until very recently an abstract term, associated with disloyalty towards government leadership and its policies, and authoritarian governments in fact enjoyed exercising power over media institutions to control this aspect reflecting an Authoritarian Press Theory approach. They were, in essence, only building on the foundations of control that had been laid by the colonial authorities. This was further fuelled by modernisation policies that stood uncritical towards government's approach to communicative spaces, as criticism of policies and strategies were seen as harmful to national unity. Remarkably, what is often ignored is the fact that newspapers (for example) are not an African medium at all. The fact that it is a form of communication in Africa today is due to the continent's colonial heritage.

When African countries eventually gained independence, they experienced a social and economic crisis that hampered their development, and made them increasingly dependent on the outside world. With Africa showing little progress during the first years of independence, and the noted disillusionment with modernisation policies, the chief response was another political transformation – authoritarian governments were to be replaced by democratic government structures – and this was achieved with the application of neo-liberal SAPs. The World Bank and the IMF included aid conditions that were supportive of liberal democratic forms of governance – of which a central component was press freedom.

Although the level of press freedom enjoyed by African media has increased over the last couple of decades, it is far from being a certain reality. Incidents like the ban on critical media in Zimbabwe, for instance, emphasise that the media in some African states is only free from government scrutiny in words, but not in action.

Kareithi (2005:3), however, questions whether the level of criticism aimed at Africa's media is valid. He argues that such criticism is often rooted in Western libertarian theories of the media, in terms of which the potential for positive contribution by the party and the government in the development of the press is usually not considered. Indeed, much of the criticism aimed at media across the globe is informed by the institutional literature, which is built on a model of the press (read media) that is Western in character. The analytical factors used to analyse the level of freedom and the professionalism of the media have become globalised. These globalised factors, in turn, serve as indicators of the level of political freedom and the form of governance, in general.

The pressure exerted through SAPs for government reform has also put pressure on the level of media freedom, including the free flow of information reciprocated by public discussion and expression.

Kareithi (ibid), and others, are not wrong in calling for an African approach to this theme. However, where the issue of press freedom is concerned, one must realise that direct government interference in media issues is not the only factor suppressing the freedom of the media. In Africa, the media is limited even more so by socio-economic rather than political realities. Best (in Kareithi 2005:2) divided these problems into four categories in what he referred to as the *"four crises of communication in Africa"*, namely: the crisis of understanding, the crisis of power, the crisis of ownership and the crisis of resources. Vicky Randall (1993) supports this claim, arguing that Africa has to contend with constraints such as the degree of literacy, the amount of wealth and the size of the population. Yet, she argues, media in Africa has been able to contribute to democratic forms of governance, and she notes: *"Expansion of the national media, especially of the electronic media, the growth in media professionalism and the dramatic increase in the penetrative capacity of international communications have enhanced that role"* (Randall 1993:644).

However, as was suggested, the influence of media freedom, governance and development is not merely a one-way affair.

Edeani (1980:64) tested the reversed influence of supposed 'development variables' on the level of press freedom. In his study, he examined the relationships of mass communication, economic development, urbanisation,

education and political participation in the determination of press freedom.<sup>10</sup> He challenged the one-way Lerner model (1965) that only concentrates on the influence of communication development on political development. Lerner, as is noted by Edeani (ibid:64), fails to recognise mass communication's array of other influences. The media's influence on the level of literacy and incidental learning is particularly important (Mcrone & Cnudde 1967 in Edeani 1980:64). Edeani seems to suggest that concerns as noted by Randall (1993) and others on the influence of education in communication development, is not entirely valid. Lerner (1965 in Edeani 1980:64) suggested that there was a sequential flow of influence from literacy to communication, but Edeani notes that with communication developments, the sequential flow might be reversed from mass communication to literacy or education. People, in the words of Edeani, "*no longer seem to wait until they are educated before paying attention to and learning from the mass media*" (1980:64).

Edeani (1980:65) further criticises Lerner's model by arguing that whilst economic development exerts a 'relatively' strong influence on urbanisation, its impact on mass communication and literacy seem to be close to null.

Press freedom and democracy, as suggested by governance policies, are paired, but in less-developed countries, press freedom does not unequivocally equal democracy. Democracy, by definition, implies that governors should be held accountable by the masses, and often the media highlight this accountability. The media can also in certain cases act as an opposition where a formal strong opposition is lacking, thus challenging government policies. This role of the mass media is impaired if the masses cannot respond to the media's challenges.

As noted, the socio-economic realities in Africa do not always cater for a system where the influence of the media is direct and immediate. Apart from formal education, which by implication means schooling, importance should be given to political education. The masses must understand the concepts associated with democracy, such as '*freedom*' and '*accountability*.' Apathy in voters often sets in if they feel their votes do not make a difference. The media, like other institutions, should constantly highlight and teach citizens their roles in a democracy and the importance of political participation. At the same time the media should ensure that it maintains a high level of professionalism, and that it remains economically viable to enable it to fulfil its watchdog role in a

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<sup>10</sup> In his study, Edeani (1980:64) defined the variable of press freedom as "*the extent to which individuals and groups have the liberty to express themselves through the mass media. It also includes liberty which journalists and other professional communicators have to transmit and exchange information without undue restraints.*"

political bureaucracy and in other public and private sectors in the community (Edeani 1980:65).

It is doubtful whether sufficient political knowledge and media professionalism are present in developing African states. It is thus questionable whether the necessary influence on development can occur if these two factors need to be developed themselves. The obvious solution seems to be to invest more capital in communication systems and media training. Lack of professionalism is often associated with lack of capital, as media houses and journalists are less prone to bribes and other forms of corruption if they are economically viable. Media-training is thus also a costly, but very important aspect, to sustain a viable communication system, especially in the light of the constant developments in international communications that seek national application.

When the media is adequate and the exposure to the necessary communication media is present, it is likely that economic development will also improve. Edeani (1980:71) writes: *"The magnitudes and signs of its [mass communication] relationships with economic development, urbanization, and education suggest that development of communication channels and exposure to pertinent information stimulate economic development, make people aware of opportunities available in the cities, help them to find their ways around in the cities... [and] assist the individual not only to be aware and appreciate the value of education, but also to become educated."*

Access and influence thus go hand-in-hand. When factors hampering access are identified and addressed, influence will increase. The improvement of media professionalism, enhanced education and increased poverty alleviation should, in terms of this argument, contribute to the level of media accessibility in developing nations, and this in turn should favour influence, whether political, social, ecological or economical. This dissertation would like to emphasise that the media does not play either a constructivist or a supportive role. The media's transitional role in governance and its role in supporting governance have both been documented as equally important. It is however possible that the role and influence of national media under authoritarian or other dictatorial regimes can be compromised due to the level/lack of media freedom allowed. In such a situation, the role of the international media would play an important role in providing information that is nationally compromised. Samuel Huntington discussed the power of global mass communication systems during the third wave of democratisation, referring to the fact that international media provided

information in countries where the media was generally government-controlled. This contributed to the demonstrations and protests that spread across the continent (Agbese 2006:16). Once this transition to democracy has occurred, however, national development policies should firstly ensure that national media can support the liberated form of governance, and secondly, that access to media is increased. In this manner the flow of information, development and democracy could be well supported.

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## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

This chapter outlined the modernisation paradigm and how it interrelates with communication and governance. A rather critical approach to the topic was followed to illustrate the areas of concern. It was illustrated how modernisation is based on liberal political theory and overtly grounded in Western principles of development, governance and communication. It was argued that some of these principles negate the realities faced by many developing countries today and that these called for a more Africa-sensitive approach to the theme.

By highlighting the theories and institutions that support the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication, it became clear that these international institutions face a general lack of effectiveness. This was illustrated by looking at the examples of the World Bank, the IMF and other international institutions' policies that, on rollout, showed little success.

Communication theories by Schramm, Lipset, Lerner and Rogers were presented to illustrate the prioritisation of communications within a developmental context. This relationship was, and still is, based on the principle that the mass media are an instrument that can influence and manipulate behaviour and assist in development. It was highlighted how certain socio-economic factors, most notably poverty and illiteracy hamper the effective transmission of communication messages, and how this can result in development having a limited effect in societies. Like Rostow (1979) proposed certain stages of development, Rogers (1962) assumed with his *'Diffusion of Innovations'* theory that exposure would lead to receivers wanting to attain higher social levels and that this *'will'* for a higher social standing would encourage them to uplift themselves. He argued that this aspiration gained from mass media exposure would encourage people to move into the city (urbanisation) to achieve a higher living standard as illustrated in the media. Randall (1993) supported this claim by speculating that the portrayal of Western lavish lifestyles might inspire people to acquire the same lifestyle, or merely highlight the discrepancies between the developed and undeveloped world's leading to despondence and even resistance.

What was found to be an overall flaw in these theories is the fact that exposure is needed for diffusion of modernisation innovations to take place. This exposure in Africa is lacking to a great extent due to socio-economic, and often political, factors.

These socio-economic realities are discussed in more detail in the following chapter, which focus on traditional African societies. It is suggested in the following chapter that there has to be a gradual, but definitive move away from the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication-thinking to a communication system that is more African in character.

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## TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES AND AFRICAN REALITIES

*“By the year 2000, with wisdom and some luck, we as human race may have succeeded at these critical tasks: ... Within the human community, the developing nations, taken as a whole, will have doubled their present income per capita. They will be approaching levels of per capita income normally associated with a rapidly declining rate of population increase. They will have acquired another quarter-century’s experience of modernisation as well as competence in a much widened range of technologies. They will be much more capable of adjusting to changing circumstance and solving their problems in the century beyond.”*

W.W. Rostow (1979:18)

### 4.1 SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATION, DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

#### *4.1.1. NWICO as Response to International Communication*

The frustration with Western-informed systems is not new or limited to this century. Since the 1970s, the dominance of Western-prescribed development models and their influence on communication systems has culminated in mounting frustration in Third World countries, who felt that Western dominance was a source of their *‘underdevelopment.’*

To counteract this dominance, the Third World called for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) during the 1970s and 1980s. Much has been written on the subject and it is not the intention of this dissertation to elaborate too much on the goals and resulting agreements of the NWICO, as this introduces a work on its own. It highlights certain concerns noted by the NWICO merely to underscore that discrepancies exist in media technologies that influence economic and social development. In following sections it is highlighted that the divide between rich and poor nations continue to exist and impedes on socio-economic and political development, this is illustrated at the hand of Kenya’s communication standards and challenges. In short, the NWICO sought to address (as noted in Fourie & Oosthuizen in Fourie 2001:416, emphasis added):

- *The imbalanced international flow of news, information and media entertainment;*
- *Inequities in the arena of international communication; and*
- *The crucial role of communication in economic and social development.*

The NWICO was also a response to news, information and entertainment as forwarded by Western powers to reinforce their economic and military ideals as well as their political and cultural values (ibid). Concern was also highlighted during the General conference of UNESCO in 1972 where attention was drawn to the way media of the richer nations were being applied as a means of dominating world public opinion (ibid).

Following this, and underlying the development of the NWICO was concerns about certain international communication inequalities that impede economic and social development. Fourie (2001:418) notes certain inequalities listed by Vincent in 1997 (ibid). These were:

- *The developing world has only four percent of the world's computers.*
- *Thirty-four countries of the world have no television sets.*
- *Africa (in total) has less than three newspapers per country whereas the United States has 1 687 and Japan 125 dailies.*
- *There are more telephone lines in Tokyo than on the entire African continent.*

The NWICO was also an outflow of an UNESCO conference in 1976 that created the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, known as the McBride Commission. The McBride report on a New World and Information Order was published under the title *Many Voices: One World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow* (1980).

Two main components of the report were the principle of a free flow of information and the question of communication technologies. Third World countries were concerned about the impact powerful communication satellites, trans-border data flows, digital communications and interactive computerised data exchanges would have on their political sovereignties and indigenous cultures (Ayish 1992:492). Secondly, the Maitland Commission of 1985 highlighted the gap in telecommunication resources between industrialised and developing nations, underscoring the NWICO report's question of communication technologies. The Commission noted that three quarters of the 600 million telephones in the world were located in nine industrialised countries (Ayish 1992:495).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century these two main components of the McBride report remain an issue in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in addition to inequalities linked to economic discrepancies, cultural and political differences also influence development and therefore 'breaks' the link between communication, development and democracy. This is elaborated on in the following sections.

## 4.2 POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DISCREPANCIES AS OBSTRUCTION TO DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa has been criticised for not meeting the required goals as set out in the modernisation and development paradigms. Certain, if not most Sub-Saharan countries, still operate on a very frail foundation of governance. Attempts to achieve revolutionary social, political and economical transformation have been met with setbacks in some cases and utter failure in others.

The United Nations Human Development Report on Democracy (HDR 2002), states that *“at current trends a significant portion of the world’s states are unlikely to achieve Millennium Development goals, including the overarching target of halving extreme poverty by 2015.”* The report also notes what can only be described as the failure of development ideals. According to the report, many countries are poorer than they were *“10, 20 and in some cases 30 years ago.”* But it is not only on socio-economical grounds that development has not succeeded; democracy as the proposed form of governance is also failing: *“Just as troubling, the flush of euphoria that saw the number of countries embracing many of the hallmarks of democracy – particularly multiparty elections – soar to 140 over the past 15 years is starting to turn into frustration and despair.”* (ibid) Add to this the high rate of illiteracy, inadequate infrastructures, debt burdens and disease, and a depressing picture materialises.

Those critical of neo-liberal policies will attribute these failures to previous neo-liberal development efforts that failed (Akokpari 2005:1). According to Thomson (2000 cited in Akokpari 2005:1) underlying these critiques is the negative effect the upsurge of neo-liberal globalisation has had on Africa, since *“competition and liberalisation attending globalisation have only presented Africa with further developmental challenges.”*

Some authors have warned that these neo-liberal standards, which include parliamentary democracy and a primarily privately-owned press, should not merely be accepted without weighing firstly its relevance and secondly investigating other options (Berger 1998:599 and Nyamnjoh 2005:7).

### 4.2.1 African Democracy: The Priority of Equity and Development

Claude Ake argues that *“political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development”* (Ake 1996:1). To support his argument he cites the mark left by the colonial legacy whose control over resources and indigenous people to a large extent impeded the independent growth of Africa and its producers — decades

of this form of colonial domination meant that Africa could not grow to reach its own hegemonic status.

When the move away from colonial domination did finally occur, the social economic, political and industrial infrastructures that would have enabled Africa to operate independently were not developed. To actively compete in an imbalanced world market favouring the colonial predecessors was and still is something Africa is battling with.

Ake argues that a legacy of domination as forwarded under a colonial dispensation is one that was simply adopted by African leaders at the time. Finally, being bestowed with power is something that state leaders were not willing to give up – not even when ushered to do so by the populace. In order to maintain (pseudo) solidarity, the commitment to development was upheld as a common purpose that called for certain sacrifices. With this, the new independent state leaders aimed to keep demands for redistribution of state resources and the structural transformation of the colonial economy under control (Ake 1996:8). It can be argued thus that the colonial forces provided African leaders with a ‘valid’ excuse not to allow the self-governance of its people, and in doing so development became the protagonist of democracy.

Development and the accompanying dream of equity remain, to a large extent, an unobtainable reality and in many countries the reality is that both democracy and development is lacking due to the philosophy outlined in these paragraphs. What is needed, as advocated by Ake, is a democracy informed by equity foremost, and then development. The one should not be advanced at the detriment of the other. If this imbalance continues, this will result in what Ake terms the “*democracy of alienation*” (in Bradley 2005:407).

Also it should be noted that the conception of democracy is one that differs widely in communities and countries. Bradley writes that democracy, (and this is true to all forms of governance to an extent) is a “*configuration of governance moulded by the general values, biases, prejudices and nuances of a given culture*” (Bradley 2005:407). Whereas a common reflection and association with governance is achieved in a less diverse society like those characterised in the West, Bradley (ibid) notes that African identity is interwoven with “*ethnicity, religion and communal adaptations and traditions.*” With many different cultural denominations sharing a common border,<sup>11</sup> a homogenous definition of

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<sup>11</sup> For example Nigeria where 250 different tribes reside within a common border.

'sufficient' governance does simply not exist. When Bradley (ibid) calls for a reappraisal of democracy in Africa he is correct in doing so.

Just as the goals of modernisation, development and communication should be advanced in line with the social realities of the continent, democracy should be allowed to reflect an African character. This character according to Ake and supporters is one that is already imbedded in traditional African political systems. The chieftain-system where accountability is restricted to a ward, society or community is a classic example of an existing, workable system that has been greatly eroded and replaced by Western prescribed models of governance<sup>12</sup>.

To view African-style democracy from a different angle and not to become entangled in these Western models is important if socio-economic restructuring, (that would assist in modernisation, development and communication) is to take place. Bradley (2005:409) for instance cites Jalal (1995) who argues that a combination of socialism and democracy is perhaps better suited to the African environment where equal access to power and resources is more important than a liberal dispensation.

To analyse African-style democracy in-depth is beyond the scope of this dissertation. What is important to note in support of the theme is the fact that, like with the other overarching terms associated with the dissertation's title, Western critique aimed at development and democracy in Africa is flawed if social realities are not considered.

That Africa is communal rather than individual-driven is a very important factor. This communalism is not only important on a political front, since an understanding of imbedded practices like communal decision making also play an important role in communication practices and the dissemination of messages linked to development and social growth.

#### *4.2.2. Communication in Developing Nations: The Great Divide*

Although a critical approach to Western imposed standards has been followed, it has to be stated that this criticism does not render these standards obsolete. However, much has been said about the misinterpretation of African realities and the associated misapplication of development strategies. Understanding Africa is the key to effective development (Berger 1998:600).

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<sup>12</sup> There are the exceptions, for example Botswana (Nyamnjoh 2003 cited in Bradley 2005:412), Mozambique (Harrison 2002 cited in ibid) and South Africa (Oomen 2000 cited in ibid).

This is a pertinent issue, since communication models can, and should not, merely be extrapolated from developed countries and applied to African settings that are uniquely different from those of development partners.

The majority of Sub-Saharan citizens are non-literate, poor and do not have technological resources at their disposal that will enable them to access modern mass media such as the internet, email and television. The media's impact is thus greatly restricted. As Boafu (1986:41) writes:

*“Communication and telecommunication systems in most African countries largely serve the needs of the 25% of the people who live in the urban centres while neglecting those 75% who live in the rural areas. Africa’s communication and telecommunications infrastructure is predominantly marked by high centralization and concentration in the few urbanized areas, inadequate communication facilities and resources and limited accessibility to available facilities for most people living in the rural areas.”*

Berger (1998) underscores the dilemma of these ‘African realities’ – of which the reach of the media seems to have the most limiting effect on development. Much media is still restricted to serving urban elites; where in the past it served the interests of the colonial power, it now serves the interests of an indigenous ruling group. He argues that because of the media's limited infrastructure in developing countries its political power is also compromised.

According to Berger, the Western media is better prepared overall to support democracy than developing media. He identifies key differences between what he refers to as ‘North or Western’ and ‘South or Developing’ media.

The differences are listed in the table below:

**TABLE 3:**

<b>North or Western Media</b>	<b>South or Developing Media</b>
Private ownership, comparatively competitive, free, market-orientated system	Publicly owned, highly centralised, monopolised and controlled system (Ansah in Berger, 1998:603)
High entertainment premium	High educational function
Well developed infrastructure	Infrastructure is limited
‘New media’	‘Old media’
Largely public media	Government controlled media

Differences between developed and developing communication as compiled from Berger 1998:599-610

The obvious and blatant differences between developing and developed nations are not restricted to mass communications. These disparities are applicable to most of the modern barometers identified *supra*. Without much doubt, these disparities in turn play a restrictive role in developing nations moving through the stages of growth proposed by Rostow (1979). If Sub-Saharan Africa is still wedged somewhere between traditional society and takeoff, how practical is it to apply and expect realities and ideals associated with countries that have already achieved the mass consumption stage?

A UNESCO conference in Windhoek in 1991 envisaged that the mass media should continue to play a cardinal part in the process of political liberalisation. Once again it was declared that an independent, pluralistic and free press was an essential component of the development and maintenance of democracy (Odhiambo 2002:295).

Furthermore there are other international conventions and declarations that presuppose that certain realities are present that are conducive to the conditions needed for liberal democracy. Article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations *vide* Resolution 2200A (XXI), provides, for example, “*that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice*” (Odhiambo 2002:315). Freedom of expression has become a universal standard – but how legitimate is it to expect countries, especially developing ones, to adhere to these standards?

Odhiambo poses the same question, although he casually states that measuring up to the same standard as any other nation “*costs nothing in material terms.*” This dissertation disagrees with this statement, since ensuring a free media that caters for absolute equal access and receivable information does indeed seek capital and material investment.

Every country needs an individual analysis, but Kenya can be referenced to illustrate the challenges that developing nations’ face that ultimately hamper development as envisaged by the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication.

### 4.3 KENYA'S COMMUNICATION STANDARDS AND CHALLENGES AS AN EXAMPLE

Kenya is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This means that in local legislation the standards as expressed by the convention should be incorporated. But this is not the case. Kenya's constitution does not provide the same level of acknowledgement to media freedoms as provided in the ICCPR.

Individual freedoms do receive protection under Section 79(1) and Section 79(2)(a) and (b) of Kenya's Constitution, but there is no specific reference to freedom of the media. This has resulted in many cases of media restriction and violations against media practitioners. This is worrisome in its own right, especially from the perspective of a libertarian press theory that views these practices as undermining liberal democracy. The question that remains, however, is whether constitutional and other political changes will make a difference if socio-economic realities remain unchanged. Diffusion of messages, whether political or developmental in character, cannot be achieved if there is limited consumption of media products.

Odhiambo (2002:306) confirms that economic development and media development are interlinked.

He poses two important causal questions:

1. *How did the Kenyan economy perform in the 1990's in terms of structure and growth or decline?*
2. *How has its performance been reflected in the growth and diversification of the media industry?*

Kenya, like its eastern African partners, has shown little economic prosperity and this is reflected in the level of media ownership.

Table 4 presents various indicators to show that economic growth in Kenya remains low. This is a clear indication that Kenya's national development strategies have been unsuccessful. Policies adopted and pursued by Kenya's government during the 1960s were founded on the premise that economic prosperity would result in economic benefits trickling down to all Kenyans, even those living in rural, traditional clusters. Nevertheless, according to the Global Monitoring Report (2007), poverty reduction and economic growth remain challenges faced by the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries, including Kenya.

**TABLE 4:**

Figures			Uganda	Tanzania	Kenya
% population living below national poverty line			55%	51.1%	42%
GNP			US\$6.8 billion	US\$8.0 billion	US\$10.6 billion
Economical growth			7.7%	5.6%	0.5%
Per capita GNP			US\$320	US\$240	US\$360
Gini Index			39.2	38.2	35.4

The table reflects figures dating back to the 1990s, in other words, during the so-called second wave of democracy. Source: Compiled from Odhiambo (2002:306-307)

Another relevant argument noted by Odhiambo (2002) is that expenditure on media products and communication gadgets come from disposable household incomes. Expenditure on media or information ‘disseminators’ is thus a luxury, which few can afford. Odhiambo (2002:307) refers to the use of “*per capita growth in private consumption*” to measure the availability of such funds. From 1980 to 1998 the annual per capita growth in private consumption in Kenya was 0.2%, which means that Kenyans had close to 0% income to spend on communication gadgets and mass media products. Looking at the socio-economic data presented in Table 5 indicate this remains a factor that should be considered in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In a study by the Institute for Development Studies [*Universal Access to Communication Services in rural Kenya* (2004)], findings showed that most Kenyans spend their meagre earnings on consumables such as food – and that, therefore, media products remain a luxury few can afford.

**TABLE 5:**

Indicator	Value
Population	28, 686, 607
Urban Population	19%
Rural Population	81%
Human Development Index	0.550
GDP	US\$3.9 billion
GDP per capita	3,360 Kshs (approx. ZAR 0.43 or US \$ 0.04)
GNP per capita	980\$
Human Poverty Index	34.1
Adult Literacy Index	0.736

Source: Third Kenya Human Development Report 2004, in Final Report to the Communications Commission of Kenya and the International Development Research Centre.

The study further found:

- *over 80% of the country's population lives in the rural areas;*
- *most of the country's rural population is engaged in subsistence farming;*
- *most Kenyans spend their earnings on consumables, mainly food;*
- *Kenya's youth population (under 20 years of age) accounts for 56% of the total and is disproportionately represented among the poor;*
- *poverty levels show a general increase;*
- *education levels are very low with just over 55% of the household heads having a primary school level of education and another 18% having no schooling at all. Those with at least secondary school level of education comprised a quarter of the household heads.*
- *The main source of information was the radio with a large majority (80%) of the households relying on this medium. Word of mouth accounts for a mere 9%.*
- *The majority of households (76%) indicated that they sought information on social life. A mere 3% indicated that they seek information on agriculture, although most rely on subsistence farming. Only 9% indicated that they seek information about politics.*

Whilst the level of poverty, cultural differentiation and communication structures differ in every African country, Sub-Saharan Africa is by and large a vast continent characterised by rural realities that suggest it is largely in the beginning stages of development. Therefore data, like that provided in the study outlined, should be incorporated in national communication policies.

Based on the above data one can briefly suggest that:

- *rural communication system should be a priority;*
- *that agricultural messages should be incorporated in social programmes;*
- *that the youth should be a main target;*
- *that media should be made more economically accessible;*
- *that education should receive much more attention and*
- *that prioritisation in communication policies to enable citizens to decipher media messages.*

Communication and development strategies that are 'contextualised' to fit into local settings are increasingly called for. Yet, it seems as if the importance of developing media, applicable across various, if not all, sectors is not receiving the urgent attention it needs, and that there are often weaknesses in the structure.

#### 4.5 COMMUNICATION APPROACHES AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Authors are quick to note and criticise the failure of ‘imported Western development ideologies’ in Africa (Abrokwa 1999:646), and further retaliate with suggestions that Africa should find approaches to development that are more suited to its realities than Western models of modernisation ever were (ibid:664). Others point out that the Western path to development is laden with ecological destruction as the “*belief in technology led, and will increasingly lead, to ecological disasters*” (Sachs 1992 in Schuurman 2000:10). The media in such a situation would be an accomplice in estranging indigenous peoples from their cultural roots as the media messages would urge them to adopt “*the wrong things for the wrong reasons with money they did not have*” (Schuurman 2000:10).

One of the main problems with Western models of modernisation is that the social system they suggested (an urban, modern system) clashed with the indigenous social systems that were (and still are) a core part of African operations. When development did not succeed, it was these traditional structures that external observers blamed for stifling the process of modernisation. When authors, like Abrokwa (1999), suggest abandoning Western development strategies in favour of African-orientated ones, one can expect these African-orientated strategies to be more community driven, rather than large-scale nationally enforced strategies as was attempted in previous development efforts.

It is arguable whether Abrokwa’s suggestion (1999:664) that a total abandonment of Western development strategies is the answer to Africa’s problems. NEPAD as an African institution clearly does not support this suggestion either, as the organisation itself applies strategies of development by the ‘West’. There is merit in a more African-sensitive approach, however.

Although the community (citizens) should in no manner be excluded from development policies, it is still a national, and with regard to NEPAD, a regional effort to bring about the desirable change. National and regional efforts at development should however be aware that change is not necessarily a top-down affair, and that increasing efforts should be made that development does trickle down to those community clusters that are a dominant part of Africa’s demography.

This also applies to communication sectors. Whilst it is the rural areas that are most in need of community-sensitive communication systems, the resources

will have a minimal impact if they are not integrated in national development, policies, plans and goals (also noted by Boafu 1986:36-37). Boafu (ibid) also notes that national communication policy, furthermore, has to be shaped by the socio-economic, cultural and political climate of societies. It is not unorthodox to suggest and respect that communication policies will differ in every society. If a communication policy is developed that is in line with the socio-economic, cultural and political realities, governments will be able to “safeguard its indigenous cultures against the constant intrusion, through information channels, of undesirable alien cultural values and traits” (Boafu 1986:38).

A conference on Communication Policies in Africa, held in Cameroon in 1980, suggested a number of guidelines for communication policy of which three are applicable to this dissertation (in Boafu 1986:38-39):

1. *“Communication needs to be recognised as essential to economic, social, education and cultural development.*
2. *Communication’s ultimate goal should be the betterment of man, not only as an economic and social unit, but as a cultural entity and with the potential for contributing in many ways to the enrichment of the community of which he is part. To reach that potential, he needs to be informed and educated and given opportunity to participate fully in socio-cultural activities, including communication itself.*
3. *Such participation would only be possible if he is provided with the necessary facilities such as access to communication media, the right to self-expression and the right to make his opinions known.”*

Even though this was suggested in 1980, this remains relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where little progress has been made on the three points listed above.

#### 4.6 MOVING AWAY FROM BRETTON WOODS: THEORETICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR AN AFRICAN SOLUTION

The focus in Africa should move away from mainstream media and should rather focus on community and small space media. Therefore, communication methods and theories should not be applied in a general fashion as done within the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication. McQuail suggests:

*“The functions and goals of the press must be seen differently, especially around the following themes: the primacy of national development tasks (economic, social, cultural, and political), the pursuit of cultural and informational autonomy, support for democracy, and*

*solidarity with other developing countries*" (1994 cited in Ocitti 1999:12). If Africa wants to move away from Western dominated development strategies, the first obvious departure point would be to define the key concepts in their own terms. For example, how would Africa approach the topics of development, good governance and communication?

Patrick Chabal (2002:452) writes that African political systems today are characterised by three 'intriguing' characteristics: *"They are increasingly informal, they appear to 're-traditionalise' and they have failed to stimulate sustained economic development."*

This is important to note, since the approach to governance says something about the social constructions within Africa.

Chabal's first characteristics highlight the relation between the individual and his/her community. In Africa, the individual is far less autonomous than in the West, as he/she is part of a collective. As Chabal (2002:452) notes, *"the individual cannot be conceived outside the community from which s(he) hails, however geographically distant s(he) may be from it."*

This social construction interlinks with increasing calls for an '*African Renaissance*' that enforces African customs. Furthermore, Africans function simultaneously on several different registers – from the most visibly 'modern' to the most ostensibly '*traditional*' – in their everyday lives (Chabal 2002:453).

This in turn affects political effectiveness. The African system combines both traditional and modern modes of governance, culminating in a neo-patrimonial system where the political elites or patrons (that on a vertical line have achieved modernisation) serve their clients at the same level to ensure their position on the scale. The benefits of development would thus be restricted to very few, as the benefits will only be extended sideways to those operating on the same level. The few elites will benefit, whilst the traditional masses enjoy little development progress.

The answer to this problem would be to eradicate the differentiation between the horizontal and vertical distribution of development. The way to do this would be to mobilise the traditional masses to challenge the neo-patrimonial order. Those who do not benefit, should be able to hold 'patrons' accountable without having to resort to violent measures.

Communication systems can assist in this accountability and the communication systems that are advanced should be sensitive to the social-cultural realities of collectiveness, traditionalism and overall lack of development.

In a study reviewing the role of mass media and interpersonal communication in development in Latin America, Africa and Asia, Rogers (1974:44) found that:

1. *“At present, the mass media play a major role in creating a climate for modernisation among villagers, but are less important in diffusing technological innovations – although their potential for doing so is high;*
2. *that mass media channels are more effective when combined with interpersonal channels, as in media forums; and*
3. *that the traditional mass media, such as village theatre and travelling storytellers, have an important potential for development purposes, especially when they are combined with the modern electronic and print media.”*

Rogers (1974:46) distinguishes between mass media and interpersonal channels by defining these concepts as follows:

*“Mass media channels are all those means of transmitting messages which involve a mass medium – such as newspapers, magazines, film, radio and television – that enables one or several individuals to reach an audience of many. Interpersonal channels are those which involve a face-to-face message transfer between two or more individuals who may be family members, neighbours and friends, salespeople, school teachers, government change agents or others.”*

He continues to note that interpersonal communications are of greater importance for the diffusion of innovations in less developed nations.<sup>15</sup>

Great emphasis has been placed on the call for a more African-sensitive approach to development. It is suggested that the necessary development can be achieved with development models that are focussed on social as well as socio-economic change without negating the importance of culture and imbedded social practices and realities.

This idea together with the disillusionment with Western notions of a free media and its role in development has stimulated debates on alternative communication models.

A study of 134 developing nations by Weaver, Buddenbaum and Fair (1985 in Ayish 1992:500), found that, *“given the conditions of scarce resources, a colonial legacy, a poorly educated population, tribal and ethnic rivalries and a subordinate position in the world economic and information system, a free press can too easily lead to an inability of governments to function and to internal chaos.”*

An example of an alternative approach to press freedom was suggested at a joint Asia-Pacific Press Convention and General Assembly of the

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<sup>15</sup> Rogers (1974:45-46) defines an innovation as an idea, practice or object perceived as new by an individual.

Confederation of ASEAN Journalists, during which an *'Eastern model'* of the press was presented as an alternative to the *'Western model'*. The alternative model featured a media-government partnership that was sensitive towards goals of development that worked alongside government in relation with the direction set by them. Since this type of model lends itself to serious government intervention, this model will only be relevant and thus applied in societies where liberal democracy is not an intended outcome. Assuming that liberal democracy, whether present or not, is still an intended outcome, a goal or a core principle of a country's development policy, then the media should enjoy a fair level of freedom. The media does not have to be controlled to contribute towards government policies.

If governments expect the media to contribute to development goals, then the intended outcome must be stated in government plans and policies.

Melkote (2003:137) provides an easily understood desired outcome to the African development process: *"(I see) development as a process that should provide people with access to appropriate and sustainable opportunities to improve their lives and lives of others in their communities."*

Various approaches in order to achieve this change via communication systems have been advanced – most notably models that stress the importance of community driven media.

Although this is the opposite of Western models of communication, which relied on top-down approaches to achieve development, critics have noted that such models achieve little success if authorities retain control over messages and development agendas as *"the postmodernist destruction of these participatory development paradigms aims to empower the people at grassroots level and to encourage 'real' social change in individuals and groups"* (Melkote 2003:138).

Melkote (ibid) highlights two areas that may contribute to achieving this goal: Participatory Action Research (PAR) and empowerment strategies. In the PAR model, the people identify key areas in need of awareness-making, and develop the methods to achieve this awareness; this identification is by collective and democratic means. The identified key areas are debated, which encourages participatory social action that are in touch with indigenous realities (ibid:139). The model also includes and empowers indigenous knowledge that did not receive recognition in international development paradigms. In terms of this

model, local narratives, popular knowledge, cultural meanings and social arrangements are all incorporated to achieve maximum effectiveness.

The second strategy, viz. empowerment, like the PAR strategy, emphasises the need to give the power back to the local people, and to work with individuals and communities at the grassroots level to enable them to participate meaningfully in the political and economic processes (ibid:142).

Whereas Western-orientated paradigms minimised the power of societies, rendering them weak and non-existent to a certain extent, empowerment seeks to mobilise people to protect their interests by providing attainable channels to do so.

What should be emerging, thus, is a critical alternative media, within which collective concerns, anxieties, goals and needs are addressed with debates and critical self-evaluation.

This form of 'small space' media, as opposed to mass media, remains the major form of communication in the majority of African countries. It is this that should be developed and enhanced, since development cannot be limited to the urban sections of societies that only comprise a minute section of populations.

In Uganda, for example, the indigenous media has been utilized as "*a respected, trusted and acceptable form of development communication*" (Mushengyezi 2003:108). The development of small space media requires a mind shift from where communities are assumed to be literate to the actual reality of a predominantly low literate population with very low levels of technological development.<sup>14</sup>

Others like S.T. Kwame Boafo (1988) and Frank Ugboajah (1985) cited in West & Fair (1993:93) proposed the term 'Oramedia' to highlight the importance of song, dance, drama, drumming, storytelling, proverbs and marketplace gossip as important tools for disseminating news and information in societies where development is lacking.

What seems to be emerging is an essentially culturalist paradigm that treats modernisation with a fair dose of aversion. The irony is that the message, or goal, remains unchanged. Whilst culturalists advocate the use of traditional or indigenous forms of communication like ritual theatre, '*talking*' drums, village criers, orators and storytelling, some have noted that although this will enhance the effectiveness of communication, the message, in essence, remains one that

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<sup>14</sup> Mushengyezi (2003:108) refers to a "*oral-ate*" community and also notes that scholars have pointed to a '*oral*' rather than '*written*' tradition that still persist in societies.

aims at advancing modernisation (Mushengyezi 2003:107-117 and West & Fair 1993:91-114). As a result, the *'hybridization'* of ideas is postulated as a solution in the struggle between tradition and modernity. In this hybrid system, indigenous and modern systems are incorporated to achieve maximum effectiveness (Mushengyezi 2003:115).

Rogers (1974:49-50) supported this idea by pointing out that the potential of communication in modernisation can be realised more fully when:

1. *"the mass media are coupled with group discussion in media forums, and*
2. *the traditional mass media, such as balladeers and travelling village theatre groups are utilized along with the more modern electronic and print media."*

Radio serves as a valuable example for this *'hybrid'* system. In essence a *'modern'* medium, it has become a highly valued source of transmission all over Africa. The number of radio handsets per 1000 people is significantly higher than other modern media forms such as newspapers, television and the internet (Odhiambo 2002:308). In Kenya it is estimated that radio coverage is available to about 97% of the population (ibid:310). Its effectiveness to stimulate, aggravate and instigate violence was clearly illustrated with the Rwandan civil war, when the medium was used to promote dissent between ethnic groups. This illustrates that although literacy is not a prerequisite for receiving radio messages, political education is still needed in order to recognise messages that can be harmful. Using radio together with traditional systems such as media forums increases its effectiveness. Rogers (1974:50) highlighted this relationship as an effective mode of transmission in developing countries such as Nigeria and Ghana. Media forums as further developed in Canada consisted of an organised group of individuals who meet regularly to receive a mass media programme and to discuss it afterwards (as explained in Rogers, ibid).

This relationship is not limited to the radio, however, but has been applied to the printed media and television broadcasts as well. These forums were shown to be generally effective in achieving behavioural change by creating knowledge, forming, and changing attitudes. Critique levelled by Schramm (1967 in Rogers 1974:51) at these media forums, however, is that continuous attention is needed from professional organisers; forum members drop out; radios break down or their batteries are exhausted. Nonetheless,

these forums show great potential for maximising the effect of media messages.

Authors, like West & Fair (1993:98) also warn against the politicisation of media and its messages. Some African governments are still controlling access to media and media production and remain reluctant to decentralise or democratise mass media. This cautious approach is often explained in terms of state loyalty and expressed fears that empowering local communities might work against national integration, since it might fuel ethnic conflict and '*tribalism*' (ibid). It is feared that this in turn will work against national development policies. However, as West et al (1993) point out, radio messages can be rendered meaningless if it becomes clear that messages are government driven, which might result in resistance towards accepting development messages.

Another form of media that has successfully combined the traditional and the modern is a form of theatre based on a '*Freireian*' methodology<sup>15</sup>. This form of theatre underscores the PAR strategy discussed above, since it relies on messages constructed by the community. An arena of dialogue is established by including the subjects in the dramatic dialogue. The viewers are drawn into the play as participants that have control over the direction of the play by means of their suggestions and reactions (West & Fair 1993:102). Each individual can thus send, receive, contemplate and re-apply messages. It also assists in identifying grievances in local communities. Facilitators conduct interviews during which contradictory views concerning local political structures and their role in mediating conflict and resolving local issues usually come to the fore. Village residents are also provided with the opportunity to voice their visions for the future. These views are then incorporated in a dramatic presentation that is performed at a public gathering. The ending remains open and, after the presentation, small groups of audience members are formed to discuss the problems addressed in the play, and to find resolutions to these problems. In this manner, the community itself finds ways to change certain social realities without feeling that ideas have been imposed on them.<sup>16</sup>

The Freireian and PAR approaches to communication both rely heavily on collective or group participation. This contradicts the individualist approach to communication informed by libertarian communication forms, which view

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<sup>15</sup> Named after Paulo Freire who studied African popular theatre.

<sup>16</sup> The discussion on this form of theatre enjoys more elaborate discussion in West & Fair (1993:102-105).

messages as information that should enable the individual to make decisions best suited to him/her, as Huesca (Mody 2003:212) notes this form of communication *“combines critical theory, situation analysis and action, which in turn constructs knowledge that is examined, altered and expanded in practice.”*

Pluralism, modernism and individualism, as developed by international communication processes denies the fact that in most African societies *“group relationships are basic and group belonging is the only possible way of giving meaning to individual identities”* (Baraldi 2006:56). In the ‘Freireian’ and PAR approaches, participants are treated on a subject-subject basis, rather than on a subject-object basis as found in the diffusion of innovations approach. Melkote (Mody 2003:147) suggest that in these approaches *“the object of communication professionals should be to empower people at grassroots level so that they can enter and participate meaningfully in political and economic processes in their community.”*

This is very much in line with what Freire suggested in 1970. He denounced overtly Western guided approaches to development communication and suggested an orientation during which *“practitioners attempt to close the gap between teacher and student, development agent and client, researcher and researched, that would ultimately result in a co-learning relationship guided by action and reflection”* (Huesca 2003:212).

What Freire in essence moved towards was a communication model that emphasised co-presence and inter-subjectivity – emphasising dialogue between people (termed ‘dialogic’) that would by the construction of social reality between people lead to the humanisation of communication (ibid).

It makes sense that if this social reality is constructed between people then the deconstruction of this meaning can also take place within a community-centred approach.

It is fair to postulate that if these grassroots approaches to communication are followed, then the reach of development messages will be higher, since a larger audience will be reached that will be able to interpret messages more easily.

In Edeani’s study (1980:73) it is shown that mass communication has the potential to influence all variables relevant to national development.

These variables were indicated to be:

- *Urbanisation*
- *Economic development*

- *Education*
- *Political participation*
- *Press freedom*

Edeani (ibid) concludes that because of the potential influence of communication in development, governments should prioritise it when drawing up national development plans.

The importance of communication in development is so well established that Edeani (1980) confidently notes: *“The crucial role of communication at both the national aggregate and individual levels of development has been so consistently demonstrated from study to study that researchers have now come to regard modernisation as a communication process.”* Rather disconcertingly, many African governments do not give communication the necessary position of priority in national development plans.

Boafo (1986:43) underscores the importance of communication in development plans and suggests that a national communication policy should be formulated in each African country, specifying measures, which would aim at the following:

1. *“Adapting both imported communication technologies and traditional media to the peculiar development needs and goals and cultural values of the society;*
2. *Encouraging the growth and development of a more decentralised and participatory communication systems in the country;*
3. *Effecting greater geographical spread in the distribution of communication and telecommunication facilities;*
4. *Generating a national recognition of information as a prime national resource to be produced, processed, managed and distributed for the benefit of the entire population; and*
5. *Making communication strategies and processes integral components of all socio-economic, political and cultural development programmes in the country.”*

In order to achieve this, African states should acknowledge what is needed in terms of development. They should identify and define key areas in need of development, and should aim to achieve increased literacy levels, better political social and economic education, increased agricultural output, better health and higher socio-economic standards.

In addition, for future developments, African governments should acknowledge technological advancements and help rural areas to gain access to communication systems that can assist in development efforts.

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

The factors linked to this dissertation's theme namely: *communication, democracy, development, modernisation* all preside in a hierarchy of needs that is appropriately illustrated within Maslow's (1943) proposed hierarchy of needs. According to this hierarchy in which self actualisation and the will for development is the highest and final step in the sequential flow, physical needs such as health, food, water and freedom is the first step and highlights the basic needs that need to be addressed before the advancement can be made to the next step (safety). A great part of Africa still presides in Maslow's first physiological platform. The need for safety, group belonging, power and development all take second priority if the basic needs such as sanitation, education, running water, health-care and housing are not achieved.

At the hand of this, it could be argued that good governance, therefore, is also lower (or higher depending on how it is viewed) in the priority it enjoys on the scale of unattained needs. The same can be argued for "modern" communication systems such as television and radio that is still considered a luxury as oppose to a necessity.

Democracy, modernisation and proper communication has little meaning when a mother cannot feed her child. This is the reality of undeveloped nations were the masses are poor. Because this physiological level still dominates the African continent, a practical revision and repositioning of modernisation in Africa should become the focus.

For this reason the last chapter recommends that communication systems should be developed that firstly are sensitive to the socio-economic factors by inhabitants of undeveloped, overtly traditional societies and secondly, that the messages portrayed in media should aim to address the needs faced by the receivers. This calls for localisation of the media: reshaping communication systems to address the most people, most effectively by means of participatory and community-based systems of communication.

Suggestions by African scholars were also cited to illustrate how governments should outline and include communication in development policies. At all times it should be noted that although these policies should be included in national development plans, governments, as well as the international community, should always be aware of regional differences within a state that might call for a different communication approach. Development communication policies, apart from being attainable should also be flexible.

## *Conclusion*

Although this dissertation concentrated on Sub-Saharan Africa, it has to be noted, that the evolution of the media, and the support it has been lending development policies in various African states, is at best, uneven. However, the general approach to the topic is substantiated by the fact that overall, Sub-Saharan Africa is generally deprived of the socio-economic standards and privileges that are experienced by first world countries. To import communication efforts and ideals based on first world expectations and realities on African soil will, as was illustrated at the hand of Kenya's socio-economic realities, not have the intended development outcomes due to gross disparities between media users and non-users. These disparities were generally shown to be of geographical (*rural versus urban*), economic (*rich versus poor*) political (*government interference versus free media*) and social (*different cultural expectations*) nature. It was argued, that due to these realities, modernisation efforts incorporating communication structures as envisaged by the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication, had marginal success in achieving development goals as forwarded by international agencies such as the IMF, WB, UNESCO and UNDP.

These development goals were presented as being within a triangular relationship where communication, development and governance operate within an influential sphere – e.g. changes in one was shown to have an effect on the other. This was substantiated at the hand of various theorists, notably Lerner, Lipset, Rogers and Schramm who, during research, illustrated the influential relationship between effective communication and development on the one hand and democracy on the other. These theorists and theories informed the Bretton Woods School of Development Communication who applied this research in modernisation efforts aiming at decreasing the gap between traditional and industrial societies. Following a critical approach to this School's modus operandi, it was illustrated that modernisation efforts were flawed right from the onset of the process. Modernisation efforts were applied in a haphazard fashion: where initial political conditions were set for the successful application of development policies these conditions were rendered null and void when the envisaged development did not occur. This 'failure' was followed by SAPs that restructured political conditions around democratic governance that included a libertarian form of

media. Both modernisation efforts, governance conditions and assumed communication structures proved to be incompliant with African realities.

In turn, it was suggested that development policies in Africa should focus on the role its indigenous realities can play in the developmental process. Few suggestions were made in the closing subsections that development communication efforts should focus on an African-sensitive media model that incorporate social realities in message distribution. In this model, it was suggested that communication rather be a bottom-up approach rather than the top-bottom approach that was followed by earlier, western prescribed, development efforts.

This model would be of a more collectivist nature, where participatory communications efforts are emphasised instead of individual sender-receiver models where the receiver is left to his/her own devices to decipher and implement media messages of a developmental nature. An African-sensitive model will also be more particularistic - whether cultural, geographical, socio-economic or political – since the needs and expectations between communities within a *single state* differ greatly. A single overhead development policy should therefore incorporate lenient structures that differentiate between different communities.

The greatest shift that should occur is the realisation that perhaps the biggest distinction that should be made between developed and developing nations such as Sub-Saharan Africa, is that where the rich is the group catered for in modern countries, it should be exactly the opposite in predominantly rural societies, where the masses are poor. Due to the seemingly disregard for this reality, modernisation efforts, incorporating communication for development, has not reached its intended outcomes.

The theory that communication can assist in development is not flawed, what is flawed is the method how this theory is applied. Key to development is *'effective'* communication that is achieved when local realities are taken into account. To achieve global development there should be a move inward, guarding what is true to societies.

Democracy might be an acceptable form of governance in the West but lack of definition and structure does not reverberate true to cultural, collectivist societies that dominate the African continent.

To impose this form of governance, together with its liberal, capitalistic ideals on a continent vastly different from the societies where this political

structure provides the operational skeleton for growth, is an insult to the differential values of the cultural structures in Africa.

All societies do not necessarily seek democracy. They seek to be governed righteously by enjoying what is rightfully theirs: good health care, education, roads, running water, sanitation, and houses. Equity rather than liberation is what should be emphasised. In order to achieve a form of governance that reverberates true to Africa's realities a reappraisal of democracy is needed. In all spheres it should be realised that Africa operates from a communal rather than individual sphere. A move towards a socialist-democratic combination was suggested, but it is important that this move does not provide totalitarian rulers with power to rule without considering the needs of the populace. Development should never be at the loss of equity. That Africa is communal rather than individual is a very important factor. This communalism is not only important on a political front, since an understanding of imbedded practises like communal decision making also play an important role in communication practices and the dissemination of messages linked to development and social growth.

Socio-economic rights are not solely tied to democracy; they are however tied to core human needs that are often disregarded by totalitarian governments. These governments can be held in check through the exchange of news and ideas,<sup>17</sup> but this wilful protest against a totalitarian leader is more often spearheaded when there is not appropriate delivery of the people's needs. A democratic leader, therefore, can just as easily become embroiled in dissident voices when the government of the day does not deliver in the basic physiological needs of its electorate. The link between communication and governance is most appropriately achieved when effective communication methods are in place that enables the electorate to make their voices heard.

The future of communications in Africa is interesting. Africa is awakening to technological advancements at a great pace; internet and cellular phones are fast becoming a reality among societies greatly overseen by the *Western wires*' of earlier telecommunication technology.

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<sup>17</sup> Geldof (2005:284) refers to a study "that has shown that when 20% of a population has the ability to exchange news and ideas through access to cell phones and text messaging, dictatorial of totalitarian regimes find it hard to retain power."

Bob Geldof (2005:282-283) surmise this reality most aptly:

*“Africa has skipped the age of wires that afforded the telecommunications technology to the rest of the world. It has leapfrogged straight into the wireless era ... The use of mobiles in Africa is increasing much faster than anywhere else in the world ... It is happening even among the poor, who will share a single phone between an entire community if necessary.”*

For societies only just finding their feet in a post-modern world, traditional collective interaction, combined with Western technology will prove to be a hybrid of global realities that just might achieve what decades of prescribed modernisation models could not.

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