Folktales for Social Change

A Study of
Dialogic Democracy, Oral Culture & Communication for Social Change
in Rural Malawi

MA thesis in Communication and Philosophy
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Acronyms

ADC  Area Development Committee
ADRA  Adventist Development and Relief Agency
Aids  Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AR  Action Research
CFSC  Communication for Social Change
ComDev  Communication for Development
DA  District Assembly
DBU  Development Broadcasting Unit
DC  District Commissioner (member of DA)
DevCom  Development Communication
DIO  District Information Officer (member of DA)
DPD  Development Planning Director (member of DA)
EAR  Ethnographic Action Research
HIV  Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT  Information and communications technology
LEFAM  Let’s Fight AIDS in Malawi (ADRA project, 2007-10)
MACRA  Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority
MBC  Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
NGO  Non-government Organisation
OSISA  Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa
REFLECT  Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
ROAR  Remediating Orature through Action Research
SDA  Seventh Day Adventist
SMS  Short Message Service
T/A  Traditional Authority
T/C  Trading Centre
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VDC  Village Development Committee
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Introduction

“Let me get this straight now,” I ask the chief’s wife, Mrs. Tambala, in the midday shade of her courtyard tree: “By placing those ignorant birds among the other animal characters in your folktale, did you mean to criticize your church board members for sending home the school children, using the school buildings for their own purposes, and abusing money grants?”

While the question is being translated the old woman leans back on the narrow bench, eyes twinkling: “As you pass by a field you wonder, what are those children doing scattering aimlessly around the crops? What you don’t realize is they have set traps for the mice. So, while some things may seem random or without direction to the spectator, they are not.”

Tambala Village, 22 November 2011

African folktales are often mentioned in lay and academic literature as a distinct feature shared by most if not all ethnic cultures South of Sahara. In Malawi, the practice of telling folktales consist of several performative elements, often including a set of linguistic markers, a choir-response form of narration, singing, clapping, and usually a moral point at the end. In terms of social function nthano are traditionally told in the relatively private context of the household where it is perceived widely among Malawians as a vehicle for bringing up children and delivering life-guiding principles in an engaging and entertaining manner. Nthano are thus not merely to be perceived as children’s stories, I suggest in this study, but also a means of communicating a sense of belonging and a notion of the good life across generations.

In recent times, however, collectors and connoisseurs of Malawian oral literature have begun lamenting that ‘the’ tradition of telling nthano is crumbling under the influence of modern and especially Western culture. Although there might be some truth in this, I see this depiction as nourishing a form of nostalgia that both disregards the resilience that nthano folktales demonstrate, and overlooks their possible applications in a host of communicative and cultural contexts. By now the stories have been collected, published, and read by oral literature scholars and other enthusiasts for more than a century, and they often re-emerge in postcolonial literature. Miniature nthano in the form of proverbs are used in everyday idiomatic discourse, and merge with other folkloric
fragments, underground rumours, and stories of witchcraft on the radio trottoir – the pavement radio, or “the circulation of lively news through nonofficial oral channels of interpersonal communication” (Bourgault 1995, p. 202). For the purpose of formal and educational use, Christopher Kamlongera has edited easily read nthano collections for adult literacy programs (personal communication), and recently, nthano performances have become part of the Malawian Primary School Curriculum. In the media, traditional stories are revamped by dissident column writers (Chimombo 2008a), nthano themes even crop up in newspaper reports on metamorphoses and other magical news stories from the suburbs (Chimombo 2008b), and on national radio and in television produced by local NGOs, such as ADRA Malawi and Story Workshop, elements of nthano are being used as a cultural thread in tailoring entertaining and educational programs (Michael Usi, personal communication; Nicholson 2005: 141-7). Finally, as I demonstrate with reference to ethnographic research that I conducted in September 2010 in the rural village of Nkhuta, Mulanje district, the telling of nthano is in fact still being practiced in domestic settings by many storytellers and audiences who wish to keep up their tradition.

As a point of departure for this thesis, and to provisionally conclude on the above perspectives, I understand nthano as a cultural and artistic form of expression that, like many other types of African orature (meaning verbal art forms that are cultivated orally in a given and in this case Malawian context), demonstrates an ability to coexist with and enter into more recent cultural genres. In this sense the nthano does survive in cultural and communicative practice, although not always in what may be perceived as its original shape and social setting. Moreover, as the local storytelling expert Mrs. Tambala explained to me as I did fieldwork in her village, nthano may also function, depending on its audience and social context, as an indirect way of articulating social critique: It moves around the subject in a flanking manoeuvre that, while seeming harmless, nonetheless entraps the opponent and gets to the point. In this way, Tambala’s comment frames the most central understanding of storytelling put forward in this thesis, namely that the telling and transformation of traditional nthano also are potential enactments of politics (Furniss & Gunnar 1995; Jackson 2002).
Aim of Study: Two Questions

In this thesis, I investigate as an Action Researcher how traditional storytelling may constitute a resource for democratic forms of communication in rural Malawi. In concrete terms, I ask whether and how it is possible for local storytellers, living in villages under severe conditions of poverty, to use traditional folktales as a resource for articulating their particular social perspectives and aspirations for a better society. My motivation for asking this question is to know how, if at all, this kind of initiative may contribute to take public sphere deliberation in a more democratic direction. In this investigation, and throughout this thesis, I combine elements of political philosophy and Communication for Social Change (CFSC) studies to ask the normative question of why democracy requires both voicing and listening to people’s perspectives, and also how transforming traditional storytelling practices may be an appropriate direction towards fulfilling such a requirement. This study’s objective are formulated in two research questions, which I flesh out in the respective two sections that follow: The first section builds up a research question that inquires into the CFSC paradigm through philosophical lenses, and especially through the works of political philosopher Iris Marion Young, who in my reading interestingly bridges the often contrasting ‘deliberative’ and more radical or ‘agonistic’ approaches to leftist democracy theory. The second section develops a research question based on a project that I term ROAR for ‘Remediating Orature through Action Research’, which is an interventionist and action-oriented research project that I conducted in November 2011.

Philosophical inquiry into Communication for Social Change (CFSC)

In her global CFSC study of small and alternative media, Clemencia Rodriguez (2001) coins the concept of ‘citizens’ media.’ This concept is pivotal in CFSC as well as in this study. Inspired by Chantal Mouffe’s ‘radical’ democracy model – also known as ‘agonistic pluralism’ (Mouffe 1999) – Rodriguez focus her study on how a plurality of citizens’ media generate ‘social change’ by negotiating and renegotiating power in everyday life politics. In more general terms, Rodriguez harnesses media and social change studies to pursue the specific goal of how such media allow for the creation and empowerment of civic identities that are able to withstand and contest oppressive and non-democratic societal constraints.
When Rodriguez speaks of contestation as the goal of citizens’ media, however, it is based on Mouffe’s assertion that democratic communication is an unending battle of preferences and taking discursive positions and counter-positions. Because human relations always entail relations of power, Mouffe does not accept the possibility of reaching consensus - a final point of convergence in democratic conversation, urging us instead to accept that “every consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power, and that it always entails some form of exclusion” (1999, p. 756). While this ‘radical’ concept of democracy may be appealing to some scholars and certainly relevant in many contexts, my aim is to work with a different concept of democratic communication. In brief terms, I propose ‘dialogic democracy’ as a alternative normative framework for citizens’ media. By stressing a concept of dialogue, and the possibility of reaching consensus by chancing perspectives and transforming preferences, dialogic democracy focus less on contestation and more on sustaining dialogic qualities in democratic communication.

To establish this ‘dialogic’ model of democracy, the late 1990s work of political philosopher Iris Marion Young is particularly relevant. While she takes part in defining the field of deliberative democracy theory, with an early reference to Habermas’ theory of communicative action (Young 1981), she later issues an influential critique of what she calls ‘mainstream deliberative democracy’ (Young 1996; 1997a; McAfee 2009). As opposed to letting go, like Mouffe, of the very possibility of reaching lasting democratic consensus, Young suggests a more constructive solution by proposing a “communicative” democracy model which, in her own words, designates “differences in culture, social perspective, or particularist commitment as resources to draw on for reaching understanding in democratic discussion rather than as divisions that must be overcome” (1996, p. 120, emphasis added). Young’s democracy model suits CFSC scholarship well, I argue in this thesis, especially if it undergoes a “thoroughgoing dialogical reappropriation” as recently proposed by Australian philosopher Paul Healy (2011). This manoeuvre involves to define relevant alternative forms of communication, storytelling included, as sustaining dialogic qualities in deliberative processes and other forms of democratic communication. This is the main foundation for the ‘dialogic democracy’ theory that I in this thesis propose as a viable alternative theorizing citizen’s media and CFSC.
In the light of this brief introduction, I can now raise the first problem addressed in this thesis:

**By rational reconstruction, how does dialogic democracy theory contribute to understand CFSC in theory and practice as guided towards a normative-teleological ideal of social justice and democracy?**

‘Rational reconstruction’ is an exercise that aims to use the ‘logic of justification’, as opposed to, say, a ‘logic of discovery’ or ‘uncovering what is really going on’ in CFSC. This means that my primary aim is to reconstruct central theoretical positions in CFSC from the perspective of dialogic democracy. It does not mean that I would describe each and every CFSC scholar and practitioner as ‘promoting democracy’. By referring to dialogic democracy as a ‘normative-teleological ideal’, I do not argue that this is the only direction for the CFSC paradigm. Rather, what I mean to imply is an understanding of dialogic democracy as a normative ideal that guides processes of social change, action and reflection, in a specific direction or towards a specified goal, that is, justice and democracy. This is how dialogic democracy becomes telos for CFSC that carries normative weight in a different manner than ideals formulated as conventions or constraints. Lastly, I do not argue that dialogic democracy is the only legitimate understanding of democracy, nor that it should be some sort of ‘unifying theory’ for the CFSC paradigm. In this way, I propose dialogic democracy as a (but not the) normative-teleological ideal for CFSC.

What I do argue, however, is that dialogic democracy is one direction of particular relevance to CFSC research and practice that (as in many approaches to CFSC, including my own) place ‘dialogue’ as a pivotal working concept. With dialogic democracy, however, ‘dialogue’ is somewhat more sharply theorised than it is otherwise often the case. On my definition, with reference to especially Young and Healy, I see ‘dialogue’ is a non-contesting yet dissensus-driven form of human interaction that, rather than forcing consensus, aims at achieving transformative learning by getting, so to speak, one’s own perspective in perspective. With this active definition in mind, I argue that dialogic democracy provides a useful framework for making philosophically justified normative inquiries within the CFSC paradigm.
**ROAR (Remediating Orature through Action Research) in Chisitu**

In the second part of this thesis, I use my ethnographic and action-oriented case study on orature and social change in Malawi as a concrete example of applied dialogic democracy. The aim is here to put dialogic democracy theory into practice by conducting an analysis based on two CFSC (research) interventions which I carried out in November 2011 with local storytellers from two village communities from the Chisitu area of the rural Mulanje, a district bordering Mozambique in South-East Malawi. I refer to these as ROAR projects, which is my abbreviation for ‘Remediating Orature through Action Research’. In addition to the ROAR projects, my empirical research includes an ethnographic component conducted in 2010 on storytelling practices specific to the communicative context of Chisitu. Lastly – as a research consultant for ADRA Denmark, an international NGO running a CFSC-oriented program through a local branch in Malawi – I also did related formative research on communicative needs and prospects for setting up participatory content production for community media in the Northern Mzuzu district as well as in Mulanje, the latter more specifically in Nkando some 25 kilometres away from the Chisitu area. In this thesis, I first draw on these different kinds of research material to provide an understanding of how existing storytelling practices in Chisitu are part of a broader ‘ecology’ of multi-mediated forms of communication (Hearn et al. 2008). Second, I document and discuss the challenges related to having local storytellers participate in the production of community media content. The latter refers specifically to the ROAR projects.

With reference to my own experience from my field work in 2010, and to the theoretical debate on dialogic democracy, my main objective with ROAR was to find out if and how the participating storytellers, who were also ordinary community members, could use their communicative skills to articulate and problematise community development issues and aspirations in a dialogic fashion. The participants went through a process of raising and deliberating collectives issues, before entering the creative and experimenting communicative process of making a ‘social change folk-tale’ within a workshop component of the ROAR framework. Finally, we recorded these stories as examples of locally created content for future community radio in Mulanje.

Through these empirical studies, and in relation to the first question stated above, I can now proceed to raise the second problem guiding this thesis:
How does Malawian orature in the case of producing community radio segments that draw on local nhtano practices in Chisitu, constitute a resource for democratic communication and social change?

As a combined piece of philosophical investigation and CFSC Action Research, this study is situated in practice but oriented towards scholarship, and vice versa. My analytical aim is to contribute to the CFSC paradigm from the fields of communication studies and political philosophy, and to explore Malawian orature, and in particular local nhtano folk-tale practices, as a resource for democratic and dialogic communication.

First, by means of philosophical analysis and by drawing on the works of Iris Marion Young, I reconstruct CFSC to designate ‘dialogic democracy’ as a normative-teleological ideal, and thereby link CFSC to understand dialogue as modes of communication that enable exchanging and transforming perspectives on social life. Second, I provide analytical perspectives on how these ideals and theoretical concepts play out in the concrete case of conducting the ROAR project, and in what ways cultural and artistic forms of expression, and in particular local Malawian nhtano practices, constitute a resource for participatory content creation aimed towards generating dialogic forms of publicity. This is the work my final analysis and discussion in this thesis does.

Here, my focus is, first of all, on the creative and communicative capabilities exercised by the research participants in the ROAR process, and second, on evaluating the products that came out of that process with respect to social and political impact, and in particular how traditional folk-tale practices may help poor and ill-educated people in articulating their hopes and needs for a wider audience of political agents. From this perspective, finally, my aim is to contribute to the existing knowledge on how and why it is necessary to support participatory and culturally grounded content production for community media outlets in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

Reader’s Guide
In the first part of this thesis (chapter 1-3), the aim is first to discuss the selected points related to the CFSC paradigm (chapter 1), review selected theory on democracy and social justice (chapter 2), before performing the rational reconstruction referred to in the
first of the two research questions (chapter 3). Part two (chapters 4-6) addresses the second research question, beginning by providing an overall account of the research process that focus in particular on my September 2010 field study of storytelling practices in the Chisitu area of Mulanje district, Malawi (chapter 4). I then move on to elaborating on the core methodological concepts of and methods applied throughout the ROAR project conducted in the same area in November 2011 (chapter 5). Finally, I provide an empirical analysis and discussion of the deliberative processes and creative products of ROAR in Chisitu (chapter 6). This analysis comprises further methodological and empirical reflections with reference to dialogic democracy theory, as well as an assessment of the applicability of ROAR as a self-sustainable approach to participatory content-creation for rural Mulanje. In conclusion, I sum up the most central points in a general discussion supplemented with recommendations for CFSC scholars and professionals alike.
Chapter 1

The Communication for Social Change Paradigm

In general terms, Communication for Social Change (CFSC) scholars and professionals orient their practices around culture, dialogue, development, and social critique. While different accounts of how CFSC has evolved exist, I choose in the context of this study to relate to it as a branch of development communication (DevCom), and especially Communication for Development (ComDev). In this chapter I discuss some central themes in what I refer to as the ‘CFSC paradigm’ for academic and action-oriented communications research, and in particular Clemencia Rodriguez’ concept of ‘citizens’ media’. Certainly, I must first introduce CFSC before rationally reconstructing dialogic democracy as one of its possible normative directions. Second, the present chapter will serve as an outline for positioning my empirical study within the framework of this paradigm.

The CFSC abbreviation is a registered U.S. trademark for the Communication for Social Change Consortium (www.communicationforsocialchange.org), a global initiative for ComDev professionals launched around the turn of the millennium and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. The way I use the term, however, is to more broadly refer to a community of scholars and practitioners who work with an agenda similar to but not necessarily in direct affiliation with the CFSC Consortium. In the meantime, apart from delivering practical guidelines for NGO practitioners and policy-makers, the Consortium also plays a key role in the field, in particular by demonstrating its roots in academia through the publication of Communication for Social Change Anthology: Historical and Contemporary Readings (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte 2006). This 1.000+ page compilation of shorter texts and excerpts was selected from a wider corpus of sources suggested by a network of CFSC scholars and practitioners. From a sociology of knowledge perspective, the CFSC Anthology comes close to fitting the role of a scientific handbook that, according to Thomas Kuhn, is crucial in maintaining paradigm status of a scientific discipline, albeit within the natural sciences. Among other things, this role consists in establishing a historiography for that discipline and a sense of origin by
designating its founding fathers and a starting point for the accumulation of knowledge relevant to the paradigmatic worldview (Kuhn 1996, p. 3f).

In comparison, the *CFSC Anthology* begins by reaching back to Bertolt Brecht’s reflections on democratising radio technology during the days of the Weimar Republic. Instead of isolating the listeners as receivers of information, Brecht suggests to “change this apparatus over from distribution of communication” and “give a truly public character to public occasions” by transmitting the voices of speaker and listener alike (Brecht 1927/2006, p. 2). Although some claim ComDev to originate in the 1950s – with Nora Quebral as a leading figure (Manyozo 2006) – the *CFSC Anthology* jumps ahead to the 1960s to depict a Latin-American intellectual movement from and onwards, especially with scholars such as Luís Ramiro Betrán and Paulo Freire as central figures. Especially Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). The Latin American movement in communication scholarship that he inspired plays a prominent role in the construction of CFSC: Liberating dialogue, Freire insist, requires interacting between “action” and “reflection”, while an undue emphasis on either is respectively rendered as “activism” or “verbalism” (p. 75-6). Dialogue to Freire is a form of liberating education, not just talk or thoughtless action, but a process of collaboration:

> Authentic education is not carried on by “A” for ”B” or “A” about “B,” but rather by “A” with ”B,” mediated by the world—a world which impress and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it . . . We simply cannot go to the laborers—urban or peasant—in the banking style, to give them ”knowledge” or to impose upon them . . . a program whose content we have ourselves organized

Freire 1970, p. 82, original emphasis

It is with remarks like these that Freire came to be a founding father for an alternative approach to the so-called transmission model of communication, a shift often framed as a showdown between ‘modernization’ and ‘participatory’ paradigms in DevCom thinking (see e.g. Rogers 1976). Branding transmission or diffusion models as ‘vertical’ or top-down reminiscent of the modernisation paradigm, communication scholars following Freire’s approach would work instead with ‘horizontal’ or dialogic forms of communication (Beltrán 1979). The core critique advanced by this movement and to
some extent picked up by present-day CFSC community revolves around the social injustices that are allegedly perpetuated by capitalism, rationalisation, industrialisation, and mass democracy associated to Western influence on developing countries, especially in Latin America. A good example of how this heroic narrative is used to attribute paradigm status to CFSC is Clemencia Rodriguez’ chapter of *Redeveloping Communication for Social Change*:

[L]ed by Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire [the Third World scholars] challenged the belief that mass media were the most appropriate communication means in processes of social change. Branded with ownership issues, the mass media privilege agendas that have little to do with the well-being of most people in the Third World. This conviction catapulted communication scholars and activists throughout the world into exploring different possibilities, [and they] have succeeded in articulating the potential of citizens’ media in facilitating processes of social change towards more democratic societies.

Rodriguez 2000, p. 149

Further on, Rodriguez infers that this endeavour epitomises “[d]evelopment communication’s cumulative knowledge of citizens’ media” (152), indicating that such research has a historical staring point and is situated within the maturing CFSC paradigm in DevCom studies. In effect, CFSC reformers such as Rodriguez see themselves as breaking with top-down administration and mass control to promote a bottom-up oriented and participatory approach. I refer to ‘mass democracy’ and control as the elitist (although its main proponent Joseph Schumpeter called it ‘realist’) view that democratic decisions are not effectually arrived at through civic participation and inclusive deliberation, but rather made by experts and bureaucrats elected for office in a “competitive struggle for the people's vote“ (Schumpeter 1942 in Christiano 2006, § 3.1.1). To properly understand the democracy agenda clearly expressed by Rodriguez in the above quote, and which I argue is inherent with the CFCS paradigm, it is crucial to distinguish these two democracy concepts, that is, democracy as participation and civic education versus democracy as a mere competition for a people’s vote. I will return to this subject below and in the following chapter.
**DevCom ‘Millenium Crisis’: An Opening for Critical CFSC Approaches**

One of the more recent steps in the ‘handbook’ construction of CFSC as a paradigm for communication research and practice, and one which is in line with the showdown between the modernisation and participatory paradigms, is the ‘crisis of lacking results’ in Development Communication (DevCom) around the millennium shift. This crisis was primarily driven by the HIV/Aids endemic, which by then still had increasing prevalence rates in many developing countries. HIV/Aids poses a challenge to communication scholars and professionals that extends beyond conceiving this pandemic just as a health problem to be dealt with by means of large-scale information and behavioural change campaigns disseminated downwards from the top. Such campaigns conceive their target groups as rational individuals who lack the appropriate knowledge to perform risk-free behaviour, and rest on the assumption epitomised by the KAP-model in health communication, a model which infers that changing the Knowledge of an individual also will change his or her Attitude, which in turn will lead to a change in Practice. Faced by the fact that these behavioural changes did not happen, as argued by Thomas Tufte, this crisis led DevCom to introduce new approaches such as ‘advocacy communication’, which aims at mobilising and collectively engaging people on multiple levels to fight HIV/Aids, and ‘communication for social change’, which in Tufte’s terms means to recognise “the underlying causes of HIV/AIDS [...]” (2005a, p. 117) In CFSC jargon, to address such “underlying causes” refers to what Freire calls a process of ‘conscientisation’ (*conscientiação*), that is, a method for questioning taken-for-granted assumptions of structural oppression that through processes of problem-posing, non-manipulative dialogue invite men and women “to a critical form of thinking about their world.” (1970, p. 95)

In the words of Iris Marion Young, who I will return to in the following chapter, critical theory is “a mode of discourse which projects normative possibilities unrealized but felt in a particular given social reality.” (1990, p. 6) It is important here to understand normativity not as a constraint on how to conduct political processes, such as rules and procedures for decision-making that must be respected, but as a context-sensitive inquiry among relevant interlocuters on how to best organise themselves in a given society. In my interpretation, on the one hand, this way of understanding normativity refers to a dialectical process of unmasking oppression. On the other, it implies the notion that
action in specific contexts requires specific measures and considerations in terms of choosing the best possible path ahead. However, according to the perspective of critical communication theory (Craig 1999, p. 146-9) and with respect to Freire’s conscientisation concept outlined above, the choice of path carries normative weight only if it implies a discursive reflection or conversation about how oppressive social structures and hegemonic power relations condition and constrain the choices and capabilities of subordinate individuals and groups. By engaging in such conversation these individuals and groups become agents creating new choices for themselves, choices that despite being “unrealised” are “felt” under the present conditions, and doing so they make it possible to gradually change those structures and conditions in a normatively justified direction. For the present construction of the CFSC paradigm and in terms of meta-theoretical positioning, I regard critical theory as carrying the most significant weight, just as I below will maintain that the criticism inherent in CFSC implies a teleological concept of normativity. On the dialogical democracy variant, I argue in the next chapter, directs discursive reflection and course of action towards a specific goal, namely that of justice and democracy.

**CFSC and ‘Citizens’ Media’: A Quest for Democracy**

By promoting participatory and critically oriented perspectives, the DevCom agenda changed from conceiving people as passive knowledge recipients to empowering them as agents capable of handling these problems themselves. In terms of working with media in development communication, this turn towards participation paved the way for CFSC professionals throughout the 00s to advocate, and I quote from several sources, a shift in “control of media, messages, tools and content of communication from the powerful to the traditionally powerless” (Parks et al. 2005, p. 3-4) “so that they can themselves communicate within their communities and with the people making the decisions that affect them – for example community radio and other community media” (The Rome Consensus, WCCD 2006, p. 2) – “allowing them to voice their concerns and share and learn locally relevant knowledge” (Tacchi 2008, p. 14). A clear line is drawn, then, from activating a concept of empowerment or self-empowerment, which is a prefix suggested by Cees Hamelink, rendering empowerment as “a process in which people liberate themselves from all those forces that prevent them from controlling decisions affecting
their lives” (Hamelink 1995: 143), to working in practice with, to paraphrase an early 00s slogan of UNESCO, ‘putting the power of media technologies in the hands of the poor’ (cf. Tacchi, Slater and Hearn 2003, p. vii). As an alternative to top-down dissemination interventions, and by localising the strategic use of communication and media technologies, CFSC scholars prompt practitioners and policy-makers through bottom-up and participatory approaches to empower communities in taking control and constructively change their own lives, by themselves and for themselves.

In line with understanding media technologies as a key to self-empowerment and civic education, Rodriguez coins ‘citizens’ media’ as an umbrella term for what, often in lack of better terms, is among other terms is referred to as community media, alternative media, and local media A major criterion for her definition of citizens’ media is that they contribute to public sphere discussion by empowering a citizenry in “contesting social codes, legitimized identities, and institutional social relations” (2001, p. 20, italics added). Maintaining the scepticism toward mass media culture also found in the Freire’s works, Rodriguez claims that locally driven citizens’ media is stronger in its identification with and more responsive to its audiences, and that it brings them closer to dialogic form of interaction. By redefining the media audiences as active and creative citizens, Rodriguez indicate citizens’ media as capable of, 1) Breaking a culture of silence and voice the voiceless; 2) Fostering empowerment under oppressive circumstances and supporting self-confidence and civic participation; 3) Connecting isolated communities and joining them for taking action; 4) Facilitating the critical forms of discourse, or what Freire called conscientisation; and 5) Providing alternative sources for information that are more independent than mass media. (Rodriguez 2000, p. 150) By facilitating civic participation and empowerment, citizens’ media engage in a quest for democracy, but not towards democracy conceived of as an end state of society: “[I]nstead of thinking of democracy as an ultimate goal, a final state-of-things to reach,” Rodriguez recommends, “we should look at how democratic and nondemocratic forces are being renegotiated constantly, and how citizens’ media can strengthen the former.” (2001, p. 22)

In resonance with Brecht’s early reflections on radio and Freire’s liberating pedagogics, CFSC research and practice is driven by democratic values, defined by its focus on participatory, horizontal, bottom-up, and dialogical way of using
communication – through citizens’ media, for instance – to make social changes: that is, changing those structural relations of power that perpetuate systemic oppression, as opposed to maintaining or reinforcing an unjust status quo. In the next chapter, I return with a critique of some of the ideas following the democracy concept subscribed to by Rodriguez, but affirm with her that citizens’ media provides a feasible way of thinking CFSC in democratic terms, and that the heroic narrative found at the core of the CFSC paradigm is indeed in this context a quest for democracy.

**Communication and or for Social Change**

While some communication scholars prefer to keep ‘social change’ an open and descriptive category, and in line with critical communication theory, I argue in the following that CFSC is oriented towards a normative-teleological concept of social change. To reiterate, I regard this approach to normativity to be a form of ideals that should be approximated and realised to the greatest possible extent, as opposed to constraints on, say, political processes that should be respected. The former implies to pursue a teleological goal, whereas the latter is focused on evaluating the legitimacy of such processes and not their outcomes.

An example of a more descriptive and also normative-teleological approach is evident in urban and social movements theorist Manuel Castells’ statement that “*in analytical terms,* there cannot be a normative judgment on the directionality of social change” (2011, p. 301), whereas the latter, teleological version could be, as suggested and demonstrated by Clemencia Rodriguez (2001), to conduct case studies of democratising power relationships and redefining citizenry by recasting alternative media as citizens’ media.

In line with critical theory, the ‘social changes’ that Castells refers to are the results of social movements and insurgent politics that contest the power of established cultural norms and political institutions – a contestation “formed by communicating messages of rage and hope” (2009, p. 301). Castells’ use of the term ‘social movements’ refers here not necessarily to activist groups or organisations branding themselves as such, but should rather be understood in a broader, structural manner that implies a co-constitutive relation between everyday practices of social actors and gradual changes of societal institutions – institutional changes that both determine and are determined by the same
social practices. *In analytical terms*, however, such contesting practices could be pro, con, or perhaps just different from any predefined, say, democratic direction, such as the one informing Rodriguez’ approach. According to Castells, to head exclusively towards ‘radical democracy values’ in communication and social change studies would rather be a result of the selectivity if not the “personal taste of the analyst” (301). This does not mean, however, that Castells would regard a non-teleological variant of normative evaluation as irrelevant: Social change processes may indeed happen in way that is democratically legitimate, or they may not. Only should the researcher not forget to seek out and understand other kinds of ‘social changes’, be they in accordance with a normative-teleological ideal or not.

With reference to these two approaches to the study of social change communication, then, one may distinguish between communication *and* social change and communication *for* social change, defining the object of study, social change, in less or more normative-teleological terms. The ‘for’ approach aligns with the normative-teleological task of sustaining critical discourse in the search of a more just and democratic society, and for this reason, as mentioned above, I exclude from the present construction of the CFSC paradigm the more descriptive ‘and’ approach. Surely, Castells would not regard it his task to ‘project normative possibilities’ (Young 1990, p. 6) of social change into his analytical work. This is, however, often the case in CFSC research and practice, which again affirms the need for sustaining the distinction between the descriptive ‘and’ versus normative-teleological ‘for’.

That being said, I do not regard these two approaches to studies in social change communication as incommensurable. Indeed, instead of rejecting the relevance of the other competing perspective, the validity of communication research increases by *relating* different approaches to one another, exactly because the multi-disciplinary and still flourishing nature of communication requires opening up and not closing down alternative scholarly viewpoints (Craig 1999). By subscribing to the CFSC paradigm, however, my study is positioned towards the ‘for’ end of this ‘social change’-continuum, just as it adheres to a normative-teleological democratic agenda, namely that of dialogic democracy (see chapter 3).
Chapter 2
Democracy and Social Justice

Indian economist Amartya Sen argues that “no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent country with a democratic form of government” – defining a nation-state democracy as one “that goes to elections regularly, that has opposition parties to voice criticisms and that permits newspapers to report freely and question the wisdom of government policies without extensive censorship.” (1999, 152-3) However, while democracy is often taken for granted as something self-evidently positive, it is also true that the nation-state context is one of many in which the word ‘democracy’ is used for various purposes in everyday and academic discourses. Etymologically ‘democracy’ consists of two parts derived from Greek, ‘demos’ meaning a ‘people’ or ‘the commons’ in combination with the suffix ‘-cratia’ denoting the rule, authority, or control exercised by such people (OED 2012). Understood as such democracy refers to a people’s rule, or to a people ruling themselves.

From the perspective of contemporary and somewhat leftist political philosophy, including participatory, deliberative, and feminist democracy theory, this is the question that is scrutinised in the first of the following two sections. The aim of this section is, by means of brief introductions, to activate relevant parts of the theory-loaded vocabulary belonging to these different but related branches in democracy theory. I then move on to focus on the work of Iris Marion Young, with a particular interest in how she relates democratic decision-making to social justice. Taken together, these in the following chapter serve as a foundation for developing a ‘dialogic’ version of Young’s ‘communicative democracy’ model (cf. Healy 2011), in order to finally reconstruct dialogic democracy as a promising normative direction for citizens’ media and the CFSC paradigm. The point with outlining these theories of democracy is that both participatory and deliberative democracy theories provide relevant but different perspectives on a discussion of possible justifications of Young’s radical or ‘communicative’ democracy model. In turn, this will shape the foundation for the ‘dialogic’ version offered in chapter 3,
Participatory, Deliberative, and Radical Democracy Models

In political philosophy, too, democracy is a “contested concept”, meaning that there is a “lack of consensus” over what in fact democracy theories are about. (Cunningham 2002, p. 3) For instance, if democracy theorists operate in a nation-state context, a liberal model would maintain that democracy’s ‘rule’ is legitimately conceived of as a (minimal) form of government in which individual preferences are equally represented and decisions are made with respect to the right of individuals to pursue whatever goal they may have in life (to the extent that fulfilling such preferences do not cause harm to others). If considered instrumental to maximising the satisfaction of preferences in the group of people concerned, a utilitarian would value this model. On a different view, namely one that could be ascribed to modern liberals, people’s rule as a minimal form of government is a means of securing individual freedom and equality (understood as having the freedom to act in a way conducive to the welfare of others), and may therefore be justified on the basis of these values. In this way, even by accepting the same model, democracy theorists may disagree on the reasons why democratic rule is valuable and, in turn, on what constitutes democratic legitimacy.

It is generally acknowledged that direct democracy or the direct participation of everyone in decisions-making is practically impossible in the mass context of a nation-state. In fact, some theorists would find such participation of the masses not at all desirable, fearing violation of individual rights or the degeneration of high culture, as in a Tocquevillian ‘majority tyranny’ (Cunningham 2002, p. 15f). However, the leftist branch in democracy theory considered here – including deliberative, participatory and feminist radical democrats – does maintain that a government’s ability to ‘represent the views of a people’ is problematic if it reduces democracy, as often implied in the liberal model, to a contest by vote. In opposition to Schumpeter’s ‘elitist’ or ‘realist’ view of democracy, that is as a form of government elected more or less arbitrarily by an unidentified mass of ‘people’ prone to demagogy (Christiano 2006; see ch. 1), the general perception among these theorists is that democratic legitimacy depends on a process where ‘the people’ constitute ‘a public’ capable of giving voice to and shaping opinion on matters of collective concern. Democratic legitimacy is obtainable, then, if a ‘public’ participate in debating collective concerns by giving voices to and reasons for having different individual and collective preferences on how to organise society. On a general account, it
is when ‘people’ engage actively in ruling themselves that they become a ‘public’ capable of making democratically legitimate decisions.

Participatory democracy requires an open discussion with direct participation of everyone who is affected by the issue at stake. This approach anticipates what one may term a ‘deep’ or ‘strong’ democracy concept. A strong democracy is in participatory democrat Benjamin Barber’s sense a form of democracy where “citizens relate to one another as ‘neighbours’ bound together as active participants in shared activities”, which is “meant to provide participatory-democratic theory with a way to recognize diversity of interests.” (Cunningham 2002, p. 131) Participants in a strong democracy are to reach a form of consensus that, according to Barber, “arises out of common talk, common decision, and common work,’ and is premised on ‘citizens’ active and perennial participation in the transformation of conflict through the creation of common consciousness and political judgement”’ (Cunningham, ibid., quoting Barber 1984, p. 224). Barber calls this decision-making outcome ‘creative consensus’, which is to be distinguished from consensus grounded on pre-defined, unifying properties of a given context, be it the conception of citizenship as a kind of brotherhood bond or relying on nationalistic sentiments. One way of making the quite demanding ideal of strong democracy applicable in practice is to detach it from mass society and go beyond the contexts of vote-based governments and nation-states (which Barber calls ‘thin’ democracy). In this way, participatory theorists often address democracy issues in workplaces, families, schools classrooms, or universities. Focus is thus on democracy enacted in local contexts, whereas broader contexts such as that of the nation-state is of less relevance to participatory democrats.

A theoretical working concept that brings back focus on the need for active, democratic ‘publics’ in the context of the nation-state is that of the ‘the public sphere’. Although the term itself does have a longer and also more recent history (cf. Gribsrud et al. 2010), it is primarily the concept as initially theorised by Jürgen Habermas that serves as a reference point for deliberative democracy theory (Benhabib 1996; Elster 1998; Cunningham 2002, ch. 9). According to Habermas, the public sphere is a “realm of private individuals assembled into a public body who as citizens transmit the needs of bourgeois society to the state” (1991, p. 117). From a descriptive viewpoint, Habermas uses this conception in relation to the historical 18th and 19th century clubs formed
around the common interests of the emerging European middle class hence the reference to “bourgeois society”. To the extent that public ‘sphere’ carries spatial connotations, however, it might be somewhat misleading considering the more abstract German term, ‘Öffentlichkeit’. Perhaps ‘publicness’ would be a more appropriate. In Habermas’ thinking, publicness is achieved when a group of people is communicating with each other and in broader contexts on issues of collective concern. In his general account, Habermas identifies ongoing practices of deliberation in the political public sphere that, by giving shape to publicity or public opinion, provides some direct democracy influence on higher level decision making. Although Habermas has later revised his position, his initial formulation of the public sphere remains crucial if one is to conceptualise the dynamic of publicness and publicity as a way for citizens to participate and express their views on the development of society.

Seyla Benhabib writes that according to deliberative democracy theory, processes of collective decision-making attains “legitimacy and rationality” only by making sure that “what is considered in the common interest of all results from processes of collective deliberation conducted rationally and fairly among free and equal individuals” (1996, p. 69). Benhabib draws on Habermas’ discourse ethics to construct a set of procedural rules or normative constraints for evaluating rational and democratically legitimate conversations. By this, she refers to conversations where interlocutors recognise each other as equally capable of speaking of and criticising the subject under consideration (also referred to as ‘symmetrical reciprocity’), and where everyone is allowed to question the appropriateness of that subject as well as to reflect on a meta-level upon the rules for having the conversation. With respect to these co-called ‘validity claims’, and to whether such conversation indeed is open to any “person or group [that] are relevantly affected by the proposed norm under question” (p. 71), it becomes a forum for making democratic decisions that are morally binding. A specific course of action is morally binding, as long as it is based on the “presumptive claim to being rational until shown to be otherwise.” (p. 72) These rules should not be seen as designating the result prior to deliberation, but rather as an institutional procedure for avoiding abuse and for legitimising democratic decisions. To the deliberative democrat, according to Benhabib, decisions made by a government must take into account the views of their public as constituted in “a public
sphere of mutually interlocking and overlapping networks and associations of deliberation, contestation, and argumentation.” (p 74, original emphasis)

While Benhabib’s position is one of many sub-positions in the extensive field of deliberative democracy, it is a core presumption among members of this family of theorists that the process of deliberation aims at achieving rational consensus on a common basis, that is a collective consensus, arrived at by force of reasoned argument. In this way, deliberative democracy emphasises that while individuals and groups in a given public may have different and diverging parochial preferences and self-interests, as they are bound to present these views in a public committed to reason, they are also bound to change those preferences and interests if they are not in accordance with the common interest of all. A weak conception of publicity is to see it as a strategic manoeuvre, as suggested in Jon Elster’s ‘civilizing force of hypocrisy’. According to Elster, publicity by deliberation “forces or induces speakers to hide” their preferences (1998, p. 111). A stronger view is, however, the presumption that such a hypocrisy of democracy in fact will lead to a genuine transformation in preferences, that “[c]ivilizing people's speech will eventually civilize their mind (and hopefully in turn their non-linguistic actions)” (Gossy series 2010, § 2.2). Lastly, while this is a point often highlighted by its critics, deliberative democrats do not suggest that if their procedure is followed, deliberants will always arrive at a common consensus, or that it will never be necessary to cast a vote. However, at the core of deliberative democracy, as pointed out by Cunningham reading Joshua Cohen, it is suggested that “in this circumstance ‘the results of voting among those who are committed to finding reasons that are persuasive to all’ will differ from those of people not so committed” (Cunningham 2002, p. 166; Cohen 1997, p 75).

In the next chapter, I will return with a critique of the deliberative model from what may be termed as ‘feminist’ or ‘radical’ positions in democracy theory, including Chantal Mouffe’s ‘agonistic pluralism’ and Iris Marion Young’s ‘communicative democracy’ model. On this note, too, I would like to stress that democracy and democratic communication is less concerned with formal procedures for decision-making, and more with an orientation towards social collaboration and communicative action. To conclude this section, then, it suffices to say that while ‘radical’ democracy theories exists in many variations, they often conceive of ‘the political’ from a broad,
everyday life perspective. This broad perspective on everyday life or quotidian politics is also the reason why the participatory school of democracy theory may be considered ‘radical’.

From the everyday life perspective, politics is not only concerned with administrating actually present or represented members of a political body. Politics is rather a pervasive element in social relations, typically pointing to questions of authority and the configuration of power relations. In this way, politics are the everyday negotiations of general and concrete questions of how to arrange ourselves as individuals and groups in society. This approach does not allow for any issue to be intrinsically ‘private’ and therefore not appropriate for politics, which would be a modern liberal position. In the logic of conceiving a group, a community, a society, a nation, or the world as a collection of individuals bound up in social relations with each other, any issue considered of social importance can be brought up for public scrutiny. What is public and what is private, or ‘non-public’, then, is therefore a question dependent on the appropriate context. Increasing the possible uses of the term ‘politics’ also enriches the possibilities for using a normative democracy concept analytically in most, if not all, aspects of social life. At the same time, critics may worry that changing the term this way complicates the relation between politics and state policies. With regard to defining the role of the state in mass democracies, is dissolving the private sphere practically feasible even if desirable?

With reference to the crucial role of public influence and publicity described by Habermas, feminist democracy theorists, and in particular Nancy Fraser (1990), maintain that in actually existing democracies, the role of so-called counter-publics and political public spheres, plural, should be to define the ‘political’ by contesting established norms and to struggle for an agenda based on interest that these counter-publics have in common. In this way, the political public spheres of “subaltern counterpublics” – meaning minority groups formed around, for instance, resistance to systemic oppression – function both as “spaces for withdrawal and regroupment” and as “training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics.” (Fraser 1990, p. 68) Against this backdrop, I suggest in the following chapter, with Young, that contestation alone is inadequate for conceptualising democratic discourse, and that dialogic democracy offers a viable alternative in terms of making democratic decisions while still doing justice to
differences, that is, differences derived from diverging life histories and social positionings among interlocutors engaged in democratic discussion (Young 1996; Healy 2011). Before moving on to these arguments, however, I will now introduce some core aspects of Young’s critical theory focusing on the ideal of ‘social objectivity’ in making “just and wise democratic decisions” (Young 2000, p. 27f). In brief, to qualify such decisions as ‘just’ and ‘wise’ means to make them both enabling and sufficiently well-informed. Justice refers to equalising conditions for self-empowerment while wisdom consist, according to Young, of a social kind of objectivity which requires facilitating in democratic discussion the articulation and inclusion of all social perspectives that can be relevantly shown to be affected by such decisions.

**A Critical Theory of Justice**

Iris Marion Young contributed to a major debate on justice and democracy in contemporary political philosophy, a debate departing from works published in the 1970s and 1980s by, among others, Habermas and John Rawls. Around 1980, she commenced her two and a half decade of active scholarship by aiming to construct a ‘radical’ theory of justice as opposed to the ‘liberal’ version offered by Rawls (1971). While Rawls’ liberal concept construe justice as fairness in distribution, a radical concept of justice insists that fairness conceived as a ‘veil of ignorance’ risks perpetuating or reinforcing structural inequalities, for instance the continued repression of women. Observing that contemporary radical criticism of the liberal paradigm did little to suggest new directions for political theory, Young commenced her quest “Towards a Critical Theory of Justice” (1981) with an early translation of Habermas’ discursive ethics as a key inspiration. Throughout the 1980s, she published a series of articles that gave shape to the first major monograph, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), in which she famously works out the “Five Faces of Oppression”. In this monograph, departing from an account of individual choices and preferences as based on more or less self-chosen social group affiliations, Young develops an analytic approach to understanding social injustice as structural oppression and domination, meaning that some social mechanisms more or less limit those choices and preferences, and that justice requires eliminating those mechanisms. In a similar working process throughout the 1990s, a series of articles resulted in *Inclusion and Democracy* (2000) that, among other things, elaborates on the
democratic value of including diverse forms of communication and social perspectives in politics, and how this, from as normative viewpoint, should impact on defining public sphere deliberation. This last point has to do with Young rethinking what she calls a “mainstream” model of deliberative democracy and her constructive proposal of a “communicative” model (see esp. Young 1996). With regard to reconstructing a normative-teleological concept of dialogic democracy for the CFSC paradigm, both the concept of social justice and that of communicative democracy are of particular interest.

In what follows, I discuss how Young justifies the relation between democracy and social justice, in particular by elaborating on her argument on why maximising the inclusion of social perspectives is a necessary resource for improving democratic decision-making. This part also provides thoughts on why democracy requires the existence of vibrant public spheres that, crucially, are not restricted to reasoned argumentation, but recognise multiple ways of articulating social perspectives. Further elaboration of this ‘communicative democracy’ model is reserved for the chapter that follows.

As the principal subject of political philosophy, justice relates to how we organise ourselves in society. With this in mind, Young appeals to conceiving of justice as concerning the structure of social life which is also at the core of social and institutional organisation. Drawing explicitly on Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory, she emphasizes that social structures are fluid and changing and constitutively connected to agency: “We act with knowledge of existing institutions, rules, and the structural consequences of a multiplicity of actions, and those structures are enacted and reproduced through the confluence of our actions.” (1990, p. 28) Yet, she contends, structuration does also constrain actions of subordinate individuals or groups, just as it enables the actions of the privileged. Young’s suggestion is to address issues of social injustice by observing prima facie structural inequalities and to look for ways to deal with them; that is, to make social structures “more liberating and enabling” (p. 34) by reworking relations of oppression and domination, for instance by providing the conditions for all to participate and be included in democratic discussion and decision-making.

In Young’s view, social justice is exhausted in the dual principles of ‘self-development’ and ‘self-determination’ referring to, respectively: (1) Equal and enabling conditions for exercising human capabilities and satisfying skills in socially recognised
settings, which are provided at least by covering basic needs and the absence of direct or indirect forces of oppression, and: (2) Freedom to pursue life in one’s own way, which is provided by the possibility to participate in changing conditions that would otherwise reinforce constraints on such capabilities and freedoms. According to Young, these two aspects of social justice mirror two general conditions of injustice, namely “oppression, institutional constraint on self-development, and domination, institutional constraint on self-determination.” (2000, p. 31) To be free from oppression, every individual must be able to develop and exercise his or her capacities freely. This means that societal conditions restraining individuals from doing so are unjust, and that justice requires that all are able to articulate their particular perspectives and needs. To be free from domination, every individual must have the opportunity to participate in “determining their actions or the conditions of their actions.” (1990, p. 38) It is by virtue of this double contrast between oppression and self-development and between domination and self-determination that Young strongly asserts that social justice presupposes the elimination of oppression and domination.

Importantly, Young’s concept of justice is not tied to individuals or individual preferences only, as in some sort of methodological individualism (Heath 2011). Rather, while recognising the intrinsic value of individual beings and aspirations, Young’s notion of social justice seeks to maximise relational autonomy; that is, the freedom to determine ones’ life as living in a group of other individuals crisscrossed by differentiated social group affiliations and different preferences, but nonetheless, for better or for worse, bound up in relations to one another. Social group affinity is “thrownness”, Young asserts, borrowing terminology from Heidegger’s analysis of being-in-the-world (Dasein): “We find ourselves positioned, thrown, in the structured field of class, gender, race, nationality, and so on, and in our daily lives we have no choice but to deal with this situation.” (1997b, p. 391) Young’s account of social groups aligns with the above mentioned social ontology of being thrown into a web of social relations and differentiated social positions, a web from which we cannot always escape.
‘Social Objectivity’: Making Just and Wise Democratic Decisions

In Young’s account of social justice and the ‘social ontology’ that goes with it, the democratic communication processes are pertinent, especially with regard to deliberating upon and finding a just course of action among differently situated individuals and groups. On the face of it, then, the value of democratic discussion in relation to social justice is instrumental. This relation becomes less clear, however, considering how Young also suggests that decision-making is not only an “important element” but also a “condition” of social justice (1990, p. 10). In doing so, Young seems to claim that social justice cannot be achieved without democratic processes. Her explanation for this runs in two directions.

First, Young argues that social justice requires democratic deliberation because, as in Habermas’ ideal speech situation also subscribed to by Benhabib, the principles of deliberation require decision making based on common interests in a power-free speech environment (2000, p. 30). This understanding of Habermas’ discourse ethics should, with Young, be conceived of as an ideal for conducting a critical evaluation of a given discourse, and not, as some deliberative theorists might claim, as a state of affairs that can be normatively evaluated in definitive terms. In my view, however, Young’s approach to Habermas clearly positions her as perhaps a critical yet full-blown member of the deliberative family of theorists, which is in perfect accordance with her earlier writings as well (e.g. Young 1981, p. 288; 1990, p. 34; 1993, p. 127; 1996, p. 126). This stands in contrast to other commentators accusing her of being a dissident in deliberative thinking (McAfee 2009, § 2.4) or labelling her a ‘postmodernist’ (Lorenzo Simpson in Healy 2011, p. 300). This family strife is not particularly relevant for the present reconstruction of the CFSC paradigm, however, and I therefore leave it aside.

Second, and in relation to the first point on why justice requires democratic process, Young introduces an epistemic dimension to the argument that has to do with her concept of ‘social objectivity’ (see esp. Young 1997b; 2000; 2004). Social objectivity is the most central concept in Young’s ‘communicative’ democracy model, as well as in the account of ‘dialogic’ democracy and reconstruction of CFSC performed in the following chapter. In short, social objectivity refers to the ‘wisdom’ in making just and wise democratic decisions which consist in being informed by as many relevant perspectives and in considering as many possible scenarios as required to make such
informed decisions. Young describes social objectivity, with reference to Donna Haraway, as the sum of ‘situated knowledges’ about a specific sociopolitical issue. In other words, social objectivity derive from the differentiated kinds of knowledge and perspectives that members in one social group come to share by being thrown into similar social group positions. With respect to inclusive and democratic decision-making, then, Young asserts that social objectivity requires the articulation of all social perspectives that can be shown to be affected by such decisions. Social objectivity is an ideal requirement that consists in informing democratic decision-making by maximising the inclusion of differentiated perspectives of individuals and groups to whom such decisions matter. With respect to evaluating whether some decision making processes ‘matter’ to individuals or groups, or how they are ‘affected’ by them, while Young does not make this entirely clear, I take her dual principles of social justice, self-development and self-determination, as the principal measure. In addition, as explained below, I understand the maximisation of social perspectives as a matter of degree and as according to the appropriate context. Thereby, I assume that social objectivity applies only if the maximal degree of inclusion in the relevant context is obtained. I do so because the justice principles as well as the pragmatic approach to maximisation contributes a critical edge and a contextualised approach to the argument on social objectivity that is necessary for the forthcoming reconstruction of the CFSC paradigm.

Crucially, the ideal of social objectivity requires paying specific attention to the articulation of the perspectives of social groups suffering from indirect or direct harms of oppression. This has to do with the silencing effects of oppression and domination that play part in perpetuating constraints on self-development and self-determination. Without a voice and the opportunity to being listened to, the possibility for contributing to the formation of public opinion and thereby participating in the determination of how to arrange society remains absent.

Ideally, democratic decision-making depends on every participant or group representative in a political body to be able to express his or her perspective freely on matters of collective concern. As pointed out above, this Habermasian conception is indeed challenged by Young when it comes to making just democratic decisions in practice: “Especially in the absence of such ideal conditions,” Young contends, “acquiring the social knowledge needed to formulate the best solutions to conflicts and
collective problems requires learning from the social perspectives of people positioned differently in structures of power, resource allocation, or normative hegemony” (1997b, p. 401) This is how the pragmatic approach to contextualising the argument with respect to, for instance, sociocultural factors becomes relevant. Later in this thesis, then, I will discuss how social objectivity and the requirement of making informed decisions on collective issues at stake relates to contextualising such issues and decision-making processes, notably with regards to the ‘rights discourse’ in advocacy communication (chapter 4), and to problems with defining a ‘community’ when the aim is to facilitate inclusive arrangements, such as community radio (chapter 7).

With respects to the notion of ‘dialogue’ in democratic communication elaborated on in the next chapter, which also has to do with the concepts of voice and listening in deliberative processes, my core argument inspired by Young is as follows:

(1) Evaluation of decision-making processes should focus on their ability to reach just and wise decisions;
(2) Reaching just and wise decisions requires, among other things, having sufficient knowledge related to the issue of concern;
(3) In doing so, deliberants should approximate the ideal of social objectivity’;
(4) The conditions for social objectivity improve when deliberants enter inclusive dialogue with the people either positively or negatively affected by the decision or its outcome, and also accept in such dialogue different modes of communication appropriate for articulating differentiated social perspectives, because:
(4a) Genuine dialogue enables the listener and seeks to understand the speaker on his or her own terms, and:
(4b) By accepting different modes of communication, the speakers are enabled in asserting views in a way that they master.

Therefore, deliberants engaged in democratic decision-making should, all things being equal, seek to enter inclusive dialogue and take into account every mode of communication that may articulate relevant social perspectives.
In the next paragraph I elaborate on the meaning of ‘improving conditions’ for social objectivity mentioned in (4), as well as the argument related to (4a) and (4b) will be in focus in the following chapter. The *ceteris paribus* clause inserted in the conclusion may refer to a situation where consensus is not possible and compromise therefore is necessary, even if all relevant perspectives and preferences have indeed been articulated and taken into account. In addition, given the concrete situation and process of deliberation, hindrances to obtaining social objectivity may include time limitations, practicalities concerning the arrangement of discussion, and people becoming tired and frustrated of talking (cf. Young 2000, p. 118).

In *Inclusion and Democracy*, Young relates the ideal of justice and social objectivity to democratic legitimacy: “[D]emocratic legitimacy requires that all those affected by decisions should be included in discussions that reach them” (2000, p. 61). While the inclusion requirement of democratic communication and decision-making does confer democratic legitimacy, Young later contends, majority rule does “not violate commitments to democratic legitimacy as long as persons and groups have reason to believe that they have had opportunity to influence the outcome.” (p. 118) It should be noted here that the inclusion does not require that decision outcomes in fact takes the perspectives into account, nor is it merely a requirement of these perspectives to have freedom to express themselves. What seems to be Young’s concern here is rather that inclusion is a requirement of participation in democratic deliberation, or at least that there is the opportunity for doing so, hence the ideal of self-determination.

To ensure that democratic decisions have been legitimately made, however, an extended version of the inclusion requirement does pose a dilemma for the ideal of social objectivity: How is it possible to know if everyone who might have reason to believe that they are affected by a given decision have in fact been heard and thereby given the opportunity to influence the outcome of that decision? This question becomes particular pertinent with the above mentioned silencing effects of undemocratic oppression, just as it makes it immensely difficult to evaluate whether decisions are in fact made on a socially objective basis. The solution to this problem of whether decisions are in fact democratically legitimate or not, I suggest, is found in democratic pragmatism.

According to the pragmatic view of democratic legitimacy, which traces its roots back to John Dewey’s *The Public and Its Problems* (1927; Cunningham 2002, p. 142),
democratic legitimacy is not a question of either or: it is a matter of degree. “The essential methodological point”, Cunningham writes, “is that rather than regarding democracy as a quality that a social site has or lacks, one should focus on ‘publics’ to ask how democratic (or undemocratic) they are, how democratic they might (or ought to) be, and how democracy within them can be enhanced.” (p. 144) For instance, while the problem of representation does not render the liberal model entirely undemocratic, the general point advanced in democratic pragmatism is that some measure of direct democracy would cause democratic legitimacy to increase. Such measures could be as in the direct engagement prescribed by participatory democrats, or as a process of deliberation conceived within the broader confines of a public sphere, the latter allegedly being more compatible with the liberal model of representative government.

With regard to Young’s theory of democracy and social justice, she occasionally agrees with Cunningham that broadening and deepening a participatory form of democracy, better the chances that the people in question take into account each other’s views in making collective decisions about how to arrange themselves, which would then render such context (more) socially just (Young 2000, p. 35). According to a pragmatist view of democracy, then, the conditions for making socially just decisions improve with increasing the level of democratic participation in a given social context. Deliberants should ask themselves and each other the critical question: Under the given circumstances and taking into account our diverging perspectives on the matter at stake, what would be the right decision for a good and socially just society?

Young’s theory of democracy and social justice should be seen as a critical response to the fact that in actually existing democracies, a few groups or elites are in control, while “others are excluded or marginalized from any significant influence over the policy-making process and its outcomes” (2000, p. 11). Communicative democracy therefore is a way to take issue with such inequalities. Communication is a constitutive part in providing conditions for democratic deliberation and social change. Democratic communication is not only about voicing, but also implies listening, learning, and arriving at an enlarged form of understanding that informs and transforms decision-making practices and guide them towards social justice. Such an enlarged understanding requires the inclusion of a multiplicity of perspectives on society and social life ‘from below’, as it were, a multiplicity that comes, according to Young, with differentiated
forms of communication, including public art forms and storytelling. The core premise for this argument is, then, that the more kinds of communication that are included in the decision-making process, the more relevant knowledge will be available to the deliberants, because going beyond formal procedures enable the conditions for broad participation and helps people make relevant knowledge claims from their unique and different social perspectives.
Chapter 3
Dialogic Democracy: From Contestation to Dialogue Across Difference

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, I regard Young’s direction as more appropriate for justifying a working democracy concept for citizens’ media and CFSC than the one suggested by Clemencia Rodriguez (2000; 2001). That being said, I see no reason to abandon the concept of ‘citizens’ media’ coined by Rodriguez, notably because the respective democracy concepts, all things being equal, do share the same goal of introducing a concept of difference as pivotal for making democratic social changes. In Fissures in the Mediascape (2001, ch. 1), Rodriguez theorises citizens’ media with reference to Chantal Mouffe’s radical democracy model also known as ‘agonistic pluralism’ (Mouffe 1999). In line with poststructuralist thought, Mouffe conceives of democratic communication as an unending battle of taking discursive positions and counter-positions. Because human relations always entail relations of power, as mentioned in the introduction, Mouffe does not accept the possibility of reaching consensus as a final point of convergence in democratic conversation. Mouffe sees the deliberative ideal of rational consensus as a way of glossing over differences that were essential to having a political discourse in the first place. With reference to the Foucaultian notion that discursive power constitute identities in a permanent struggle of dominance and subordination, she recommends that “[i]nstead of trying to erase the traces of power and exclusion, democratic politics requires bringing them to the fore, making them visible so that they can enter the terrain of contestation.” (1996, p. 255) Therefore, in order to apprehend the relational nature of power and the political plurality, a new theoretical approach needs to be developed. Instead of imposing an authoritarian ‘we’, Mouffe asserts, agonistic pluralism promotes the possibility of “conflictual consensus” (ibid.). Conflictual consensus means that when groups define themselves as ‘us’ and others as ‘them’ in a democratic setting – a strategy that Mouffe regards as inevitable, given the nature of power in social relations – they should regard others as legitimate adversaries (agonistics) rather than illegitimate enemies (antagonism). Inspired by Mouffe’s emphasis on agonistics, Rodriguez suggests that the potential strength of
small media outlets lies in the negotiation and renegotiation of power relations in everyday life politics which in turn contribute to social change processes. It is by such acts of contestation, or agonistic negotiation, that such media achieve status as citizens’ media.

Rodriguez’ focus on ‘power’ and ‘the political’ as a relevant concept for all social relations is indeed a helpful insight – especially for ComDev and CFSC projects that work beyond the formal confines of national level politics and seek direct democratic engagement with, as it were, people on the ground. In the following, however, with the strong accent on the need for contesting voices in democratic communication, I contend that Rodriguez’ approach does not adequately conceptualise listening and dialogue as equally necessary conditions for improving democratic communication as that of contesting voice. While Mouffe’s agonistics may be appealing to some scholars, and while it is certainly relevant in many contexts, I now suggest ‘dialogic democracy’ as an alternative way of theorizing citizens’ media and CFSC. In normative terms, this suggestion in particular focuses on improving democratic decision-making by facilitating processes of transformative learning and enlarged thought.

**Dialogic Democracy: Improving decision-making through voice and listening**

Following a recent proposal made by Paul Healy (2011), dialogic democracy is a redevelopment of what Iris Marion Young refers to as ‘communicative democracy’ (Young 1996). Young proposes her democracy model based on a concern with what she calls ‘mainstream’ deliberative democracy, and especially one among deliberative democrats common interpretation of Habermas’ discursive ethics stating that legitimate democratic decisions can be made only under procedural conditions for reasoned argument (e.g. Benhabib 1996, Elster 1998).

Despite good intentions, by privileging reasoned argumentation in democratic communication, Young maintains, the mainstream model excludes possibilities for pluralism and for taking difference into account, which impedes the possibilities for sustaining an inclusive process of deliberation on how to arrange society. This is not least because many individuals and groups, especially in a society with millions of people living in different ways and under different conditions, would lack the know-how to discursively navigate such reason-based discussion procedures, a communicative skill
often associated with a privileged group of well-educated people. On these grounds, Young asserts that mainstream deliberative democracy from the outset deprives the people who are supposed to participate in democratic discussion of their distinct voices, just as deliberants in the decision-making process fail to benefit from unique possibilities of listening to those distinct voices. As a result, privileging reasoned argument and not attending to other ways of how particular social perspectives may be communicated in an inclusive fashion is to risk marginalising vulnerable social groups even further.

To remedy this bias in mainstream deliberative democracy, Young suggests with her ‘communicative’ proposal to “understand differences in culture, social perspective, or particularist commitment as resources to draw on for reaching understanding in democratic discussion rather than as divisions that must be overcome” (Young 1996: 120). By referring to the situated experiences of every individual as partially related to one or more social group’s position in society, Young’s constructive proposal points to difference as a resource for making better democratic decisions. Individual differences, which are derived from being thrown into differentiated social group positions, must be taken into account to legitimatise democratic discussion, Young argues. She thereby provides a normative philosophical justification for why citizens’ media should conceive the task of democracy as supporting a plurality of especially marginalised voices and social perspectives.

Mouffe favours polemics and conflictual consensus as legitimising democratic communication. This causes Rodriguez to institute contestation of “social codes, legitimized identities, and institutional social relations” as the appropriate aim of citizens’ media (2001: 20). Young’s proposal, however, addresses the same problem of reaching consensus in a more constructive manner: Instead of regarding reciprocity and inclusion as illusory or irrelevant for making appropriate democratic decisions, her assertion is that democratic communication must approximate inclusion as a constructive ideal. Young maintains that inclusive and other-regarding interaction requires the acceptance of forms of communication that are often alternatively to reasoned argument, and she points specifically to greeting, rhetoric, and storytelling as examples of such alternatives (1996: 128f). The affirmative gestures of greeting are vital for maintaining conversation, just as the use of rhetoric implicates important issues of engaging an audience in listening and emotionally relating to the situated proposition and perspective.
of the speaker. By pointing to these alternatives as important elements in communicative interaction, Young asserts that it is neither possible nor preferable to privilege argument and dismiss affirmative audience appeal as empty ritual or “mere rhetoric” (1996: 130).

Young sees storytelling and narrative as an effective communicative mechanism for social learning and ‘enlarged thought’. The concept of enlarged thought in Young’s sense, based on Hannah Arendt’s reading of Kant’s notion of ‘enlarged mentality’, relates to the capability of improving political judgment by understanding the perspectives of others without necessarily taking them. Enlarged thought is triggered by communication that allows for “understanding across differences” (such as culture, identity, age, sex, wealth, political affiliation, etc.), an approach that stands in contrast to simply “reversing perspectives or identifying with each other” (Young 1997a: 341). To enable enlarged thought and understanding across difference, democratic communication needs storytelling, on a broad conception and among other forms of communication, to communicate the relevant perspectives of particular individuals and social groups. Storytelling helps putting one’s own parochial preferences in perspective by learning about possibility of seeing the world differently, a didactic method for creating other-regarding and more constructive sociopolitical relationships. As I will return to the specifics of the Malawian folktale tradition as one such potential mechanism, the concepts of enlarged thought and understanding across difference will become of particular relevance.

From the perspective of citizens’ media, what becomes important with Young’s communicative democracy theory is to focus on alternative forms of communication, storytelling included, to facilitate understanding across different social perspectives, and ultimately improve the process of making democratic decisions. As Healy (2011) points out, I suggest that Young’s recommendation to support these alternative forms share a common trait of sustaining ‘dialogic’ qualities in democratic communication, especially with regard to her account of the concept of difference. The use of the dialogue concept refers here to conceiving of mutual differences as a resource and driving force in dialogic communication. This definition diverges from the understanding of dialogue as “glossing over differences” – that is, turning a blind eye to power asymmetries and enforcing a common consensus as perceived by those pertaining power, which has been accused as being a widespread (mis)use of the term ‘dialogue’ (cf. Kvale 2006). As Healy argues
with Young, to engage in dialogic interaction is both to nurture “potentially transformative learning” (Healy 2011: 295) and a commitment to “respecting and preserving difference while finding and building on common ground” (297). As related to the notions of dialogic understanding across difference and enlarged thought, transformative learning is an evolving process that involves the mutual integration of one another’s worldview, a ‘fusion of horizons’ as Gadamarians would have it (Malpas 2009). In such a process, the aim is to understand the commonalities as well as the differences of the Other, not in our own predefined and definitive terms, but from a mutually co-constructed position characterised as intersubjective and incomplete.

Dialogic democracy does not see difference as a hindrance to overcome in order to reach common consensus, like some deliberative democrats do (e.g. Todd Gitlin and Jean Ehlstein, cited in Young 1996b, p. 383-4), nor in Mouffe’s poststructuralist view as a motivation for reducing political communication to conflict and contestation. Instead, dialogic democracy approaches difference as a necessary resource that enables the different parties engaged in democratic practices to reach enlarged thought of each other’s perspectives. This enables them, in turn, to reach a consensus on matters of collective concern. Accessing this resource, however, requires an inclusive and participatory approach to communication; by making room for other-regarding reflection in political communication, the aim of dialogic democracy is to improve ongoing decision-making in any political body, hence the epistemic argument for including as well as appreciating a multiplicity of voices in order to obtain relevant social knowledge for making just democratic decisions.

In the following three sections, I contribute three relevant perspectives to bridge the normative concept of dialogic democracy with the CFSC paradigm. The first perspective, to sharpen up dialogic democracy’s critical edge, is provided by Freire and his concept of ‘dialogue’. The second is Young’s notion of ‘decentered’ democratic communication, which has implication for understanding ‘dialogue’ in multi-mediated modalities of communication across time and space. Lastly, I resubmit Rodriguez’ citizens’ media concept as a mechanism for a maintaining critical yet dialogic qualities in democratic communication. This does require, however, a shift of emphasis from agonistic pluralism to dialogic democracy.
‘Conscientisation’: Dialogue from a Critical Perspective

According to Robert T. Craig (1999), the core question in dialogic communication theory is to conceive of “dialogue or experience of otherness” by questioning what kinds of communication, if any, may actually lead understanding “myself as the other to the other.” (p. 138f, original emphases)1 Intuitively, arriving at such understanding is a matter of self-reflection and is therefore, paradoxically, an unmediated outcome of human communication. Nonetheless, being a distinct quality in dialogical encounters, Craig refers to understanding oneself as the other as a “very real and utterly necessary human experience, although it may be a fleeting experience that easily degrades into some form of inauthenticity.” (ibid.) In contrast to other-regarding dialogue stands selfish use or strategic persuasion of the other as a means to one’s own ends.

While Freire is a central figure in CFSC as well as in dialogic communication theory, he builds his dialogue concept on the same principle as existentialist dialogue philosopher Martin Buber (Steward, Zediker & Black 2004). Buber conceives of dialogue as an ideal type for intersubjective relationships, and refers to it as ‘I-Thou’ in contrast to a reifying ‘I-It’ kind of human connection. I-Thou dialogue is an ‘authentic’ meeting where no one aims to persuade or triumph over the other. Rather, the dialogic ‘in-between’ is characterised by openness, directness, and acceptance of each other’s differences; honesty is a virtue, “the essence of courage”, whereas hidden agendas and cruel intentions are for cowards and propagandists (Buber 1954/1988, p. 68ff). Looking at Freire’s dialogue concept, the Buberian inspiration seems clear: “How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? How can I dialogue if I regard myself as a case apart from others—mere “its” in whom I cannot recognize other ”I”s?” (Freire 1970, p. 78) In his liberating pedagogy, Freire understands dialogue as an enabling condition for authentic learning. In a situation where a teacher and a pupil

1) While Craig use ‘phenomenological’ as his label – which from a history of ideas perspective is appropriate as the early phenomenologists were indeed the first to explore this subject of ‘experiencing otherness’ – I chose instead ‘dialogic’. This is with respect to the fact that this branch in communication theory also draws on the later existentialism and phenomenological hermeneutics as much as the strictly phenomenological tradition in philosophy. As suggested in the above quote, this choice of label also reflects the fact that in Craig’s own account on this theoretical standpoint, a ‘dialogue’ concept is pivotal for conceptualizing the object of study.
interacts with each other, both parts must seek to engage in an I-Thou way of relating to the other, which requires mutuality and the reversibility of master-apprentice positions. Education to Freire is not a matter of depositing knowledge in pupils by rote learning, an approach he refers to as the ‘banking’ concept of education. Liberating pedagogy, in contrast, is a dialogic process of listening and learning taking place between equals.

Here, however, Freire takes Buber’s existentialist dialogue concept in a critical direction: The appropriate aim of authentic education is to question oppression, hence Freire’s conscientisation concept – that is, as described above, a method for arriving at new critical understandings, a mutually creative process between teacher and student that he calls “naming the world” (1970, p. 76f). By integrating conscientisation with his dialogue concept, Freire activates the normative-teleological ideal related to critical theory; that is, to approach dialogue as a critical kind of discourse that at the same time questions oppressive structures and works out ways of dealing with them.

Freire’s critical dialogue concept and the phenomenological one submitted by Craig both contain a transformative element – dialogue is referred to as the mutual process of changing the view of ‘Oneself’ as well as the ‘Other’. By comparison, this can be related to the inherent potential of dialogue to lead to “enlarged thought”, “transformative learning” and “understanding across social differences” (Young 1997a; Healy 2011). In Freire’s conception, this change of view also concerns that of the ‘World’, which I interpret as the ‘social world’ or the hegemonic configuration of social relations among individuals and groups in a society. By both changing the views upon themselves, the others, and how they stand in relation one another, these individuals and groups become informed on how they may contribute to changing those structures not just out of self-interest, but also in the interest of others. That is how the process dialogue relates to democratic decision-making in a dialogic democracy.

**Mediating Publics: Dialogue from a Decentered Perspective**

Since dialogic democracy is concerned with inclusive forms of communication, it becomes principal to establish and support communicative spaces where people are capable of articulating their views in a constructive manner, which means that they do so in ways that are attentive to and make place for the perspectives of others. Before going on to the empirically informed part of this study, one question remains: How can we talk
of ‘dialogue’ in the context of citizens’ media as relatively mass-mediated forms of communication, such as community radio? The question is not often addressed by political philosophers, although it most certainly should be, given the fact that mass mediation has been and still is becoming an increasingly integrated part of everyday political practices. In fact, in his “dialogical reappropriation” of Young’s communicative democracy model, Healy leaves out this crucial element too. If a turn to dialogue is indeed feasible “as a template for revitalizing democracy in our contemporary pluralistic, multicultural and fast-changing world”, as Healy himself proclaims (2011, p. 309), the model must also include the possibility of mediating dialogue across time and space, and not just assuming the usual context of a public meeting, a hearing or, worse, politicians deliberating behind closed doors.

Assuming face-to-face discussion is a quite common bias among deliberative democrats, which Young also points out in her review of ‘mainstream’ positions in this line of thought (2000, p. 44-7). It is furthermore an understandable preference, not least due to the many communicative benefits associated with being in such direct contact, which apart from voicing and listening also includes bodily presence, eye contact, intonation, and the possibility of affirmative or disarming bodily and verbal gestures – all factors that may contribute constructively to maintaining a dialogic form of interaction, and make it a productive one. With reference to Habermas’ Between Facts and Norms, however, Young paves the way for an abstract and norm-guided account of the mediation of open and public discourse: “A discussion-based democratic theory will be irrelevant to contemporary society,” Young asserts against deliberative democrats assuming face-to-face discussion as the only appropriate means of political dialogue, “unless is can apply its values, norms, and insights to large-scale politics of millions of people linked by dense social and economical processes and legal framework” (2000: 45). These socioeconomic processes are indeed co-constituted by different kinds of media, and it would be a grave failure not to include this fact in a dialogic democracy theory. Young’s recommendation with Habermas is to regard democratic communication from a decentered perspective. Looking beyond the procedural processes of established social institutions (including decentralised institutions such as localised government assemblies), the decentered view implies a concept of publicity occurring “across wide distances and over long times, with diverse social sectors speaking to one another across
differences of perspective as well as space and time” (46). The scope of dialogic democracy, then, is not to facilitate or evaluate face-to-face dialogues only, but to observe and sustain *dialogic qualities* in complex and hybrid mediated forms of communication.

Crucially, the decentered approach affirms the role of citizens’ media as generating a more inclusive overall democratic process. To reiterate, citizens’ media should support forms of communication that allow for transformative learning and enlarged thought, and which therefore does not privilege contestation or reasoned argumentation as the only legitimate modes of democratic discourse. According to dialogic democracy, with the overall goal of improving democratic decision-making, the *raison d’être* of citizens’ media should also be to seek out and encourage alternative forms of communication that in a situated and open manner invites the listener (who could be an ‘Other’) to engage in reconstructing his or her worldview in the spirit of a dialogic encounter.

**Citizens’ Media and Dialogic Democracy**

To conclude this section, I now briefly discuss the use of the dialogue and difference concepts that here refers to the recognition of mutual differences as a *resource* and a *driving force* in democratic communication. This is a key tenet in how, by rational reconstruction, the dialogic democracy model fits into the theoretical framework of the CFSC paradigm. To reiterate, what I am looking for is the possibility for a normative democratic commitment in CFSC scholarship. I am not saying that CFSC scholars, in some non-transparent or unconscious manner, should be hiding a true character as ‘democracy demagogues’ or as forcing a preconceived form of government upon developing countries in a top-down fashion. Rather, the point offered here is that by introducing a normative-teleological conception of ‘social change’ relating to ‘dialogue’ and ‘social justice’, ‘dialogical democracy’ provides philosophical reasons for why CFSC should aim at such values in research and practice.

From this CFSC perspective, subscribing to dialogic democracy alters the premises for the concept of citizens’ media suggested by Rodriguez which epitomizes the ability of citizens’ media to enter into contestation deemed of political relevance. Instead of focusing on media as means of hostile or unbending contestation, a dialogic democracy approach focuses on the abilities of citizens’ media to sustain *dialogical qualities* in
democratic communication. It does so – with reference to the dialogical ethos of entering into processes of ‘transformative learning’ across ‘differences in social perspectives’ – because increasing awareness and articulation of such perspectives is a prerequisite for improving democratic decision-making. However, defining citizen’s media as aiming for constructive dialogue rather than agonistic contestation is not to reintroduce the ideal of ‘symmetrical reciprocity’ among public sphere deliberants. By taking into account the existence of not just mutual similarities, but also differences in social perspectives, public sphere deliberation is, according to the dialogic democracy concept, committed to an ideal of *understanding*. In “actually existing democracies”, to once more quote Nancy Fraser’s groundbreaking critique of Habermasian thinking, citizen’s media subscribing to the ideal of dialogic democracy may indeed still support subaltern spaces for withdrawal and regroupment. However, if such spaces are sustained by dialogue-driven citizens’ media, they will not act as “training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics.” (Fraser 1990, p. 68) When entering the domain of dialogue, one leaves warlike polemics behind – withdrawal and regroupment centres on reflection and social learning, on voice and listening in constructive combination, instead of contestation.

The shift from contestation to dialogic democracy may seem a shift of emphasis rather than a break with existing directions in the CFSC paradigm. Indeed, I do not reject that some citizen’s media may operate under conditions that from both a strategic and an ethical standpoint requires agitation and not a dialogical approach. That will often be the case under conditions of stark oppression and domination which exclude the possibilities for participating democratically in reshaping those conditions. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, in actually existing democracies such as Malawi – where elections are held regularly, where opposition parties do voice criticisms, and where, at least to some degree, press freedom is present (cf. Sen 1999) – it is my contention that dialogic democracy is preferable to agonistic pluralism exactly because this (sometimes relatively shallow) degree of freedom exists. This contention is not based on the strategic assumption that dialogic democracy gets results to urgent matters faster or more efficiently; nor do I conceive dialogue as a means of forcing consensus through unity. Rather, by recommending dialogic democracy as a normative-teleological ideal for CFSC, my focus is on valuing and promoting social inclusion, civic participation, and the articulation of differentiated social perspectives. It is by facilitating critical processes of
understanding, transformative learning, and enlarged thought, that dialogic democracy reveals that democracy and democratic communication is a necessary component and condition for making social changes towards social justice.

As stated in the Introduction, with Young and Healy, I conceptualise ‘dialogue’ as a non-contesting yet dissensus-driven form of human interaction that, rather than forcing consensus, aims at achieving transformative learning by putting, so to speak, one’s own perspective in perspective. In relation to my empirical study, as I discuss below, democracy and dialogue become key concepts, not only in relation to CFSC, but also in the principles of conducting action-oriented research such as the ROAR projects in Chisitu. The normative ‘dialogue’ concept as a dissensus-driven form of engagement informs the research design stage, the execution, as well as the analysis of the ROAR project experiment performed in the final chapter. ‘Dialogue’ furthermore leads to a specific understanding of Malawian storytelling as enabling rhetorical positioning and enlarged understanding of particular social perspectives – even across time and space in radio-mediated forms. This empirical question can be framed as how traditional storytelling may attribute dialogical qualities to critically informed social change communication? Lastly, I consider how these dialogic qualities of ROAR may contribute to the generation of democratic forms of publicity, both with respect to everyday politics, and in the wider context of Malawi’s formal democracy. Thus, the analysis of my own CFSC practice supplies the foundation on which I offer suggestions as to how the concepts of ‘dialogue’ and ‘democracy’ may inform reflective and action-oriented forms of CFSC research, and it is on these grounds that I appeal to justifying dialogic democracy as a viable normative-teleological direction for the CFSC paradigm.
Chapter 4
Storytelling Ethnography in Chisitu

The highland plains stretching between the smaller isolated mountain peaks Southeast to the captivating contour of the Mulanje Massif are densely populated with many villages clustered closely together. Each village is headed by a chief who has been appointed by his or her predecessor. The chief is part of a hierarchy ranging from Village Head (VH) over Group Village Head (GVH) to the Traditional Authority (T/A). The T/A reports to the District Commissioner (DC) at the District Assembly (DA), the DA being the smallest organ in Malawi’s decentralised democratic government. The traditional rulers have a council or a so-called Development Committee attached on, respectively, village (VDC) and area, or T/A level (ADC). Land for farming in this part of Mulanje is in short supply, and amounts to an average of half an acre per person, and many households have severe problems keeping up subsistence farming. Those who manage to harvest a surplus, however, may profit from selling at the local markets. Maize is the stable crop, served as the traditional stiff porridge nsima with greens of different sorts and occasionally meat stew. To counter food insecurity and starvation, cassava and sweet potatoes are gradually gaining acceptance too. The younger generation (of less than 30 years) outweighs the elder by three to one, and life expectancy is around 46 years. With an HIV/Aids prevalence rate of above 20%, not to mention malaria, tuberculosis, diarrheal, maternal deaths, etc., the Mulanje inhabitants do face a range of serious health issues as well. (Mulanje DA 2007) With these socioeconomic figures in mind, I discuss in this chapter, and the one that follows, the research process and methods used while conducting fieldwork in Mulanje, Malawi. For the total of five months that I was in the country, from 6 June to 7 October in 2010 and from 6 October to 21 December in 2011, I spent about three months in the Mulanje district, and approximately 4 weeks living in the villages of Nkhuta and Tambala, two weeks respectively each year.

After a general introduction to the study, this chapter draws on empirical material produced during the first phase of fieldwork. I describe this phase as ‘ethnographic’, since it involves describing ways of living in Chisitu’s and in particular how nthano is part of the everyday lives of the people there – whether in the traditional context of live
performances at home, in schools, on the radio, etc. In doing so, my knowledge production does not narrow down to studying nthano as a communicative phenomenon in isolation, but also pays attention to the genre’s “trajectories of disposition”, that is, to its “cultural and historical precedents and its historical relationship with the public.” (Tufte 2000, p. 32-3) While the analytical focus in this thesis mostly is on the ‘action-oriented’ elements of conducting the ROAR projects in Chisitu in 2011, as described in the following chapter, the final analysis of chapter 6 to some extent also approaches the question of how different discursive and sociocultural factors are crucial to understanding an nthano experience.

By the end of this chapter, I will provide a brief account of a traditional nthano performance in context, namely that of Mrs. Chikwaza living with her husband and children in a household in the village Nkhuta in Chisitu. My reason for presenting this fragment of empirical material is to provide the reader, who might be unfamiliar with the nthano genre in general, with a crash course in understanding both the practices related to the nthano performances themselves and how these performances may relate to their communicative contexts. In addition, this chapter indicates the different steps taken throughout the process of conducting research in Chisitu, and demonstrates how my research in Chisitu in 2010 did comprise ‘ethnographic’ insights central to the Action Research project conducted in 2011.

**Personal Motivation and Research Interests**

My interest in carrying out the present study was sparked in Autumn 2009 when Thomas Tufte invited me to do a project in Malawi through his contacts in ADRA Denmark. I accepted this as an interesting challenge, although my previous project at university had not before taken on any Africanist direction or, for that sake, been focusing on ComDev and CFSC. I cultivated some interest in storytelling throughout my undergraduate studies, but of the African sort I merely knew that they were a way of passing down traditional knowledge from the elder generations to the younger, and also that some of them reflected upon existential issues – an insight that was positively rooted in my childhood experiences with reading African dilemma stories in *Regnbuens Fange* (*Prisoner of the Rainbow*, Lundström & Aabenhus 1992), a collection of folktales about the fundamental aspects of making irreversible choices in life.
Later, while reading anthropologist Michael Jackson’s *The Politics of Storytelling* (2002) and also Graham Furniss and Liz Gunnar’s *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature* (eds., 1995), I coupled this idea with approaching storytelling from a critically informed and politicised angle to ultimately combine it with the notion of dialogic democracy. In the words of Jackson, who follows Hannah Arendt in regarding storytelling as a vital source for overcoming community forgetfulness and immortalising human experience (d’Entremes 2008, § 4.3), I picked up the understanding of storytelling as a strategy “for sustaining a sense of agency in face of disempowering circumstances.” (Jackson 2002, p. 15), which, furthermore, did require me to regard storytelling practices “not merely as folksy, domestic entertainment but as a domain in which individuals in a variety of social roles articulate a commentary upon power relations in society and indeed create knowledge about society.” (Furniss and Gunnar 1995, p. 1)

When I went on my first fieldtrip in 2010, however, I was determined to keep the initial phase of the research process open-ended. I wanted first of all to understand in general how Malawian NGOs, including ADRA Malawi and Story Workshop, were applying CFSC in practice. In this way, as I will demonstrate in the following sections, the different steps taken throughout this process is best described as a hermeneutic spiral, moving from a broad palette of interests to the specific interventionist process of Remediating Orature through Action Research with local storytellers from two village communities in Chisitu, Mulanje.

The two phases of fieldwork conducted in 2010 and 2011 are quite different, the first being open and exploring, the second focused on conducting the ROAR project. On the other hand, from a knowledge interest perspective – that is, the ways in which I as a researcher choose to define and approach the object of study – the two phases are sewn together by at least two major strands. First, the study has an interest in how African orature – that is “spoken, sung, dramatized and recorded” forms of oral literature in general (Lwanda 2009: 136; Thiongo 2007) – demonstrates an ability to coexists with and enter into new dynamics of culture, including the culture associated with development and the process of making Malawi a modern-day. Second, different parts of this study are connected by the question of how to put the normative direction designated in a dialogic democracy version of CFSC into practice; that is, how does one contextualise and implement a project such as ROAR in a culture-centred fashion?
The above model provides an overview of the research progress and highlights the features that I elaborate upon in this thesis. As also indicated in the model, my relation with ADRA evolved from the organisation acting as my host and helping out with practicalities (including the selection of Chisitu as my target area and establishing contacts to local officials that provided me with the necessary research permissions), to me conducting audience research for them on a consultancy basis. In brief terms, as an ADRA consultant, I did a qualitative and action-oriented study on the communicative needs and possibilities for including their ground level beneficiaries in what I referred to as Participatory Community Media Content Creation (PCMCP). In cooperation with local ADRA staff I produced research data from four target sites in two regions; two in Mzuzu and two in Mulanje. The latter were more specifically situated in the Nkhandoro area about 25 kilometres from Chisitu where I did my MA research. The PCMCP
investigation included 3 community meetings (ranging from 26 to 150 attendants) and 12 group interview discussions (15-20 participants each, 211 in total). The interview participants were all members of Community Based Groups and/or Organizations (CBOs/CBGs) who were the target beneficiaries of ADRA Malawi’s ongoing Action for Social Change program running from 2011 to 2013 (ADRA n.d.). For further details please consult the PCMCP Research Report (Jeppesen 2012, cf. appendix 5). I should make clear, however, that I did choose at an early point not to include or target ADRA directly in my MA research, and that the above mentioned research interests are thus defined independently and without obligations to others than myself as a student, as mentioned in chapter 1, conducting action-oriented CFSC research that tilts towards academia.

Traditional Nthano Folktales and Malawi’s Media Moguls
As mentioned early in the Introduction, the practice of performing folktales in Malawi (called nthano in the national language of Chichewa) consist of several performative elements, often including a set of linguistic markers, a choir-response form of narration, singing, clapping, and a moral point at the end. In terms of social function nthano are traditionally told in the relatively private context of the household, and the form is widely perceived as a vehicle for bringing up children and delivering life-guiding principles in an engaging and entertaining manner. Inspired by how the Malawian author and literature critic Steve Chimombo describes this tradition as a ‘bag of nthano’ (personal communication), I understand this metaphor as referring to a number of culturally shared plots, characters, songs, and morals, as well as other features available to the performing storyteller and his or her audience. For a more elaborate account of the nthano genre in Malawian orature, please refer to appendix 1.

In July 2010, with the aim of understanding the widely contested status of free journalism, I began my field studies in Malawi’s commercial capital of Blantyre by conducting a series of interviews with local media practitioners. Second, I used my contacts in ADRA Malawi and made new ones at Story Workshop to get an inside view of how these local NGOs would navigate this political landscape with their media productions. In appendix 2, based on literature supplemented with my own experience during this initial part of the research, I provide a longer introduction and discussion of
Malawi’s culture of democracy as well as the dominance of development discourse and the role of NGOs in the Malawian mediascape.

In conducting these interview, it turned out that I was not alone in having an interest in traditional storytelling. In fact, every key personality in the Malawian mediascape that I spoke to could relate nthano directly to their work. For instance, Michael Usi, creative director at ADRA Malawi, noted that storytelling was a core method when he was acting his aka comedy figure Dr. Manganya, and that he would use well-known songs from folklore and attach them to the development agenda of ADRA. Smith Likongwe, film director and then Director of Programs at Story Workshop, told me how his NGO used storytelling interludes as part of the radio drama Zimachitika, and that they would often have expert storytellers performing in the recording booth. Furthermore, musicologist and Chief Producer at Cultural Affairs and Documentation at MBC Waliko Makhala revealed to me that in fact, ‘preserving traditional storytelling’ recently had become part the government’s cultural politics – and thereby also MBC’s – a kind of politics that can be seen as an extension of the 1994 election party manifestoes on culture described at the beginning of the above mentioned introduction (appendix 2). Lastly, when I interviewed former Joy TV executive Tailos Bakili it turned out that he had just finished a television pilot called Nthano Za Ana (Storytelling for Children). As the first animation for children made in Malawi, Bakili’s program brought the well-known nthano narratives and characters to life, for instance the story of Chamdothe (child of clay) running from the rain (cf. Chimombo 1993), and the trickster Kalulu (the hare) doing his scams. One of Bakili’s narratives also took on a socio-critical edge with an evil looking child employer boasting about how well such labour would run his business, spinning an end on how such activities violate the rights of children.

I saw a clear connection here between drawing on traditional storytelling as a strong current in developing media culture in Malawi on the one hand, and in this way looking to the past either in preservative and static terms versus in a culturally more dynamic (and development-oriented) fashion on the other. I was thus confirmed in the fundamental role in communicating culture that traditional nthano played for these people, as well as Malawians in general. However, to gain an in-depth understanding of the nthano genre’s social significance, as well as how it influences the mutating Malawian mediascape, I took this realisation as a point of departure for setting up an
ethnographic study of storytelling and media in the rural Chisitu area of Mulanje. I chose a rural site for my study, first of all, hoping to meet regularly practising storyteller, sitting as stereotypically depicted by the fire-side to perform her or his stories. I return to this stereotype and how I experienced it breaking down below.

ADRA acted as my gatekeeper with respect to getting research permissions from the local authorities and also helped me selecting Chisitu as the area for my study as well as choosing among five village site recommended by local ADRA staff. I first travelled to these village interview each chief, who takes the same name as his or her village (in this case Chigwembere, Khamula, Misenje, Nkhuta, and Tambala). In this context I presented myself as an independent student researcher and thus kept a low profile on my affiliation with ADRA. Accordingly, I opted for alternative transportation – that is, an ordinary car for the major transport and bicycles for the rest – instead of a four-wheel drive with Dannebrog flashing from the side doors (ADRA Malawi’s project in Chisitu was funded by Danida). The secrecy went as far as to my future co-researcher Owen Stima Banda, a local student of journalism who I hired just before entering the field, and whom I did not tell about my relation to ADRA before the study was done. The main reason for this was that I wanted to keep these two roles distinct, and, primarily, that I would not risk getting answers to my questions that positioned me as either a development worker or member of the SDA church, and second, I did not want the research participants to have high expectations as to what my presence there could mean – after all, at the time I was there, ADRA Malawi was conceived of as the primary benefactor which was a reputation that I as a student research neither could or should live up to.

**Studying Nthano in Chisitu**

One thing that struck me while conducting my initial interview was that the further I got away from the main road, the more engaged people seemed to be in practicing traditional storytelling. According to the chiefs and later also others among the village dwellers, this is not least due to increasing competition in evening hour entertainment from radio and television, but also a general tendency among the more distant village dwellers to live, as it were, a more traditional way of life. “If you go to Nkhuta,” I remember chief Chigwembere commenting, his village being the closest one to Chisitu Trading Centre.
and the main road, “you will find that this is a proper village.” Another chief, Misenje, reflected that the closer to the road and the more developed an area becomes, the more especially elderly people – who would otherwise position themselves as the custodians of tradition – seemed to be “hiding” their culture, not speaking Lhomwe to younger people and forgetting the tales they used to tell children.

Chichewa is spoken fluently by everyone in Mulanje, despite the fact that the majority of people have their ethnic roots in Lhomwe culture. According to ethnolinguist Edrinnie Kayambazinthu, from a general perspective, the Lhomwe ethnic groups in Malawi are considered socio-linguistically as well as culturally recessive (2004, p. 91). This recessive or subaltern positioning is due to a long Lhomwe history of non-invasive immigration from Mozambique, followed by work, trade, and other forms of cultural interaction with especially the Yao and Njanja, who speak a dialect of Chewa (ibid., p. 89f). To elaborate on Misinje’s comment, then, the Lhomwe speakers are ‘hidden’ or ‘secretive’ in the sense that there only are few proficient language users within this cultural group, and that speaking the language is a way for them or exercise discretion – for instance, in the context of my study, when older women would not want the younger people to understand. Throughout my fieldwork in Chisitu, however, I did come across full households practicing Lhomwe, or one of its five dialects, albeit not at the expense of speaking Chichewa. In relation to my forthcoming analysis in chapter 6, I suggest that the Chichewa-Lhomwe distinction plays a part in expanding a sociocultural gap that exists between the younger and the elder generations of Mulanje, with the former literally being unable to understand the language of the latter. On the other hand, the languages clearly plays a significant role in rooting cultural identities, even for those who do not speak them fluently. For instance, I saw Lhomwe on restaurant signposts and the language often manifested in greeting patterns and traditional songs. In fact, memorising greetings in Lhomwe (which everyone would recognize) worked very well for me as an icebreaker when meeting strangers.

While I lived for two weeks with Owen in a tented camp behind chief Nkhuta’s house, in September 2010, we focused on researching how traditional storytelling was or was not part of the Nkhuta people’s everyday lives. This part of the research revolved around question of who these storytellers were, and who participated in traditional storytelling performances. We sought to find out what was being told, what the stories
were about, and what role, if any, storytelling would play to these people as a perceived
token of ‘tradition’ – could it be described as some sort of ritual (Larsen & Tufte 2003)?
Furthermore, with reference to this study’s orientation towards development and social
change communication, we went looking for the possible roles of orature, nthano
included, in articulating politics of the everyday, and also for how other major channels
and flows of communication, especially in the media, would play a part in promoting or
demoting cultural forms of communication. How did people living in a rural village
setting such as Nkhuta perceive this as significant? Answers to these question varied
greatly, but it turned out, as expected, that Nkhuta had regularly practicing storytellers,
while others did not see any use of such a tradition.

By doing the mini-survey in our part of the village (three clusters of 33 households
covering 151 village dwellers, 51% children and youths, 32% parents and adults above
the age of 18, and 13% grandparents) we would, among other things, ask a household
representative whether nthano was still being practiced there, how, by whom, how often,
and if not, why. The survey concluded that seven households had active storytellers
performing at least once a week, but with members of five other households going for
neighbouring performances, the ‘domestic storytelling exposure’ in the everyday lives of
the community members was up to 35% (51 in absolute numbers). One cluster of
households (24 village dwellers or an additional 16% of the community members
surveyed) were currently struggling with food insecurity and had nothing to celebrate,
but they told me and Owen that they did practice storytelling regularly the year before.
For the raw mini-survey data, see appendix 6.

Our questions did not as such take into account that some household residents
might encounter storytelling in other contexts. This we sought to understand through
informal interviews where, for instance, we learned that many school children from
households practicing nthano would perform them not only informally as part of playing
with each other, but also formally in class as part of the Primary School Curriculum. In
general, this research provided a basic idea of the cultural currency of the different
practices related to storytelling, just as the situations where we would meet people
claiming to be regularly practicing storytellers gave us an opportunity to invite ourselves
for a storytelling session later.
On ‘Communicative Ecologies’

One important methodological working concept that I put to practice both in my first and second phase of fieldwork is that of the ‘communicative ecology’. I understand the communicative ecology metaphor in line with how it is introduced in the *Ethnographic Action Research Handbook* by Tacchi, Slater, & Lewis (2003) and elaborated on in *Action Research and the New Media* by Hearn, Tacchi, Foth, & Lennie (2008). The metaphor implies, as in any other kind of ecology, that communicative phenomena should not be perceived in isolation, but be approached in their proper communicative context, that is, as part of an integrated system of channels and flows, be it small scale local or large scale global, face-to-face or otherwise mediated. Contextualising communicative phenomena may involve the inclusion of psychological, sociocultural, political and economic dimensions, just as it anchors the study in a specific time and space. In a Malawian village setting the spaces, places, flows, and channels of the communicative ecology include: Travelling the road by foot, by bicycle or minibus, going to the market, to school, church, court, or work places, chatting by the borehole, meeting in the fields, or just staying in the household, including inside a house (*nyumba*), the parents’ bedroom (*kuthala*), on the porch (*khonde*), in the surrounding court (*panja*), etc. Each of these places forms a specific space and sociocultural framework for communication, driven by habit and social norms (including differences in gender, age, and status), and each of these spaces shape people’s uses of different sorts of media technologies, including mobile phones and battery-powered radio transistors, as well as small handwritten letters brought by errand boys or old newspapers still in circulation among those who read, proudly carried around curled up the armpit. If the village is connected to the power grid the list may include stereo systems, television sets hidden away in houses or blasting out loud from low-cost cinema shacks (the so-called video shops), computers found in Internet cafés, etc. In the following paragraphs, extending into the next section, I provide a case example from my fieldwork on how two different media, that is, radio listening and face-to-face *nthano* performance, interfere constructively with each other in a communicative context defined as ‘the Chikhwaza household’, inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. Chikwhaza and their 8 children.
The Case of Chikhwaza

At the Chikhwazas, situated in a somewhat isolated cluster of household in Nkhuta village, the small transistor radio is a centrepiece for many combinations of social listening activities on the khonde or the panja, including peeling, grinding, cooking, or just relaxing in the midday heat or in the pitched black evening hours. Early in the morning, if Mr. And Mrs. Chikhwaza can afford batteries, the radio is brought to the fields to accompany turning over the soil, sowing, or harvesting cassava, maize, rice, peas, pumpkin leaves, etc. At the house, however, the transistor buzzing throughout the day defines a space known among neighbours as a place to meet and listen, for instance when a major football game is on. While performing her everyday humdrum duties as a housewife, Mrs. Chikhwaza enjoys listening to development programs, as she calls them, as well as gospel music and the 16 o’clock news followed by preaching on catholic Radio Maria while performing her daily household duties. Sometimes Mr. Chikwaza brings the radio with him to do piecework farming for richer landowners and retailing bananas at the Chiwakahaka market place in about two hours’ walking distance, but often as not it is Mrs. Chikhwaza who is in control of it. The listening patterns are so important to Mrs. and Mr. Chikhwaza that if money runs out, “we will do anything to buy batteries on tick.” (Appendix 8, p. 69-70) This might also have to do, I presume, with practicing radio listening and buzzing as an important mark of status: Despite the hardships keeping up the buzz demonstrates that the family gets along well – they can afford to buy batteries. By following this ritual, in the sense relates to Bent Steeg Larsen and Thomas Tufte’s (2003) argument that radio listening, among other ways of using media, is not an empty habit, but a ritual spun into a network of socially meaningful relations, the Chikhwaza’s radio creates a “pulse of the everyday life” (p. 101), and simultaneously sustains a position of social status in relation to the surrounding community.

In this place the social space defined here as ‘the Chikhwazas’, Mrs. Chikwaza regularly tells nthano to her many children and neighboring children, with a preference for those stories that teaches them good conduct and to treat orphans, the sick. She did agreed that this preference partly had to do with her own life history, where with mother and sister rejecting her when coming of age. This is also the reason why the family live somewhat off the main part of the village: Chief Nkhuta cut out this new piece of land to solve by not having the three women living closely together, as is otherwise customary.
due to the matrilocal pattern of the Lhomwe, meaning that men traditionally move elsewhere marry while the daughters stay. On September 20, 2010, Mrs. Chikhwaza hosted a storytelling session with a group of children and visiting neighbours as well as Owen and myself. I have produced what I refer to as an ‘audiovisual transcription’ of one of her stories from that night, An Orphan / Mwana Wamasiye, which I hereby invite you watch (Jeppesen 2011; YouTube link). The recording of Chikhwaza’s story was first transcribed and translated by Owen, although I later revised the English part of his version aided by an English-Chichewa dictionary (Pass 2009). I did so because Chichewa translated directly to English often sounds awkward, which it would not be to a first language Chichewa listener, and because a simplistic English, in my view, would disturb the narrative experience (cf. Finnegan 1992, § 4.1). Second, I find the combination between translated text rolling across the screen and the original sound recording playing helpful in recreating for the listening viewer both the ambience in general and, in particular, the performance rhythm of choir response and interluding songs – elements that cannot be captured with the same results in written transcriptions, but which form a central part of an nthano performance (see appendix 1).

Throughout my studies, apart from Chikhwaza’s private evening household sessions with visiting neighbours described above, I also experienced nthano elements in community celebratory performances, in class room teaching, among children playing. In fact, the canonical ‘fire-side’ setting, where the face of an aunt or uncle in the glimmering light of dancing flames tells nthano for visiting nephews and nieces (Steve Chimombo, personal communication), was in the particular area of my study a practical impossibility as there was no firewood for extensive burning due to deforestation. However, though the situations differed from those described in text-book cases, the stories were indeed still being told. Lastly, one aspect of ‘preserving the tradition’ brought to my attention by Steve Chimombo, namely that nthano performances have now become a ‘conscious’ act rather than a taken-for-granted or ‘habitual’ practice. This change in social conditions and individual preferences for telling stories the traditional way, said Chimombo, follows in the wake of urbanisation, but in the very rural areas of Chisitu I could trace a similar pattern. Mrs. Chikhwaza is in fact yet again an example of this, as she told me that the reason why she had chosen to keep alive the nthano tradition by turning off the radio to perform with her children and neighbours at night, was that
she had realised that this much treasured tradition of her grandparents was under pressure.

Including particularities such as personal life histories, preferences of taste, access through social networks, Primary School policy, and the of ‘fire-side’ storytelling even access to natural resources, the communicative ecology metaphor implies a methodology that encouraged me as a researcher not to take communicative patterns of nthano for granted, but to pursue multiple perspectives to achieve an in-depth understanding of the instances of traditional storytelling as part of a broad cultural system. This perspective is not a self-evident part of recording such stories for collections or textual analysis, for instance, or in conducting a media reception study of people’s use of radio programs, where focus often is on sense-making and interpreting media content (Schrøder et al 2003, ch. 3) and seldom on the broader social and communicative configuration of possible listening situations. The latter is, however, an insight central to media ethnography as it seeks “to understand how the mediatization of modern life has merged with the rest of the social and cultural context, with the reconfiguration of public and private spheres as a particular focus area.” (Tufte 2000, p. 31) By taking an action-oriented approach to conducting ethnographic research, this study seeks not only to understand, but also to interact with the mediatisation and reconfiguration of public life in Malawi.
Chapter 5
The ROAR Project

In cooperation with co-researcher Owen Stima Banda and members of the two village communities of Nkhuta and Tambala, I piloted the ROAR approach in Mulanje, Malawi, November 2011. This project is the core of the second phase of my research as well as of the analysis of ROAR-related empirical material performed later in this thesis. In the following sections, I begin with a brief explanation of the concepts behind the ROAR acronym. I then provide a general discussion of the relation between ROAR and Action Research. I then move on to outlining the ROAR project as it was conducted in Nkhuta and Tambala villages in Chisitu, Mulanje. Finally I provide a framework for the forthcoming analysis.

The ROAR Abbreviation

The ROAR concept is short form of Remediating Orature through Action Research. The term ‘orature’ is, as already indicated, used by scholars in the field of African oral literature and the verbal arts, and refers to a broad category of performative genres, including storytelling, theatre, singing, poems, and proverbs (Lwanda 2009). This study focuses on the orature subgenre of nthano, and zooms in on the interactive and creative processes involved in transposing nthano to media outside the contexts of traditional performance.

By ‘remediation’, I mean not only to what Ilana Gershon (2010) describes as how “people’s understandings and experiences of one medium are intertwined with those of other media.” (Gershon 2010, p. 393; Bolter & Grusin 1999) This way of conceptualising remediation in terms of ‘people’s understandings’, I suggest, relates closely to contemporary discussions of ‘mediatisation’ or ‘mediation’ focusing on the immersive role of mediated processes in shaping and reshaping social worlds (Livinstone 2009). It is, however, not in this particular meaning that I use the term. In my use, the remediation concept focuses more specifically on ‘texts’ as a hybrid and expanded term for communicative artefacts in general. When an instance of remediation occurs it refers to the translation processes in play when a recognizable communicative artefact moves between semantic and semiotic systems – for instance, the sign system of live and face-
to-face nthano performance to radio-mediated communication – preserving some traits of that genre, while inevitably also adding new ones (Gottlieb 2008). If such a manoeuvre happens to enter into wider discursive and sociocultural practices, the mediatisation concept becomes relevant. On a discursive and sociocultural level, ROAR seeks to move nthano folktales from the perceived traditional social function of delivering life-guiding principles to a political mechanism for articulating social critique. This, in turn, both relates to and redefines contemporary development discourse in Malawi.

An instance that explains well the text-oriented concept of ‘remediation’ in relation to nthano is that of a A Town Girl (Jeppesen 2010; YouTube link), a 4-minute short film which I produced with storyteller and girl’s initiation counsellor, Mrs. Tambala, who is also chief Tambala’s wife. The Town Girl adapts an nthano performance, both in form and content, to an audiovisual format. Mrs. Tambala acts as the narrator who tells a story about a girl coming from town to meet her parents and friends in the village. In fact, however, her voice-over consists of four different narratives that she improvised on this occasion. A second aspect of remediation is how the rhythmical nthano elements such as the choir-response, tilitonse! (we are together), and the first song in particular are supported by an underlying beat which I have constructed – in fact rooted in the Latin American claves tradition – with the original sounds of traditional farming equipment (a hoe, a sieve, and a mortar). In addition, the film features scenes shot in the town of Chitakale and a few lines of speech in diagetic sound, which definitely also breaks away from the original performance context. Lastly, another of my contributions is to make an open ending, which is quite unlike nthano endings where the narrator states his or hers morale or lesson in relation to the story. The Town Girl should be considered a by-product of my MA fieldwork, mainly motivated by my affection for audiovisual communication. Still, the process of making this film did play a part in my conception of the idea of actively intervening and contributing to the creative processes of remediating nthano.

This brings us to the second half of the ROAR abbreviation which designates the project as a process of ‘Action Research’. In this regard, ROAR moves beyond the conventional boundaries of academic research, and seeks to define its object of study, not only with reference to, but in cooperation with the people it studies. From this perspective, ROAR is an interventionist and action-oriented research approach positioned
within the CFSC paradigm and directed towards the normative ideal of generating
dialogic forms of democratic publicity. For those who might have questions on whether
this can qualify at all as academic research, however, I include my answer in the
following two sections.

What is Action Research? How does it Relate to ROAR?
Although Action Research (AR) intersects with many scholarly traditions, it should not
be confused with a social scientific method as such (Greenwood 2007). Rather, despite
internal differences in choice of methodology and study contexts, AR may be conceived
of as its own research tradition oriented around methods for collaboration and for
generating liberating action. One primary aim of AR is to produce practical knowledge
that interacts with change processes in localised contexts (a workplace, a town meeting, a
classroom) by designing, carrying out, and evaluating experiments with practitioners
(workers, town dwellers, pupils) to test and contest the enablers and constraints on, say,
democratic participation and co-determination in particular social contexts (cf. Fuglsang

ROAR draws inspiration from an established Action Research approach in media
and development known as Ethnographic Action Research (EAR). EAR researchers take
part in developing initiatives that center around particular socio-cultural and politicalcontexts, referred to by the authors as “communicative ecologies” (Tacchi et al. 2003;
Hearn et al. 2008: 31f). As indicated above, the communicative ecology metaphor
implies to look at communicative phenomena not in isolation, but in relation to its social,
cultural, political, and technological contexts. The trick, then, is to use this knowledge in
creating new initiatives that answer existing communicative needs. In devising and
implementing the ROAR project for the two Mulanje village sites in November 2011, as
elaborated on below, I drew on my experiences from doing ethnographic research with
co-researcher Owen in the same two locations in 2010. In this way, ROAR can be seen as
an action-oriented phase in continuation of an ethnographic phase of research, following
the ‘AR cycle’ (Tacchi et al. 2009a, p. 8) moving from observing to reflecting, planning
and carrying out action, and then back to observing. This circular to spiralling process
underlines the open-ended and potentially unending nature of AR processes and
programs.
In general terms, AR is informed by same core values as CFSC research, namely an ethos of maintaining dialogical interaction, participation, and self-empowerment. For instance, Freire’s formulation that authentic education should be carried out by ‘A’ with, and not for or about ‘B’ (1970, p. 82) is echoed by communication scholar Louise Phillips, who infers that, on the whole, a common denominator for AR approaches is “a research design based on participation, whereby research is carried out with practitioners rather than just research on or for.” (2011, p. 45, original emphasis) By doing so, action researchers interpret ‘participation’ as the practice of creating collaborative partnerships between researcher and researched, which again resonates with Freire’s conception of mutuality as a prerequisite for productive dialogue. Active cooperation and involvement with research participants puts the action researcher in a position to facilitate the production and articulation of local or context-specific forms of social knowledge. In principle, this can be done to a degree of participation where the distinction between researcher and researched dissolve, and where it is as much the participants as the researcher who gets to define appropriate research questions or the trajectory of the research process. In this case, participants or stakeholder-practioners would have gained status as ‘co-researchers’ (Huang 2010, p. 104). Otherwise, to live up to validity claims grounded in participation and partnership, action researchers should at least allow the “objects to object” (Bruno Latour cited in Kvale 2006, p. 489), meaning that research participants or stakeholders should to any extend possible be granted the possibility to question the aim, design, and outcome of the research (Huang 2010). I will return to this issue in the forthcoming analysis.

Throughout my field studies in Malawi, and especially the ROAR project, I have aimed to include co-researcher Owen in preparing, implementing, and evaluating the research. We have spend many hours talking about the project, he was my sparring partner in developing reference sheets for interviews and other research activities, he often acted as the main interviewer or facilitator while I took a step back and intervened only to get a quick brief or elaborate on particularities, and we had long conversations about what to make of the other research participants’ statements and actions. As a Mulanje local, moreover, Owen also acted as a key informant and my guide to matters of culture, appropriate behaviour, and politics. Lastly, he has made a considerable effort transcribing everything after my return to Denmark. That being said, I have not by any
means included him in the last stages of writing up this thesis, nor should I refrain from noting the fact that I paid him a salary, and therefore also had a ‘final say’ on making decisions that ultimately took the project to its current stage. It is in this way, in the particular case of conducting ROAR with Owen, that I interpret the co-researcher/researcher distinction of Action Research.

Creating New Social Knowledge, Moving Beyond ‘Media Access’
From an academic viewpoint, the ideals of democratising relationships and radically orienting research aims towards ongoing practice has led AR, as a leading figure in the field Hillary Bradbury Huang comments, to be ”recognised as an important way of responding to the critique that conventional social science offers little of value to the people it studies.” (2010, s. 95) In line with this statement, the ROAR project explores and challenges the common notion in DevCom that centres on ICTs as a major factor in empowering marginalised and subaltern groups, by UNESCO popularly (but questionably) put as ‘putting ICTs in the hands of the poor’(Tacchi et al. 2003, ch. 1).

This is a questionable phrasing, in my view, because it renders ‘the poor’ a non-possessive and passive recipient group, and also because it implies that the issue of democratising media is a matter only of redistributing media access (for a similar critique see Rodriguez 2001, p. 5f). By extension, the phrase could be taken to attribute some ‘magical power’ to media technologies as problem-solving in and by themselves, as dei ex machina, which unfortunately draws attention away from people’s possible ways of using such media technologies.

While physical access to technological equipment is necessary, my ROAR project pulls in a different direction driven by the idea of ‘participatory content-creation’. Coined by Jo Tacchi with Jerry Watkins and Kosala Keerthirathne (Tacchi et al. 2009b), the participatory content-creation concept focuses on the ways in which ‘the poor’ may use ICTs for self-empowerment. As a form of “creative engagement” with ICTs, Tacchi explains elsewhere, participatory content-creation “involves the ability of people to access technologies and be creative with them in ways that enable their voices to be heard.” (2008, p. 12) In my case of ROAR in Chisitu, the technological dimension is a hand recorder and a fictive, but hopefully forthcoming, community radio station in Mulanje (see below). The project does go beyond addressing access to tools for
enhancing democratic communication: When using the hand recorder in the ROAR context, the problems dealt with should be problems raised by the participants themselves, and by initiating a dialogue on these problems in the language of this particular cultural group, the participants themselves, as well as the audience members that can relate to what is being communicated, will hopefully enter a consciousness-raising process of thought and action (Young 1997a; Freire 1970). In this way, participatory content-creation in ROAR relies not only on supplying program participants with access, but works with improving or cultivating human technical, social, cultural and political capabilities. This is an educational point about democratisation that goes beyond merely distributing means of production and aims to actively engaging people in dialogue and deliberation.

However, despite having some shared goals and keeping a high level of participation, it should not be inferred that “the aims of the academic researchers and the practitioner-partners are identical.” (Phillips 2011, p. 46) The fact that these interests most likely differ is the primary reason for why action researchers are in need of reflexivity. This means first of all to reflect upon his or her subjective positioning in the field of research and evaluate, or as stated in the Manifesto on Transformation of Knowledge Creation, “the extent to which the self is acknowledged as an instrument of change among change agents and our partner stakeholders.” (quoted in Huang 2010, p. 98) To support validity claims in AR, a reflexive and transparent discussion of how relations of power potentially blind or bias the researcher is regarded and absolute must, just as it is an integrate part, as I will explain later, of knowledge production itself.

It should be clear from the above section that AR as well as the ROAR project aims at “generating knowledge that is both valid and vital to the well-being of individuals, communities and for the promotion of larger-scale democratic social change.” (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003, p. 11) This is further grounded in the motivations for action-orientation, including the need for improving communicative infrastructure by establishing and promoting participatory radio, or in Rodriguez’ terms, a citizens’ media in the shape of a community radio station in Mulanje.
Motivation for Action-Oriention: A ‘Participatory Radio’ for Mulanje

Among Malawi’s 28 districts and more than 16 million inhabitants, only a handful community radio stations are broadcasting in the districts of Lilongwe, Mchinji, Monkeybay, Mzimba, and Nkothakota (MACRA 2012). This is indeed a different scenario compared to, for instance, the bordering Mozambique with 23 million inhabitants and no less than 57 broadcasting community radio stations and community multimedia centres (Jallo 2007). Despite Malawi’s official political support, as laid out in the Malawi Communications Act (MACRA 1998), I know of several station proposals that are currently being processed by MACRA, but without insinuating that this delay is politically motivated (although that might well be true) it seems at least that the relevant bureaucracy has trouble getting up in pace. Moreover, the stations that have managed to get officially approved might still go through some hard times.2

In fact, however, Mulanje has experienced the rise and fall of one broadcasting station. The young boy Kondes from the Bondo area bordering Mozambique once build his own radio transmitter out of scrap parts, using a mobile phone microphone, a small cassette player, bendable wires, a car battery, an old radio signal converter, and a television antenna attached to a tall bamboo stick. Kondes’ station broadcasted music, live shows, and funeral messages, and within his area it remained hugely popular until MACRA shut it down for its lack of legal licence, it was said. Due to public pressure and newspaper campaigns, the boy was pardoned and sent to school instead of prison. Surprisingly, when I had an informal conversation with the Mulanje DIO (1 December 2011), I learned that the communities in Bondo are still setting up illegal transmitters to communicate within the community, for instance when calling for a community meeting. The DIO did not see this as causing any harm, but rather as an expression of the need for disceiving information from the centre to the information-lacking poor.

(Appendix 3, p. 133; Jeppesen 2012, p. 50f) When commenting the matter, however, it was clear that he took the governments perspective, and focused on the need for disseminating information’ from the centre to the information-lacking poor, instead of

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2 In December 2011, I paid Mzimba Community Radio in Northern Mzuzu District a visit. For an elaborate account of what I learned there about the politics of community radio broadcasting in Malawi, please refer to appendix 4.
reversing that dynamics so that the poor use the radio to articulate their need and put pressure on politician to live up to their promises. These two conceptions might be two sides of the same coin, but could nonetheless fuel a tension between diverging interests if a community radio was in fact established.

While Kondes’ radio station epitomises the need for improving the communicative infrastructure in Mulanje, the same theme surfaced early in my research while conducting fieldwork in Nkhuta in 2010 where several participants demonstrated to have strong opinions on the matter. I took note in particular of an elderly man, Mr. Makwamba, stressing the importance of getting local news, especially obituary messages from the nearby villages, which from social cohesion perspective is an important event not only to the next of kin, but to every individual within the community, even across village borders. I later learned that the alternative was to send message boys carrying handwritten notes, as mobile messaging would be too expensive for a farmer’s pocket, both in terms of buying airtime and getting the phone recharged, and also unreliable due to frequent network failures (Jeppesen 2012; appendix 3, p. 140). Although the people I spoke to about community broadcasting would not know what in fact that was – and here the story about Kondes would help as an example they knew and could relate to – they would immediately lighten up in a smile thinking of the prospects of having content locally produced for the many battery-driven radio received dotting the area.

Whereas the Chisitu area, for instance, only receives a handful of Malawi’s 20 stations with a national licence (MACRA 2012), I was furthermore confirmed throughout my research in the claim that radio is by far the strongest medium in a country like Malawi (cf. Manyozo 2012; Jallov 2007). Especially in the rural areas radio is the most accessible media outlet (compared to television, print, mobile phone services, and Internet), and with de-monopolisation of the media market radio is also the place to go for critical journalism – which when I was in Malawi was championed by commercial national broadcaster Radio Zodiak – a position that was until recently upheld by print media and tabloid newspapers now moving in the opposite direction (that is, sensationalist, scandalous, or party affiliated news coverage). Lastly, the need for improving communicative infrastructure in Mulanje was further consolidated in the research that I did for ADRA Malawi in the area of Nkhandu (appendix 3, p. 132ff; Jeppesen 2012, p. 42-51), reaching the conclusion that a community radio station would
be a much appreciated and well-supported means to solve that need, provided that the key listenership – rural community members – are able to participate in defining the form, content, and purpose of such a station.

The need for a community radio station as clearly articulated by people living in the Mulanje district is a key motivation for this study, and especially for conducting the ROAR program as an experiment on how to involve the audience in producing content in an inclusive, culture-centred, and sustainable fashion. The ideal of running a radio station ‘for and by the community’ is, however, an arduous ethos to live up to in practice, both when it comes to get funding, equipment, and proper management in place, and to reach and involve distant communities living, say, more than one day’s walking or biking distance away from the station. One way to deal with this problem is to mobilise a local network and secure local community ownership and support. This relates to an approach to community broadcasting that communication scholar Linje Manyozo refers to as “participatory radio” (2012, p. 4). Promoted by international NGOs such as AMARC, UNESCO, and Panos, participatory radio emphasises the need for ownership not only in terms of funding and managing the station, but also in producing content with the community members that such radio station is supposed to serve. It is with reference to this particular kind of bottom-up oriented community broadcasting that I have developed the ROAR program.

**ROAR Inspirations: Finding a Voice, Story Workshop, and ADRA Malawi**

The idea is to run ROAR without external facilitation, in CFSC jargon the so-called ‘catalyst’ of change, which brings me to describing one further asset of this project’s subscription to EAR: In relation the UNESCO-funded *Finding a Voice* project on establishing participatory media in India and elsewhere (www.findingavoice.org), Jo Tacchi, Greg Hearn and others (Tacchi et al. 2003; 2009a) argue to integrate research “as a form of growing understanding and rich descriptions of local contexts and issues into the project’s continuous cycle of planning and acting” (2009a, p. 9) By conceptualising knowledge production as part of a local “research culture” (ibid.), the authors move against the common conception of ‘research’ as an externally driven and time-limited process that seeks to evaluate upon indicators defined from an external position. Ideally, in developing a research culture, the researcher is or becomes part of the communicative
ecology while keeping a critical eye for relevant stories, collecting relevant feedback, and other possibilities for documenting and exposing through media technologies relevant perspectives in his or her sociocultural and political environment. While external researchers, even those who aim to conduct an ethnographic study, seldom remain in the same place long enough to have any durable impact on the people they study, the case is reversed if we consider members of the same cultural group as capable researchers engaged in a critical and reflective activities related to the cultural practices of themselves and their community fellows. This idea will re-emerge in the analysis and discussion in chapter 8.

Lastly, I should mention that my approach with ROAR is inspired by the work of two Malawian NGOs, Storytelling Workshop and ADRA Malawi, who in their own different ways excel in facilitating processes of content-creation with their program beneficiaries, and also gain considerable results. Story Workshop produces Edutainment programming for national media (amongst others Zimachitika), just as they base their field expertise in performative learning festivals with local film-making and theatre for development. The staff members of ADRA Malawi have been trained in the so-called REFLECT approach, inspired by Freirean pedagogy (Archer & Cuttingham 1996), to carry out ‘Community Dialogue Sessions’ to raise and deliberate issues locally, which the media production team at ADRA Headquarters in Blantyre eventually takes up on their national debate and edutainment platforms (the panel debate program Zatonse and the television soap Tikuferanji?). However, what makes the ROAR approach proposed here original, to my knowledge, is the particular focus on producing media in direct cooperation with local storytellers who are also ordinary village community members, and to do so in a way that aims at obtaining self-sustainability. The ambition of ROAR is to be an independent way of creating content in a participatory fashion that, with time, could be handled by the local participants themselves.

**Research Design: Three Components of ROAR**
The ROAR projects piloted in Nkhuta and Tambala consisted each of three distinct components: In each village site of Nkhuta and Tambala, Owen and I arranged (1) a one-day Community Dialogue Session followed by (2) a two-day Storytelling Workshop supplemented with (3) Media Audience Interviews. The research builds onto the in-depth
understanding of the local social, cultural, and political environment based on my 2010-research, and it pulls in many participatory elements – from identifying an issue and addressing it by producing content for a community radio, to including audience responses and estimations of the possible cultural, social, and political impact of the programs. In this way, the ROAR project works with processes of politicising traditional storytelling within the theoretical framework of CFSC.

Among these three components, the Storytelling Workshops comprise the core of a ROAR project. The Storytelling Workshops invite local storytellers to use their communicative skills and articulate issues of collective concern, in order to finally record a ‘social change nthano’ in a radio friendly format. While I did not actively choose women as my target group in Chisitu, I did know from my ethnographic research that most storytellers in Chisitu were female. This may be because it is women who do most of the work related to bringing up children, and that this includes evening storytelling. Also, as Lhomwe culture is matrilineal and matrilocal, the gendered orientation of storytelling relates to the fact, I suggest, that women tend to stay in their parents’ area, and their preference for telling stories is part of constructing a link across generations which is more visible to the female side than to the male. Indeed, this does not mean that there are no male storytellers or that every woman is a storyteller. In the context of the Storytelling Workshops, however, the gendered aspects of the nthano tradition meant that the core participants consisted of women, while the few men who participated would often take dominant roles in facilitating the process. Of course, the fact that Owen and myself were males played part in defining our in positioning too, although our roles as a visiting researchers and facilitators were contributing factors to this power equation as well. I will return to this point in the analysis performed in next chapter.

Before the storytellers entered the Workshop process, Owen and I had invited the wider Nkhuta and Tambala communities for a Community Dialogue Session at their respective village centres. We asked them collectively raise, discuss, and prioritise issues for their respective storytelling groups. This initial or incubating phase ROAR is inspired by an approach to implementing development programs known as PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal), which emphasises respect for local knowledge and the importance cooperating with research participants (Archer & Cuttingham 1996). Roughly, then, the Community Dialogue Sessions are oriented towards problem-posing whereas the STWs
relate to problem-solving. Problem-posing and problem-solving are understood as the
circular process of identifying, reflecting, deliberating, to finally act upon issues of
concern within a particular community or polity. In the case of ROAR, the ‘acting upon’
part is the creative work related to recording storytelling segments on the issues raised in
the Community Dialogue Sessions.

Lastly, during and after the Workshops Owen and I did a series of semi-structured,
qualitative Media Audience Interviews with, among others, neighbouring community
members, local political leaders and media representatives. The aim of these interviews
was to replay and discuss the Workshop drafts or final recordings, both to collect
diversified readings and responses on the ROAR products and to uncover and challenge
potentially problematic aspects of the social change nthano that was under the process of
being created.

Each round of ROAR took three to four days of full-time work, disregarding the
time spent on further preparations and entering the field. The ROAR Workshop in
Nkhuta resulted in one radio segment, whereas the Tambala participants managed to
record one story during the first Workshop there, and another one by improvising a
second Workshop on the last day of our stay. The material produced for empirical
analysis throughout the ROAR phase of fieldwork include video recordings of two
Community Dialogue Sessions, audio and video recordings of three Storytelling
Workshops, audio recordings of fourteen Media Audience Interviews as well as my
personal field notes (transcriptions are found in appendix 11; field notes from 2010 and
2011 in appendix 7 and 8). Owen has followed my instructions to the letter and produced
elaborate time coded transcriptions of the recordings (about 26 hours of audio and video),
which in turn was converted to subtitles for video parts. In chapter 8, as required by the
analysis, I will elaborate more on relevant issues related to conducting Community
Dialogue Sessions, Storytelling Workshops and Media Audience Interviews in Nkhuta
and Tambala.

**Analytical Approach: Processes and Products of ROAR**

The main focus of my analysis is on how diverging perspectives to politics and tradition
are shared, contested, and revamped in the Storytelling Workshops ROAR. Through the
discursive negotiations among storytellers and the remediation and transformation of
traditional storytelling, my aim with conducting the Workshops was to produce knowledge on whether and how this form of communication may or may not be relevant for addressing issues of local concern in a way that might lead to positive social change. This is achieved by actively applying themes to the otherwise timeless stories that relate to contemporary social and political issues, just as it related to other culture-oriented communication initiatives, such as those produced by the local edutainment or CFSC-driven NGO. An interesting tension emerges here, namely that nthano traditionally speaking already is associated with making ‘social change’, understood as directing its listeners towards more social and respectful ways of living together. Selecting this angle of analytical approach relates to the second research question of whether and how traditional nthano constitute a resource for dialogic democracy-driven CFSC interventions. In the context of my analysis this ‘how’ refers to balancing aesthetics and creativity with regards to the existing ‘traditional’ nthano practices and the ‘innovative’ processes and outcomes of the ROAR project, and to evaluating the potential political impact of articulating voices by means of nthano. Those are two ways, at least, in which this study explores the nthano as a ‘resource’ for democratic communication. Finally, I will discuss and seek to assess the participants’ capabilities in appropriately conducting critical communicative practices themselves, that is, in a way would fit into a dialogue-driven citizens’ media framework.

In this last discussion, I argue that for ROAR to become a self-sustainable media initiative, it is required first of all that participants have access to recording equipment and to an appropriate technological communicative infrastructure for broadcasting, such as a community radio station. Second, a major challenge reside in the fact that participants in such bottom-up facilitated content-creation practices must exercise a certain measure of self-censorship or run self-editorial processes, which also became evident in the context of ROAR. This especially proved necessary for addressing complicated and delicate political issues, and applied especially for those who were less educated and had less experience and rhetorical know-how in approaching political authorities. In this discussion, I conclude that the folk-tale tradition in fact helped the interlocutors surmount this barrier.

The fact that I conduct critically informed empirical analysis of my own CFSC practice is a somewhat circular move. This may certainly seem problematic with regards
to me evaluating ROAR by using the same theoretical working concepts, namely those related to dialogic democracy, upon which I have build the very same project. The first step in dealing with this dilemma is to apply a good pinch of methodological self-reflection. Second, I should once more point to the fact that I within dialogic democracy theory understand normativity as teleological, that is, driven towards a specific set of ideals and goals (e.g. social objectivity, understanding across difference, and self-empowerment), and also that democracy is seen as a matter of degree. This stands in contrast to evaluating normative questions in definitive either-or terms. In the context of my analysis and discussion, to once more enter into Frank Cunningham’s pragmatist position (cf. ch. 2), I therefore focus on the processes and products of ROAR to “ask how democratic (or undemocratic) they are, how democratic they might (or ought to) be,” and how dialogic qualities and thereby “democracy within them can be enhanced” (cf. Cunningham 2002, p. 142).

In the interest of confining myself to the space available for this thesis, and since my analysis centres on the Storytelling Workshops and the ‘social change folktales’ that came out of them, I will have to leave aside many methodological questions and discussions in this thesis. This includes not least those related to my first phase of ethnographic fieldwork, but also those concerning my methods of recording and processing the diverse forms of empirical material. On the other hand, as this is a piece of Action Research, my analysis does have a concern with positioning among the research participants, especially the extent to which researcher-researched relationships were established between the research team, Owen and myself, and the remaining participants. This closely relates to reflecting and producing knowledge about ROAR as an ‘experiment’ or ‘method’ for improving mediated democratic communication. Is it not a measure to safeguard the repeatability of ROAR as an experiment; rather, the point is to create knowledge of and point to indicators that certainly will contribute to render future ROAR projects different from the ones analysed here. In this way, passages that in other academic contexts would count as ‘method’ or ‘field positioning’ become one of my central points of interest in the production of empirical knowledge.
A Literary Mode of Representing Empirical Material

Before moving on to the final analysis, I need to briefly discuss my way of textually representing Owen’s transcriptions in ‘literary style’. With this approach, I take the liberty of contextualising transcribed passages as I find it necessary, to insert references to and elaborate on the gestures and articulation of the speakers, to use a first person narrator (when I describe myself in the ROAR context), and to jump to and explain passages from a different section of my raw material indicated by shift in tense.

While passages cropped more or less directly from the transcript with the authors notes in sharp brackets may provide some methodological transparency at best, at its worst I see it as a rhetorical strategy for indicating that the passage in question is somehow ‘objectively representing what is out there’. In doing so, whether purposefully or not, the author may end up misleading his or her reader, and conceal the fact that the same transcription passage has been selected as a consequence of a conscious interpretative and communicative process, presumably involving many layers methodological choices as well as other analytical and strategic considerations. I should state here that this last observation of course counts for my selection of passages and subsequent analysis to. Second, I chose the literary style of representation because it, from a written genre perspective, increases the extent to which the text might involve the reader. This argument relies on the literarily developed capacity of written text to emulate subjective and multi-sensory experience (in my case the experience of being a ROAR participant researcher) in combination with a narrative level, that is, my specific and general observations a the narrator of that passage. In other words, my aim in supplying literarily inspired narration is to ‘put the reader in my shoes’. For better or for worse, and supported by my critical analysis of the non-literary sections, I see this textual strategy as pertaining a potential opening for an increased methodological transparency: To put the you, my reader, in my shoes enables you to make an imaginative shift, to look upon and evaluate the subjective positioning of myself as well as other participants in the ROAR process. There should be no mistake, if not otherwise commented in the specific case, that the quotes presented in literary style refer directly to transcription lines as indicated in each passage.
Chapter 7

ROAR as a Cultural Production Model for Citizens’ Media

Dialogic democracy requires reworking power relations to the advantage of the otherwise poor and marginalised, so that their perspectives can enter a progressive democratic dialogue guided towards social justice (see ch. 2). This normative argument is in favour of democratising media production practices, and as a form participatory content-creation and creative engagement with ICTs, this is also the aim of the ROAR project. To recapitulate, participatory content-creation is a voice-enabling and community-involving activity which is oriented towards politics in the broader sense as a “mechanism to express oneself and participate in social and public spheres.” (Tacchi et al. 2009b, p. 575)

But how are these democratic values negotiated and enacted in relation to ROAR in practice? What are the merits and misgivings of the creative processes and products of ROAR? And how may they be perceived in wider communicative contexts? These are some of the complexities that I discuss in this chapter.

Community Dialogue Sessions: Deliberative Process and Collective Priorities

In November 2011, when Owen and I set up camp, this time in Tambala village, the ROAR project proceeded according to a tight schedule. Drawing on our connections and acquaintances from doing ethnographic research in Chisitu in 2010, and with the help of chief Nkhuta and Tambala, we invited everyone interested to join us for a Community Dialogue Session in their respective villages. As we did experience some chief bias with regards to who would be invited for such an event, especially in Nkutha, we sought also to invite participants through other channels, primarily by making visits to as many household clusters as we could manage – our first attempt at surmounting the barriers to more socially differentiated and thereby from a dialogic perspective more interesting discussions. Among the invited participants were also the active storytellers identified in the 2010 ethnographic research phase. After briefing the group on the general aim of the ROAR approach – the creation of a ‘social change nthano’ radio program – Owen and I continued in the role of facilitators and asked the participants to identify, discuss, and
prioritise issues that affected them as a community. The goal of the prioritised list of issues was not as much the list itself as the deliberative process of making it.

Especially in the Nkhuta Community Dialogue Session, the discussion was hard to get on track. Part of this was undoubtedly because Owen and I were novices in the field of community dialogue facilitation, and also due to the time consuming process of translating back and forth as it was I who asked the questions. In this question-response form of translated conversation, however, the group did identify a range problems they faced as a community, including lack of local schools, maize mills, boreholes, and problems relating to famine, including lack of land, land infertility, and corruption issues. Especially the latter was on the everybody’s mind during my stay in Malawi, including that of the Tambala participants. From this point I took on the role of being a background moderator, filming from the hip, taking notes, and framing thematic questions for Owen’s work as he moved along with the Dialogue Session participants to elaborate, distinguish, connect, and look for root causes of these collective issues. However, facilitating such critical dialogue was no easy task, as evidenced by the following reconstruction from the Nkhuta session (italics indicate transcript translated directly from Chichewa; for the remainder of this chapter, page numbers with no further explanation refer directly to transcriptions in appendix 11):

“And if we are to talk about lack of food,” Owen says, “you will agree that most times when there is lack of food, there are some deceases coming as well, deceases related to ...?” The responding choir to Owen’s question, “Lack of food!”, is prompt and in unison.

“Then what are the issues that relate to health and our way of life?” Owen’s question hits a wall of silence. The seconds enlarge, eight of them. Owen rephrases. A smile appears on the face of an elderly woman, lifting her palms upwards in a resigned gesture. “We don't know how we can say this, but maybe you can tell us what to say?” Owen chuckles. “If I do that, I would not be doing my job properly. I need to hear it from you!”

p. 118
This elderly woman’s comment shows that both she and, presumably, the rest of the group did not expect to be asked to elaborate or reflect upon such open-ended questions. While the reason for this might be that this is not the usual type of question that outside visitors ask, it is also clear that the question departs from the flow of choir-response discourse. In this mode of communication, which is a method frequently used in facilitating other so-called dialogues with communities throughout Malawi, even those facilitated by ADRA Malawi allegedly based on the REFLECT approach (Archer & Cottingham 1996), the group univocally agrees or disagrees in accordance with the orator. Although one may find that choir-response interaction has a quality of bringing the group together, as if the group were just one body, it also seems that this kind of discourse carries a real possibility of suppressing any desire to seek and ask critical questions. The choir-response genre can be seen as a backdoor to what Freire calls a “banking” concept of education (Freire 1970); that is, to deposit knowledge in pupils by rote learning, in contrast to engaging in a dialogic process of voicing, listening and learning. If Owen were to keep using the banking method, he might have made a second statement on health, leading to a lesson to be repeated in unison by the group.

Interestingly, in the given situation, some groups did overcome this speech genre confusion – that is, choir-response monologue versus reflective dialogue – as shown by the following passage:

“It’s not a matter of someone telling you how,” a man stresses. “Just say what you go through in your life –” He is interrupted by woman looking straight at Owen:

“The thing is, there is not enough food in your body, and the next thing is that you can become sick and your stomach begins to swell because there is no food in the body.” Her hands and arms move forcefully from her chest and out: “You go to the hospital, and they tell you to go home and eat vegetables. But there are not enough of those here. If we eat our vegetables on a daily basis, they are gone within a few weeks.”

A single clap follows, the woman’s hands drop to the ground next to where she sits.
The woman’s account clearly highlights the urgency of the food situation that subsequently prompted the participants in this session to prioritise the issue of getting food on the table. It was clear that this issue, quite understandably, overshadowed other health concerns, such as mitigating the HIV/AIDS pandemic or getting access to basic health supplies, although we did discuss these at other points.

To suffer from malnutrition and not being able to exit the vicious circle, in spite of reaching and getting advice from the hospital, is an experience shared by most people in Nkhuta village. Because of this homogenous composition with respect to this particular issue the theme did not instantiate a dialogic moment, which is more likely to happen when different speakers represent different social positions (see below). As an alternative to asking open questions, Owen and I sought to amplify the articulation of different social positions (for instance, haves versus have-nots, young versus elderly people, men versus women, leaders versus ordinary community members, people living with HIV/AIDS, etc.) either by inviting people representing such perspectives to speak up, or if those people were not present or unwilling to contribute, to try and put these perspectives into words ourselves. The intended outcome of the sessions was that the Tambala and Nkhuta gatherings each arrived at a consensus on the relative importance of a range of issues (the prioritised list), and that they at the same time went through a process of articulating perspectives particular to their social positions, either though argumentation or by recounting personal experiences as the woman from Nkhuta did.

**The Dialogic Potential of Community Dialogue Sessions**

In Tambala and Nkhuta, Owen and I made an effort to discursively position ourselves not as development workers but as student researchers. However, this perception created a tension or ambivalence in understanding means and ends related to the research process: We sought clarify that our interest in conducting the dialogues and workshops, was to understand the struggles of the community and enter a mutual learning process with those storytellers willing to do so. On the other hand, in the eyes of some if not all participants, it was often clear that we as researchers were somehow connected to ‘development’ (*chitukuko*). This is duly emphasised when T/A Chikumbu made it clear to her village chiefs that “disturb the work of Owen and Jonas is to disturb development
whether we liked it or not, we were seen as being an integrate part of development in general.

In the following excerpt from the Tambala Dialogue Session, I reproduce a situation to exemplify some of the complexities related to this discursive construction. From an Action Research perspective the passage is especially interesting because Mr. Hope Banda indirectly questions the legitimacy of the research team as part of overall *chitutuko*. He did so in the ‘any questions’ category concluding the meeting, and thus used this miscellaneous category to test especially my position and role as a research visitor in the Tambala context. Mr. Hope is a local theatre for development instructor at the local Mikoko Youth Club. He was a volunteer in ADRA’s LEFAM project, and even after ADRA chose to pull out of Chisitu (as LEFAM phased out in 2010), he still kept theatre and other CFSC-related activities going. As opposed to most of his fellow community members, he understands English on a somewhat advanced level, although his spoken English is less proficient. I should make it clear once more that I, for the sake of methodological transparency, have made no changes to my original expressions in the following passage, although the literary style may, to some, signal otherwise.

“In the future,” Hope lifts his left hand in a delicate gesture, “what kind of benefit are we going to get from your research?”

I am somewhat prepared for his question, or at least I am able to distinguish the leading terms in Chichewa. Hope confirms my understanding, and I begin responding: “I think the benefit is right here, things are happening in this group, and you are discussing things in a new way, it seems.” After a brief hesitation, I continue with a reference to the upcoming Storytelling Workshop in Tambala: “I'm writing this report, and other people will learn about how you dealt with the issue, and since there is going to be a storytelling group tomorrow, I might have a chance to distribute this material to people who are able to broadcast as well.” I refer here to what I later told the group, namely that I will use my network in Blantyre to broadcast the recordings, if possible. “This is all hypothetical, but there are possibilities for those kinds of benefits,” I conclude, and go on: “As such, my benefit is that I learn about the culture, and I think this is a very nice example for me to use in this process. Thank you for bringing it up, by the way!” After listing these reflections I turn to ask Owen to translate.
“No, that's okay,” Hope interrupts in English and continues: “We have talked about the lack of buildings and classrooms for the nearby school. Is there any possibility that you can get some people who can come and help us with this issue?”

Hope’s question, as immediately translated by Owen, refers to the prior discussion, where the Tambala participants articulated their concerns with the corruption problem, the need for repairing a nearby bridge and establishing a local health centre, as well as the construction of additional class rooms and teachers’ houses at nearby Mikoko School. Time passed quickly, however, particularly because of an intense last discussion also raised by Hope and his fellow Youth Club leader and chief-to-be, Mrs Chitseko. They accused the traditional initiation ceremonies for accepting children too early, and that this resulted in improper, promiscuous and ill-informed sexual behaviour among children and young people in general. The discussion evolved vividly due to presence of initiation counsellors, who said first of all that the two initiation rites into adolescence and marriages, respectively, for some reason had become mixed. In turn, they blamed the parents putting pressure on the chief, who officially and on tariff provides the initiation permit. In addition, there was also some youths who told stories confirming the underlying problem of the accusation: They had felt out of place during their initiation, not ready for advice on how to live as an adult. Eventually, the discussion arrived at a consensus around the need for taking the issue seriously, and that a solution had to be found. Darkness began to fall, however, and the participants had to leave for their homes, so we did not get to prioritise the suggested issues properly. Instead, we agreed to do it first thing the following day at the Workshop. After receiving Owen’s translation of Hope’s question on the Mikoko school problem, I respond disarmingly while presenting my book of fieldnotes:

“I’m not an NGO, so there are limits to what I can do, as me. I’m conscious about reporting these issues to people, and I took note of them. But it just seems that this initiation issue is very much worth taking up in a storytelling setting, but, erm,” I pause for a moment: “As I said earlier, I am working together with ADRA and I am going to report on how this meeting went, and which issues were brought up. I guess they are the most powerful actor in doing something about that, if we look apart from the DC and other relevant stakeholders. So, there is a chance that it can be brought up. Otherwise I would recommend that you mobilise around this issue and try to come up with a strategy for how to communicate it. It can be
through me, but I cannot take all responsibility, because, “I stretch out one arm to
shrug: “I am just me!”
“Okay, thank you,” Hope replies and laughs with a friend, repeating parts of

As indicated above, this incident with Hope indirectly questioning my position as and the
legitimacy of ROAR is an example of the negotiation and renegotiation of power
relations among the participants in the project context. In this particular situation, I
would like to call attention the researcher-researched complexity regarding Hope’s
questions as well as my way of responding to them. I will return to this matter below.
First, however, I will continue with elaborating on the middle passage of the above quote
contextualizing the conversation of Hope and myself. Specifically I want to address from
a dialogical perspective the interesting aspects of the initiation discussion.

It was clear both in the Tambala and Nkhuta Dialogue Sessions that whenever the
discussion arrived at ‘social issues’ – such as that of inadequate sex education due to,
according to some Tambala participants, early initiation – the possibilities for facilitating
proper, dissensus-driven dialogue increased. As opposed to a question-response
conversation dynamic, I understand proper dialogue as a dissensus-driven form of
discourse that enables transformative learning through the mutual exchange of particular
and socially contextualised perspectives (see ch. 3). First of all, the reason why the
initiation issue had this potential in the Tambala context was because it as a collective
and socioculturally defined problem may be considered more or less within the
participants’ agency reach and control, understood in terms of ‘self-determination’
(Young 1990) or ‘self-empowerment’ (Hamelink 1995). Second, the dialogical dynamic
emerged due the fact that there were different social perspectives represented and
articulated among the participants. To nurture this possibility for dialogue, Owen and I
sought to include silent perspectives within the group by asking directly those who
remained quiet to speak up, especially the youth participants. Lastly, the dialogic and
deliberative process was also driven by the fact that the problem of early initiation as
well as its possible solutions would affect or matter to the represented participants in
different ways:
First, to alter the existing conventions of the initiation rite would probably affect the social status of the initiation counsellors. This should be seen as part of them already feeling threatened in their position, especially as rights activists had recently targeted them aggressively to stop the initiation practices, with the result that the counsellor instead hid away their practices (Interview with ADRA Mulanje staff Twambilire Munthali, 22 Nov 2011; Appendix 8, p. 86-5). Second, altering the practice may also matter to the chief’s income due to the official permit, and thereby the chief him or herself. On these ground we had a suspicion toward chief Tambala’s interest, but he reassured us in a later interview that he would take this issue very seriously for the sake of the youths in his village. (This was an incident, were I had to frame my direct question several times before Owen finally dared translating it; as a local from Mulanje, he feared for his reputation in Tambala and beyond. The chief did not take any offence, however.)

Third, with respect to the initiation issue, there are the perspectives of the parents, although they were not well articulated in the Dialogue context. Surely, however, one argument for early initiation from the parents’ perspective lay between the lines, as Owen later told me: The reason why some parents put pressure on the chief to get the permit is because uninitiated children by convention cannot be buried on the consecrated burial grounds, and nor can the children visit their parents’ graves if the parents happen to die. From this perspective, the parents’ disposition to initiate early in fact seems quite reasonable, that is, if the burial ground convention is continued. On other hand, not to alter the ongoing practices of early initiation would mean that the sexual education of many children and young people would be spoiled: They do not learn anything from being initiated early, as one girl argued, or they might become sexually active in an age too young, as Mrs. Chitseko noted. Especially the latter would further endangering these children and young people, as they might enter into sexual relationships involving high risks, especially with HIV/Aids around.

Of course, if we are to take a social justice perspective on this matter, these immediate constraints exercised upon this latter social group, that is, children and adolescent being initiated too early, would indeed outweigh arguments for continuing early initiation – especially considering whether early initiations practices, directly or indirectly, lead these children and young people to lead more miserable lives as well as to the possibility of premature death. Still, as required by the ideal of social objectivity, the
perspectives of those otherwise affected in changing this tradition must also be taken into account. An appropriate solution is therefore not simply to eradicate initiation practices, as this could undermine central elements of the cultural identity of the concerned group, including those of the initiation counsellors. From a dialogic democracy perspective, then, what is called for is a social and culturally contextualised deliberation and process of change towards social justice, that is, in a direction to which all well-informed and affected deliberants would consent. In many Malawian church and mosque societies, the traditional initiation have been replaced by youth counselling (cf. DIHR 2006), but there is no institution, to my knowledge, that offers the kinds of counselling offered by traditional counsellors, who to some degree perform what is considered heathen religious practices (non-Christian or non-Islam). I suggest on this basis that ROAR could play part in such processes if the capacity building activities are set up and thoroughly implemented. I also suggest that the nthano genre is useful for the purpose of communicating social change on this particular subject, as this kind of storytelling carries an established link to the way local knowledge and life-guiding principles already is communicated for instance in the initiation context (Steve Chimombo, personal communication; cf. appendix 1). By asking storytellers and initiation counsellors to work on this issue, and communicate change on behalf of themselves as well as a broader collective of cultural group members, chances increase that a cultural development on the whole might take a more healthy direction. This point intriguingly tangles with the notion of nthano as an existential guide leading towards the good life.

**Researcher-Researched Complexities: ROAR Towards Self-Sustainability**

Returning to Hope’s questions and my answers in the above passage, I would like to point to articulation of different interests at stake in the context of the Tambala Dialogue Session as well as in the upcoming Storytelling Workshop. One way of interpreting Hope is that he questions whether I and my research is in fact a legitimate agent of change in the Tambala context, and therefore worthwhile. When I began answering Hope’s question about the Tambala community’s possible future benefits of ROAR, the group had just finished discussing the issue of early initiation. The “benefit” that I refer to first, is the idea that the Dialogue and thereby the ROAR process itself brought together different perspectives in a interesting and engaging manner. Moving on, while I
did expect from Hope’s first question that he would understand “benefits” in more concrete and action-oriented terms, I in turn respond by highlighting the rather abstract “benefit” from conducting research that contribute to knowledge production in elite circles of scholars and development practitioners. I then mention the – to the participants – more important perspective of getting the Workshop product into circulation in some Malawian media, which was a point that I had stressed earlier as well.³ Lastly, I touch upon my interest in “learning about their culture”, which is true but, again, probably not what Hope was looking for.

In his next question, Hope both amplifies and fortifies his discursive position by stressing the urgency of the Mikoko school problem, which we did not discuss as thoroughly as the initiation issue. I respond in a reserved manner, having a clear preference for the latter, which is, by the way, also related to my “interest in learning about the culture” – a parochial interest of mine that I frame as ruling out, to put it bluntly, “building schools.” In response to Hope, I repeat the part about sharing my immediate research finding with ADRA, but also suggest that the community should “mobilise around the issue”. In other words, I put myself in the expert role of the ‘visiting CFSC consultant’, and divert Hope’s direct question by positioning myself ambivalently between taking the roles of an action-oriented ‘member of the team’ and a half-distanced ‘visiting researcher’ with an agenda that might be different from that Hope and his fellow community members. I then rhetorically defuse the otherwise dominant positioning by pointing out that “I am just me” and having a laugh.

³ As promised, after finishing ROAR projects in Chisity, I took up the task of distributing the recordings. Unfortunately, I did not manage to get the social change folktales on the radio before departing for Denmark: My journalist contact at Radio Zodiak never returned to me, and my contact at MBC could not allow me to supervise the editorial process of the final program, which made me worry whether the stories would be framed in accordance with how the creators would want it. Instead, I sought to distribute them through other channels, first of all in my concluding round of Media Audience Interviews, were I went to the ADC and the DC, as well as to other Mulanje communities as part of my ADRA research. Second, I handed the recording over to the Mulanje staff of ADRA Malawi, who were eager to use it as a ‘catalyst’ – that is, an incubating method for generating change processes – in their field program activities.
The incident reveals power asymmetries in research-researched relations pointed to earlier by Louise Phillips (2011) and by Steinar Kvale. In his article “Dominance Through Interviews and Dialogues” (2006), Kvale hesitates in labelling research interviews as “caring” and “dialogical”. With the exception of a Platonic truth-seeking and egalitarian form for interviewing (that is one interpretation of Socratic dialogue), Kvale maintains that an interview conducted for research purposes is a “a one-way dialogue, an instrumental and indirect conversation.” (2006, p. 483f) This critique relates not only to research interviews but, in my view, to any situation in which interlocutors recognise themselves and the other as researcher or researched. While Kvale does not mean to undermine the legitimacy and validity of interview-based knowledge production in social sciences and the humanities, he maintains that this is indeed the case if researchers use the term “dialogue” to gloss over the reality of asymmetrical researcher-researched relationships.

The ‘any questions’ section of the Tambala Community Dialogue was one (admittedly minor) attempt to employ dialogical mechanisms in the ROAR context. On the face of it, the roles of interviewer-interviewee relationship indeed seem to be reversed – Hope asks the questions, I answer – and certainly he does exert some measure of “counter control” (ibid., p. 485), in his case a rhetorical testing of my positioning on how he and his community could best benefit from taking part in the ROAR project. On the other hand, my calculated arguments in response to Hope form a defensive line against his suggestion that the research might in fact not be in his and his community’s interest. In other words, I reject Hope’s attempt to bring the Mikoko issue to me, and instead point to the social issues related to early initiation as the most interesting subject for storytelling, which I, in that present situation, had the privilege to define in such absolute terms.

While it will almost inevitably be true that interests among researcher and researched diverge, the challenge in the ROAR context was to figure out how to handle these differences. Later, the participants ruled out my preference for the initiation issue by deeming the Mikoko school issue as more important and better suited for their needs. This decision was due to the priority procedures incorporated in the ROAR project, preferably both at the end of each Dialogue Session and at the beginning of the subsequent Storytelling Workshop. As a way of deflating the potentially hegemonic
asymmetries of the researcher-researched power relationship sustained in the ROAR context, this systematic approach to deliberation allowed the Dialogue participants and Workshop storytellers to decide (ultimately by vote, although that never happened) which issue they would prefer to take up. While this form of consensus to some (and in this case to me) may compromise parochial interest, it was a consensus that may reasonably be justified as collective. One indicator of this is the reversed reading of the group discourse dynamic criticised above, namely that the deliberative process in Tambala was concluded in agreement by a unison choir of hum and nods when Owen asked if the group would prioritize the school issue highest (STW1a, line 50). Hope also argued his case at the venue, stating to the gathering that “lots of people will listen to the story and see if they can help” (line 22), just as Mrs. Chisteko contended that “people can manage to carry their children to the hospital, while its difficult for a young child to cross the river which is flooding”, which should be seen in the context of prioritising the education of vulnerable school children above the need for a local health centre, which was the Storytelling Workshop participants’ second priority. While of course the risk of group pressure is present, I am confident that these mechanisms incorporated in the Dialogue Sessions as well as in the Storytelling Workshops helped make the decision-making process a collective affair that through argumentation and choir-response feedback paved the way for creative forms of consensus to emerge. Hope should not least be commended for his communicative-strategic overview when he argued for focusing on the school issue by making reference to the possibilities of using radio to mobilise well-wishers beyond Tambala to help. His capacity and constructive cooperation with the Tambala chief family (including Mrs. Chitseko) converge to running local editorial processes much needed if a project on participatory content-creation for community media, like ROAR, is to become a sustainable affair in Chisitu.

A Creative and Artistic Process of Acting Upon Collective Issues

The Storytelling Workshops in Nkhuta and Tambala functioned as a creative and problem-solving response to the problem-posing process of the Community Dialogue Sessions. The Tambala group of storytellers consisted of a handful of adults and elderly women formed around the chief’s wife Mrs. Tambala. Some but not all of these women were involved in the practice of conducting traditional ceremonies, including girl’s
initiation rites, to which *nthano* performances are a related but not an integrated part. Mrs. Tambala’s group was joined by Mrs. Chitseko and Hope. In addition a handful of children gathered to do the chanting choir response, *tilitonse* (‘we are together’).

Similarly, the Nkhuta storytelling group consisted mostly of female adults and elderly storytellers. While the core group of women live and practice their art in the same small cluster of households, it was also joined on our invitation by Mrs. Chikhwaza, who had demonstrated extraordinary skills during the 2010 ethnographic research. Although the group also comprised the male chairman of the Nkhuta Village Development Committee (which is the Villages Head’s council the lowest level of traditional rule), the Nkhuta Workshop did not display the same level of socially high ranking community members as in Tambala.

To protect their own integrity as communicators and with an eye to the fact that not all issues may be equally suited for storytelling, we reminded the Nkhuta storytellers that they, like the Tambala participants, had the possibility of choosing other subjects than the one with the highest community priority. In addition, realising that the prior Community Dialogues may have had certain exclusory elements (depending on who had time to show up, for instance, or the confidence to speak), this second round of deliberation presented another possibility for participants to make their case in a smaller and different forum.

After this initial exercise, the next step of the Workshop was to enter a creative process of brainstorming, improvising, rehearsing, and finally recording a ‘social change *nthano*’. As opposed to the Community Dialogue Session, however, I kept my level of interfering in the Workshops quite low since asking for translations often would disrupt the flow of the creative process. However, as I had familiarised myself with the *nthano* genre (by reading, by participating in traditional performances, and by conducting expert interviews – both with local and academic authorities on the subject), I did occasionally interrupt to remind the participants of the different *nthano* elements at their disposition.

This included suggesting the possibility of creating a story with animal characters and a reminder not to replicate drama programs based on theatre (*sewero*), for instance by breaking up narration passages into dramatic dialogue. Theatre can serve well as a basis for radio production – indeed, this is a well-known phenomenon in Malawi – but the participants agreed that too many theatre elements would have made the end product less of an *nthano*, which in turn would have watered down essential ethnic
identification elements. Lastly, I used pen and paper to get an overview of the plotline. This allowed me to suggest ways to make the nthano more coherent, and to remind myself and the group not to leave important details out of the final recording. In the interest of space, I choose not go into detail with describing this process further, but invite you to screen a selected video clip from Tambala village (YouTube link). Before the beginning of the clip, I asked the participants if their work-in-progress story would not benefit from using animal characters in terms of making it more like an nthano (bearing in mind, of course, that nthano did not exclude the use of human characters; cf. appendix 1). As clip illustrates, the participants thought well of the idea and used it to construct this dimension in addition to the general plot line. As we will see in the next section, the quality of using animal characters did work as a means of depicting the contemporary problem of the Mikoko school in a more generalised manner, not pointing fingers at anyone.

On the technical side producing the stories, both Workshops showed us that the best way to maintain the dynamics of the nthano performance was to make several one-take recordings instead of recording the final story in smaller segments. This is in line with the improvisational memorisation method used by most nthano performers, but it also made it necessary to rehearse over and over to get the recording right, a challenge that arguably could have been solved by creating a script. As part of the rehearsal process, the groups used the playback function of the recorder to evaluate drafts and correct mistakes until they reached a satisfactory result. Secondly, they chose to divide the narrator role among several participants, although that is not a common practice in traditional nthano performances. If we look apart from the chanting choir in narration passages, direct interruption from the audience-participants typically serve to file a complaint with the rendition of the story (“you are confusing things; according to our tradition, the story is supposed to be like this …”). The immediate advantage for participants in distributing the narrator role was that they had to memorise less, just as the chain of storytellers added to the feeling of creating a collective product. The flipside was that they had to stay with the same story in order not to confuse the next narrator, and not improvise new plot directions or add details to the story as is often the case when a skilled storyteller performs her or his art. The evaluation process was further refined by letting the product rest the first day of the Workshop in order to return on the next with
new energy and a fresh perspective on prior achievements. The time in between allowed Owen and I to supplement the storyteller considerations with perspectives derived from Media Audience Interviews based on draft recordings from the first Workshop day.

**Dialogic qualities of the ‘Social Change Nthano’ from Nkhuta and Tambala**

In the Tambala Community Dialogue Session, the participants discussed the issue that pupils at the local Mikoko Primary School were being taught under trees and had nowhere to seek shelter for heat or rain. By selecting this issue as of collective importance and fit for storytelling, the Tambala Workshop participants, with Hope as the leading facilitator, explicitly aimed their story at mobilising the local community members and political leaders for the construction of additional classroom buildings. The story made use of well-known animal characters from the bag of *nthano*, including *Kalulu* the Hare, *Fisi* the Hyena, as well as several others. However, instead of filling in their usual roles as, for instance, trickster and dupe, the animals in this *nthano* act as concerned Tambala village dwellers trying to solve the Mikoko school problem. The animals demonstrate their engagement and willingness to help with the realisation of the project by moulding bricks from clay-soil and collecting river sand for the buildings. Additionally, they appeal to the lion or the District Commissioner for help, emphasising the importance of using the established political channels. In the obligatory moral, Mrs. Chitseko appears as herself to make clear that this was no ordinary *nthano*, and that the real Tambala people want well-wishers to help with the real problem of Mikoko. “Help us at Mikoko School,” she concludes, “for here is a source for good health and a bright future for our children. Thank you!” (p. 99)

As a genre *nthano* are, on the one hand, fictional (Chimombo 1988: 6). This makes the direct references to factual places such as Tambala and Mikoko quite unusual. On the other hand, as mentioned before, the use of animal characters but also the choice of songs make the narrative instantly recognisable as an *nthano*. The songs were produced by the storytellers by simply reaching into the ‘bag of *nthano*’ and pulling up relevant items for the occasion. One of these songs, presented by Mrs. Tambala, was from a well-known *nthano* called *Child of Clay* (cf. Chimombo 1993), a tragic story about a childless mother moulding a baby boy from clay. The clay boy must not join his friends when they are
playing in the rain, but eventually he becomes unable to withstand the rain and his body to collapses into a muddy puddle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>My moulded child must run!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choir: Thawani milambo</td>
<td>Run from the clouds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>My moulded child must run!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir: Thawani milambo, milambo, milambo, ee!</td>
<td>Run from the clouds, from the clouds, from the clouds, ya!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thawani milambo madeya deya</td>
<td>Run, the rainy clouds are everywhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The song is in Lhomwe, the recessive immigrant language of the Mulanje region, which was however spoken fluently by the elderly women at the Workshops. Apart from the sense of origin associated with the use of the Lhomwe language, the song establishes a feeling of being left out as a child, an emotional experience that most people can relate to. On a thematic level, to run from rainy clouds forecast the issue of children who are not able to go to school because of the poor learning conditions at Mikoko.

In the process of making this story, Mrs. Tambala inserted the detail of the ominous bird *Nanchengwa* (*scopus umbretta* or ‘hammerhead stork’ in English, a bird indigenous to Malawi) not wanting to cooperate with the other animals of the story. In a Media Audience Interview in village Nkhuta ((p. 69), a group of women saw this as a symbolic reference to a, within Chisitu, well-known affair of a corrupt board of church members at Mikoko misusing the school buildings and taking grant money for themselves. While I anticipate that the Nkhuta women are right, I will let you, dear reader, decide whether Mrs. Tambala intended to put this reference there, or if it is rather an interpretative product of these women inferring this themselves in the process of decoding the narrative; Tambala’s full and final response on the matter, hence the very first paragraph of this thesis, was that “while some things may seem random or without direction to the spectator, they are not.” (appendix 8, p. 81) I see this, however, as a clearly indicating that local storytelling has a way of working within a “knowledgeable community”, as described by Harri Englund (2011, p. 199; cf. appendix 2), and that the
rural village dwellers of Chisitu are indeed capable of conducting and comprehending sociopolitical critique, even or perhaps especially when disguised in allegory.

As a mediated form of democratic communication, the Tambala social change nthano, has dialogic qualities on multiple levels. It calls attention to the Mikoko issue by mobilising nearby community members and by appealing to politicians or well-wishers in a well-mannered and non-complaining manner. This rhetorical strategy is supplemented with emotionally loaded passages that potentially engage the listener in a different way from a talk or an argument. In this way, the story is not a form of contestation on behalf the unprivileged, but an invitation to act in accordance with social justice principles. The story invites listeners to reflect on the Mikoko issue and suggests ways of addressing it, while the emotional qualities invite the listener to assume the perspective of the families and children affected by the problem. Area Development Committee member from a different village Rajib Wahaman puts it like this: “The nthano is part of our tradition, part of the way we live here. It includes music and lessons that guides our children in life, so that they will not pick up bad habits. The same goes for this nthano. It tells us of a better way of living, and the Tambala people performed this nthano to teach us this lesson” (p. 211).

Like the Tambala story, the storytellers in Nkhuta depicted emotional aspects of suffering from malnutrition and starvation by selecting a song as leitmotif: Dala ee, Dala ee! – Famine, oh famine; an elegy of slow and hollow clapping and nasal vowels painfully stretched across a mournful melody. The group used human characters to tell the story of a woman living with her children on an inadequate piece of land that is infertile and unable to support them. Eventually the woman and eight of her children pass away, leaving two now orphaned brothers. Seeking help from the chief, the brothers are sent in their uncle’s custody, but they must still go through tremendous difficulties to make it through. Finally, the government comes to their rescue and supplies the brothers with subsidized fertilizer at a price of 500 kwacha per bag. But the subsidy system is accompanied by corruption, and soon the brothers are back to square one. Again they have to seek help, and the story has an open but optimistic ending with the District Commissioner listening to their plea.

The process of making this social change nthano in Nkhuta was less playful than the Tambala one and put a higher demand on the participants’ communicative
capabilities. Working creatively with the nthano genre was made more difficult because of the choice of the starvation theme, an issue ripe with social and political tension. The corruption in the subsidised fertilizer system depicted in the nthano refers to a nation-wide disruption in the delivery of crucial supplies to smallholder farmers the same year. One man reported seeing the fertilizer bags being secretly loaded directly from official vehicles to unidentified recipients, and the villages were buzzing with rumours of a corrupt clerk. At an official venue, local staff re-priced the bags according to inflated black market standards at two or three times the previous amount. As I did the Storytelling Workshop in Nkhuta an elderly woman was trampled unconscious at the subsidised fertilizer outlet, due to the desperate situation with many people pushing to get a bag for themselves, and had to receive medical care.

Choosing this issue posed major challenges in terms of navigating the minefield of corruption as well as running the risk of retaliation from people in power, perhaps including local leaders and government officials involved in corrupt practices. In fact, when I screened to first draft of the story for the ADC in Chisitu, the same Rajib Wahaman who found the Tambala story rich and inspiring had the exact opposite reaction: “Please,” he said in English looking straight into my eyes, “you must stop this!” The solution to this issue of communicating strategically about corruption came, however, from within the nthano genre itself. By working with the story as pure fiction, the group constructed a generalised account that none the less delivered the point. In addition, they used the lesson to emphasise that corruption is everybody’s problem, because in one way or the other, everybody is involved in it. While this strategy has downsides in terms of accusing people on the ground of corrupt practices – when survival is at stake anyone may be compelled to buy overpriced fertilizer – it can also be seen as providing an alternative to direct accusations levied against named politicians.

After listening eagerly to the Nkhuta story, the District Commissioner of Mulanje (p. 326ff) explained how confrontational strategies tend to work opposite to expectations in Malawi. On one hand, he said, this is because a non-corrupt Malawian politician, who does not seem to do his job well and thereby loses respect in his constituency, will suffer retaliation from his superiors. As a consequence, he will rather pretend that all is fine, and ignore complaints from his area (except perhaps from his own home village). On the other, people rarely dare to speak up before the damage is done. From a democratic good
governance perspective, this dynamic has to be reversed: Insofar as neither politicians nor the rest of the Malawi’s publics do not engage in democratic forms of communication, the “civilizing force of hypocrisy” (Elster 1998, p. 111) in public deliberation remain absent. On these grounds, the DC welcomed a liberation and acceleration of local democratic communication processes in Chisitu including the participatory production and broadcasting of media content such as the Nkhuta story.

Seen from the dialogic democracy perspective, the Nkhuta story successfully and courageously voiced a general and important problem in a more constructive format than the muted mumbling and occasional, but delayed, outcries that shape public opinion in Malawi. The format of the Nkhuta nthano sought to transform the perspectives of politicians by exposing the experience of living under harsh conditions in an attempt to supply a much needed motivation for improving democratic decision-making. In this way a social change nthano may contribute to voice a public appeal for making a more transparent and stable system that appropriately targets the social injustices of poverty.

**An Echo of ROAR: Can Folktales Sustain Decentered Dialogue?**

To put the above analysis into perspective, I now consider the hypothetical question of how ROAR can fit into a Mulanje mediascape with an established community radio. If we look upon communicative flows as circles in smaller or larger scale, it is clear that different audiences would perceive the remediated nthano from Nkhuta and Tambala differently. The stories have to cross a distance, not only in terms of locality – from village over town, suburb and to urban environments – but also distance in terms of social difference. When the constructed media audiences of my small reception interviews were thrown (Young 1997b, p. 39) into social positions similar to those of the storytellers and their village communities, their way of listening involved making highly emotional connections both to the story’s theme and rendition. These connections were not always positive, however, as when a young girl Dorothy from Nkhuta commented that she would prefer ordinary nthano to the Tambala story, because hearing of the problems in Mikoko would only make her sad (p. 104). On the other hand, the adults instead channelled the emotional strength of the story into a motivation to do something about it: “They have said children are suffering and being taught under trees,” Rhoda from the same cluster as Dorothy says; “This is real, and the story is teaching parents
that they have to work hard to make the school a better place for the children” (p. 114). In the same group of Nkhuta women who pointed out the church board allegory, Owen and I also came across a reading of the Tambala story that was based on a suspicion that the DC would regard such plea as a rebellion against his reign. The women in question would not dare to do the same, fearing that the DC would bewitch them ((p. 69). I interpret the superstition of these women as debris of a survival strategy from under the dictator Kamuzu’s era – a folkloric version of the structure of anxiety that Freire also named a ‘culture of silence’. In responses to this worry, Rhoda’s companion Jeffrey paid the women’s worry no heed: “We don’t care who hears what. What we need is that everyone has to get this message.” (p. 115)

Conversely, the Nkhuta story about corruption was well received among the listeners in Tambala, especially for its articulation of a topic which was on everybody’s minds. In a local bicycle repair stand, Owen asks Mr. Saopa how he feels the problem of corruption and, in turn, getting food on the table is being communicated through the Nkhuta nthano:

“This is the most important thing in our lives, and the story teaches us that we must look to tomorrow and ask if we will survive or not.”

“So,” Owen continues on my request, “are you really accepting that this nthano is a voice of the community and not just some women talking on their own behalf?”

“Yes, this is what is happening,” Saopa replies.

In the local contexts of Nkhuta and Tambala audiencing each other, the remediation aspect of picking up, amplifying, and transforming the political potential of the nthano genre seems to work both as a way of supporting cultural identities and articulating social critique. This would probably also work in wider contexts location wise but socially similar settings, at least across the Mulanje districts. Scaling up the circles of this hypothetical (but hopefully future) communicative ecology, however, some quite different understandings of the social change folktales emerge. If we look apart from the ADC and DC, who took the stories very seriously as interventions in their political environment, I would have my doubts that the political impact of locally produced
content like this would maintain momentum beyond this level. When I played the *nthano* for people in the urban middle class (except my contact and the media and NGO business who would understand this kind of work differently), a typical reaction was to fade into nostalgic reflections on the *nthano* performance, often disregarding the political content of the stories. Lastly, when I brought the recordings into an academic context at the University of Mzuzu – where the political connotations was noticed – I first of all received optimistic and interested reactions, but I was also rebuked by professor in oral literature Boston Soko for assuming that the social change folktales could be regarded, as it were, *nthano proper*. The formal elements belonged to that genre, this was correct enough, but it was not customary to address contemporary issues directly, nor to name specific real world localities, in the way the Tambala storytellers did it.

While not in any way depreciating the traditional conception of fire-side storytelling, I believe that the academia in Malawi and elsewhere should beware of romanticising orature as a type of high culture. The *nthano* belongs to the people using it, not on a pedestal. And as a living piece of oral culture, it will not break by being thrown around a bit. Quite the contrary, I contend, remediating folktales to fit, for instance, a CFSC framework will most likely strengthen the *nthano* genre, also in its traditional conceptions. The remediation of *nthano* in different ways is indeed necessary for it to stay alive, to maintain a historicity, and be taken for what it is, what it was, as well as what it will be. To stay alive and maintain relevance for its listeners, moreover, the stories must adapt to new mediated environments and contemporary question of how to lead life in present-day Malawi. This can be done, for instance, in collections, by literary adaption, in newspaper columns, in edutainment media programs, and in the class room. But it can also be done by going to those people still practicing the art, and ask them how they would want to change their tradition. With reference to the principles of dialogic democracy and political scope of CFSC, is what is attempted in ROAR.

As an approach to participatory content-creation subscribing to a normative theoretical framework dialogic democracy, the ROAR projects in Chisitu did indeed demonstrate that Malawian orature constitutes a resource for nurturing dialogic democracy values and creating voices and attentive listening in CFSC-oriented projects such as ROAR. Throughout my analysis, I have demonstrated how dialogic democracy
principles have guided the ROAR research practice, and I have applied these core concepts in analysing the ROAR processes and products.

To sum up, the analysis first of all shows that enacting ‘dialogue’ in research relationships is an arduous ethos to live up to. First of all, the participants – the research team included – have to overcome conventional barriers of hearing without listening, and teach the benefits of voicing an opinion without forcing it upon others. Second, it is clear that the external status of the research teams had a notable impact on the other participants’ positioning strategies: What could be thought of as gesture for disclosing power asymmetries might also end up as a battle of discursive positions, as in the case of Hope’s questioning of ROAR as a legitimate project for social change. Third, nurturing dialogue in the ROAR process also means paying attention to social differences among the participants, and at times it means testing their boundaries rather than looking for a point of consensus. While such contest could amount to contestation, the dialogic approach entails using difference and dissensus driving mechanisms for transformative learning and enlarging thought (Young 1997a; Healy 2011). The more differences enacted in a constructive fashion within the ROAR framework, the more chances increase that such process will result in social and potentially transformative learning. This also means that when an issue of collective concern is debated among symmetrically positioned deliberants, it is no proper dialogue.

Further on, when the collective problem-posing turns to collective problem-solving, that is, the creative and artistic processes of the Nkhuta and Tambala Workshops, the participant storytellers demonstrate that nthano performance enrich democratic communication with possibilities for rhetorical and strategic positioning as well as the creation of emotionally loaded discursive openings. In particular, this is in virtue of the nthano ability to cultivate the indirect understandings of a knowledgeable audience community, as well as its deep-seated cultural status as providing life-guiding principles and a notion of the good life. Taken together, these qualities improve the possibilities for differently situated listeners to relate to the voices and social perspective presented by the speakers in a potentially dialogical and engaging manner. This counts for listeners in smaller as well as wider communicative and socially situated circles, though the former relate more strongly than the latter to the nthano. Still, however, it does seem that the small circles are wide enough to ripple into formal political spheres,
and in doing so they can relate relevant social perspectives to matters of collective concern, such as the education of children and the complex question of getting food on the table when too many live of too little, the lands is exhausted, and the fertilizer distribution system dysfunctional. This articulation, in turn, enables a process of making more just and wise democratic decisions guided towards social justice. (Young 2000) That is how a project like ROAR, from a communicative ecology perspective, would benefit a hopefully future and sustainable participatory radio in Mulanje.
Concluding Discussion and Recommendations

The poor rural village dwellers in Chisitu are no less political beings than any other people. Most people that I met there sought to keep themselves as well informed as they could on public and political matters, and while they often hid it well by doing what they thought was expected of them, they time and time again demonstrated a willingness to enter into discussions, as well as a strong critical intuition on the politics of both the local, the regional and the national. Sometimes, this intuition is overpowering, as for instance when the Nkhuta group of women were afraid of being killed by witches if they dared to use the existing democratic system in Mulanje. A less drastic but still quite significant example was pointed out by the DC, namely that the murmuring gossip on political issues never emerge as articulate criticism, but remains as growing tensions beneath the surface where it builds up until it is ready to explode. To move Malawi’s democracy forward, every citizen must be able to voice and articulate his or her perspectives on political matters. This must be supplemented as well with possibilities for listening, that is, to inform oneself on the perspectives of others, and for using the existing democratic system that already has been, however thinly, developed in Malawi within the last couple of decades.

The people in Chisitu do not lack will to participate in shaping Malawi’s young democracy; they are not cases of apathy. What they lack is the resources to enact their political role and, Rodriguez would infer, contest the hegemony of the mediascape. However, by using dialogic means of communication, I argue in this thesis that such contest can be revamped into a progressive and decentered democratic dialogue. Such dialogue requires an understanding of democracy from deliberative and public perspectives, that is, a notion of democracy where citizens are in fact enabled in exercising some measure of direct democracy. Working from a decentered understanding of democratic dialogue, the measure of direct democracy arrives with accessing public spheres and the possibility of shaping public opinion. With such a mechanism in place, which requires both improving the communicative infrastructure and communicative capabilities related to people using such infrastructure, democracy in Mulanje, and in turn in Malawi, would surely be enhanced. That is why this thesis is both motivated by and recommends setting up a participatory radio facility in Mulanje, supported by
culture-centred and inclusive content-creation activities that aim towards improving the same capabilities and sustaining democratic dialogue on a local as well as on more general level.

My point of departure was the analytical perspective that traditional storytelling in Malawi, which some bemoan as a lost phenomenon, has multiple contemporary applications that are ‘political’ in the broad sense of the term. In other words, that the practice of storytelling creates “a domain in which individuals in a variety of social roles articulate a commentary upon power relations in society and indeed create knowledge about society.” (Furniss & Gunnar 1995: 1) By closing in on nthano as a possible resource for democratic communication, my ROAR project aimed at activating this political potential, and particular look for possibilities to enact dialogic democracy values. As demonstrated in the above analysis of the Nkhuta and Tambala participants entering the process of ROAR, as well as my analysis of the products and the response from the different Media Audience Interview participants, it turned out that this was indeed an achievable and fruitful goal.

By generalising from contemporary subjects, framing political critique in an indirect fashion, and drawing on the dynamics of feeling and emotion (the latter on the theoretical level being a recognisable trait of a narrative communicative modality), the social change nthano created by the ROAR participants invites the listener to, as it were, put his or her own perspective in perspective. As it might expected, however, my preliminary study of media audience responses emphasises that listeners occupying similar to the social positions of the storytellers relate more immediately, positively and with greater enthusiasm than those who have greater social distances to cross. On the other hand, the mode of articulation does not disable the nthano genre’s political potential. In fact, if radio listeners are active listeners (which admittedly is a quite demanding prerequisite, but at least to my knowledge in the Chisitu and Mulanje context not unrealistic), I would say that social change nthano could be a way for uneducated and unprivileged people living in Mulanje to articulate their issues in a rhetorically adequate manner that allows them to be heard. In this way, the folktale tradition can indeed help the people of Mulanje surmount the barriers to democratic participation. These barriers might include Western liberal democracy’s way of privileging reasoned argumentation, just as they could refer to the clientelistic dysfunctions of the current democratic system.
in Malawi. If the people who are also voters gain a voice beyond voting, and if they use that voice of their own in way that is conducive be being heard, they can begin putting reasonable demands on their politicians in public, and Elster’s civilising effect of hypocrisy in democracy will eventually set in.

On these grounds, I suggest that ROAR can be employed as a conceptual approach for further participatory content creation projects in Malawi and elsewhere. ROAR grew out of ethnographic and action-oriented fieldwork, and as an interventionist approach that establishes a link between traditional forms of expression and contemporary issues related to politics and development it resembles existing CFSC initiatives in Malawi. What the ROAR approach contributes, is a particular focus on nthano and high levels of participation and direct cooperation with ordinary local storytelling village community members. Under the right conditions the approach can be made self-sustainable, with requirements that are limited to a sufficiently developed communicative infrastructure, for instance a participatory radio station, and a community based group or organisation that take charge of the recording equipment and coordinate local production and editorial processes. The ROAR approach piloted in this study thus provides a reference point for generating a multiplicity of voices that enter a mediated framework for democratic communication based on dialogic principles of mutual and potentially transformative learning. Without a doubt a young democracy like the Malawian one will benefit from flourishing communicative ecologies that sustain such dialogic qualities in democratic communication. This in turn will serve to improve democratic decision-making and further the cause of social justice.

Lastly, apart from supplying the details and findings related to the ROAR projects in Chisitu, my study also seek to contribute on a theoretical level to the scholarly framework of the CFSC paradigm, namely by performing a rational reconstruction of the citizens’ media concept in CFSC. This reconstruction is based on Young’s ‘communicative democracy’ theory as well as Healy’s suggested ‘reappropriation’ towards what I have chosen to term ‘dialogic democracy’, and I frame it as a clash between Mouffe’s radical ‘agonistic pluralism’ and somewhat more pragmatic, yet still critical approach that places itself within the family of ‘deliberative democracy’ theory. Faced with the argument that dialogic democracy versus agonistic pluralism is more of a shift of emphasis than a clash as such, I would tend to agree. Still, while oppressive
circumstances would cause agonistics to be are preferable to dialogue, I do maintain that this shift of emphasis is appropriate in a context that may be conceived of as ‘democratic’. This is because the active dialogue concept in dialogic democracy theory draw attention to the need to arrive, first, at an enlarging capacity for achieving understanding across differences, then, at a sufficiently advanced map of the social positions related to a matter of collective concern, before, finally, entering the decision making process. Mouffe would dismiss any such decision as, at best, based on only a provisional stabilisation of hegemonic relations, and instead recommend conflictual consensus as a form of collective arrangement. With dialogic democracy, however, I contend that creative forms of consensuses are needed for a democracy to progress, and that the transformative power of dialogical encounters has part to play in this: The possibility of changing parochial perspectives as a consequence of realising better options for all is real. On these grounds, I see the normative direction designated by dialogic democracy theory as one viable and philosophically justified way forward for CFSC. With respect to applying this theory in practice, based on my experiences with conducting ROAR in Chisitu, it should be noted that the normative basis of this teleological conception requires taking one step at a time, and not at any point looking upon the process as accomplished or as a fulfilment of an ideal version of dialogical democracy. Rather, the principles of aiming for understanding across difference and enlarging thought should be used along the way to evaluate and constructively refine the process of including as many relevant perspectives as possible, in order to thereby support the never to be completed democratic goal of continuously making more just and wise decisions.
List of References

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Appendix 1
An Nthano Typology

In its broadest conception, to communicate by telling stories may characterize everyday speech as well as any kind of performance, novel, newspaper article, movie, painting, etc. that is ‘dramaturgie’ in its composition; it has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and a dynamic structure to that drives the narrative experience – a dynamic which essentially plays with the audience by going in tension with and/or resolving their (more or less predictable) cognitive and affective expectations. Storytelling may furthermore render real life events, explicitly or allegorically, just as it may lead into worlds of fiction. And finally, stories told may – whether fiction or fact, intriguing or plain, exciting or touching – also offer new ways of looking at the world, which can be interpreted as a mechanism for transformative learning and enlarged though, as discussed in the chapter 3.

In this study, I narrow down this broad (but not all-encompassing) conception of storytelling to a culture-specific genre for African orature practices, namely that of the nthano. To set off this chapter, then, I provide an outline typology, that is, a description of which type of text and genre the nthano refers to. With this point of departure, I can then proceed to discussing my research process and methods relating to remediating the nthano, that is, the ROAR program. That being said, the following typology should be read as my humble introduction to a general understanding of nthano, and not exhaustive as such.

I refer to the nthano in vernacular nomenclature, Chichewa, since using Western folklore categories such as ‘folktale’, ‘fable’ or ‘cante-fable’ might create unnecessary confusion. One could try, for instance, to categorize the nthano as a type of fable, referring to the frequent use of animal protagonists and the fact that these stories usually conclude with a moralistic lesson, not unlike the folktales known from the collections of the Grimm brothers. ‘Cante’ might then be added as a qualifying prefix, since some passages of an nthano involve chanting and singing rather than strict narration. But by applying such terminology, as Malawian author and literature critic Steve Chimombo maintains (1988, p. 13), one misses out essential features of the nthano, which makes the
established Western categorizations unfeasible for understanding this kind of traditional storytelling on its own cultural premises.

With regard to language and ethnicity, I should also make the reader aware that the genre classifications may even vary within the same language group (cf. Okpewho 1992, p. 127ff), which is especially relevant considering the fact that the Chichewa/Chinyanja languages crosses borders of nationality as well as ethnicity – indeed, many Chichewa-speakers in Malawi are not first-language users and may contribute with elements to the nthano from an ethnic culture of their own.

In academic literature on orature, a part of proposing an integrative aesthetic theory for Malawian indigenous arts that he calls ulimbaso⁴, Chimombo (1988) offers a useful working definition to understand the most central compositional and contextual elements of the nthano performance on a typological level. In the following, I go through elements that define storytelling as nthano with reference to Chimombo and my own experiences with Malawian storytelling while doing fieldwork in Nkutha and Tambala village, Mulanje.

The ‘bag of nthano’ metaphor

It is a crucial feature of the nthano performances that they are – through narration, chanting, song, choir, and a lesson at the end – vehicles for delivering life-guiding principles. Furthermore, since the practice of performing nthano has been handed down through generations, although it is now increasingly also under the influence of written versions found in collections and especially in primary schools, the this orature tradition can be conceived of as a ‘bag of nthano’. Inspired by Chimombo’s use of this metaphor (personal communication), I use the ‘bag of nthano’ to refer to a collective memory of plots, characters, songs, lessons, and other nthano features that are at the storyteller and audience’s disposition qua tradition.

On plot level, one may distinguish different series of nthano. To take an example of a condensed plot summary, there is “the story of how the hare, in a time of drought,

⁴ Chimombo’s idiosyncratic term ulimbaso confers three morphemes in Chichewa referring to inspiration (-ul-), form (-mb-), and artistry (-so-). Chichewa is the national language of Malawi, originally spoken by the Chewa tribe and is close to the Nyanja and Mang’anja languages as well. (Chimombo 1998, p. vii & xi)
refuses to participate in digging a well to which all the animals consented. However, when water is found, the hare, through various subterfuges, manages to always get it for himself and his family. He is eventually outtricked by the tortoise and brought to justice, from which he again escapes.” (Chimombo 2008a, p. 12). Chimombo (1988, vii) categorize The Hare and the Well plotline as part of a ‘trickster and dupe’ series and indeed, the ‘trickster extraordinaire’ Kalulu (the hare) is a well-known figure in African orature in general, appearing in collections made by missionaries as early as 1907 (Chimombo 2008a, p. 12). Other series might include ‘orphan and step mother’ or ‘disobedience and punishment’. In addition, the nthano genre stretches into the field of creation myths, taking up themes such as the making of the world and how death came to be part of it (with the magical chameleon as a reoccurring protagonist). The last three ‘series’ are not mentioned by Chimombo (1988), but based on the nthano performances I have experienced in Malawi in 2010 and 2011 – see below. The ‘care for orphans’ and ‘good behavior’ series are observed, by Lester B. Shawa & Boston J. Soko (2010), in Tumbuka traditional folktales from Northern Malawi.

**Nthano Markers and Other Compositional Elements**
The use of animal characters is not required as such to qualify storytelling as nthano. It is required, however, to grab into the ‘bag of nthano’, and to apply other ‘nthano markers’; that is, compositional elements signifying that the present performance text is an nthano. To subscribe to an nthano series is to apply such a marker, and a shared characteristic of all the stories in the ‘bag’ it that they are conceived of as fictional (zopeka), which distinguishes the nthano from stories relating to fact (zoonæ), including genres such as the broad nkhani (news, speeches, life stories) and mbiri (oral history, accounts of the past) (cf. Chimombo 1988, table 1).

Other examples of nthano markers are verbal signs or idioms that indicate the beginning and end of the performance itself. These are external to the selected narratives, and do not vary within the same tradition. In Chichewa, these idioms include “padagokhala” (once upon a time) in the beginning and at the end, but before the lessono, “kaphuleni mbata yanga” (get my potato out of the fire) followed up by the audience’s response, yapselera! (it is burned away!) – perhaps a ritualized reference indicating that the storytelling performance caused everyone to forget about food
preparation, and that the time spend listening was a good one, although this is not an interpretation that the storytellers I have met had paid any heed.

Another nthano marker is the rhythmical chant of the audience choir, tilitonse (we are together) or go (go on). Apart from adding a quality of rhythmical punctuation to the narration passages – typically in between every full sentence or perhaps even more often – the choir can be seen as another element external to the narrative as such, an encouragement for the storyteller to continue narrating (indeed, if the choir stops, the narrator knows that the audience’s attention is lost). Furthermore, the narration passages are periodically interrupted by segments of singing and clapping, typically with the narrator taking the lead and being chased or supplemented in choruses by the audience choir. There are specific songs connected to specific nthano plots and series, so this element can be seen as internal to the meaning-making processes of drawing a specific nthano from the bag.

While some elements of the nthano may be improvised in performance, including adding bodily movements and interpretative voices to the characters, it is not customary to dance. As is the case with any kind of improvisation, however, it is does not come with a muse or ‘divine inspiration’. It comes with the storyteller’s skill, and is also related to putting restrictions upon creativity. In this case, the most important restriction on creativity is that the improver must relate to tradition, that is, use the ‘bag of nthano’, and also present the story as a matter of fiction while relating it to matters of fact in a concrete or perhaps more abstract social context. It would generally not be acceptable to use specific names or refer to real places in an nthano, except perhaps in the lesson.

The lesson is compulsory and comes, as mentioned, after the yapselera. It consists typically of a brief interpretation delivered by the narrator or perhaps by another member of the audience. In a way, it is not uncommon to shift the roles of narrator-audience, which might happen even during the narrating segments – especially if a member of audience is unsatisfied with the storyteller’s performance skills or knowledge of the bag of nthano. The lesson in an nthano are generalized, but as indicated above, the storyteller

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5 This variation carries traces of ethnic origin to Chewa/Nyanja (tilitonse) or Yao and, possibly, Lhomwe cultures (go from Lhomwe, gogodera).
may choose to tell a story or make a lesson that concurs more directly to a relevant social context. I would call this another aspect of improvisation and creativity, but this time tied to reality (*zoona*). This could be based on concrete questions such as ‘is there a child misbehaving?’ or ‘are someone working against community collaboration?’ The *nthano*, and especially the lesson, will then make an appeal to the audience and possible subjects in question to adjust or prevent taking this or that direction in life. It is not customary to point fingers or call names directly in the *nthano* form, however, meaning that the structure of such appeals depend much on contextualized inferences, socioculturally comprised preunderstandings, and interpretational patterns already within the audience’s hermeneutic horizon – or found in the real life contexts in which the meanings and lessons might be discussed, negotiated, or lived out.

**Nthano and Society**

Traditionally, *nthano* practices are bound to everyday life situations – and especially to socialize, relax, or celebrate in the dark evenings. However, the *nthano* performance might be associated with an institutional social function of reminding of the life-guiding lessons delivered more directly in ritual settings (Chimombo 1988). In this way, the some *nthano* are designed, in spite of them being indirect, to refer directly to the conventional wisdom (*zoona*) delivered in more ritualized contexts (*mwambo*), including rites of initiation and marriage counselling. This underlines a social function of the *nthano*, but this should be seen as an aspect of and not exhausting motivations for appreciating *nthano* completely. The *nthano* form is a unique genre of its own, it has its own cultural raison d’être, and it is not as such a direct imitation of the counselling forms (dancing, singing, coaching) used in, for instance, the context of an initiation rite.

There is furthermore a subgenre of miniature stories or proverbs (*nthanthi*) backgrounded, so to speak, by an *nthano*. This means that the saying itself is not possible to comprehend without knowing the story behind or belonging to it. These deflated *nthano* are effective to deliver a specific and mutually recognized point in ordinary, non-narrative speech situations, I presume, or to change that situation by inflating it into the appropriate *nthano* performance on demand. (Chimombo, personal communication) But to use singular elements like this does not make it *nthano*, which does of dramaturgy requirement for storytelling in general stated above. Obviously, saying “*Padangokhala”
and not continuing would be against the criteria that the story has to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The same goes for just singing a song, clapping a beat, or citing an nthano lesson. These would be intertextual references, but without the dramaturgic component it would not be storytelling, nor would it be nthano as such.

Some nthano contain animal characters, and some feature children, women and men. Sometimes magic, mystery, and metamorphoses occur, other times not. However, apart from the elements of performance – time and place, idiomatic markers, intonation, song, rhythm, improvisation, audience participation, etc. – a common denominator for nthano is that they point to truth (zooná) in the indirect manner of fiction (zopeka). It fording this relation to a social reality (zooná) that the nthano links to socio-linguistically embedded, value-creating knowledge systems – a link that opens up to understanding and discussing good conduct and, in turn, the political question of a good society.
Appendix 2

Malawi’s Mediascape: Democracy, Culture, and Development

In this appendix I include some remarks on Malawi’s broader historical and contemporary context for political and cultural expression, and especially how CFSC-inspired initiatives already play an integrative part in maintaining existing democracy and development in discourses in the Malawian mediascape.

Cultural Expression and Malawi’s Second Wave of Democracy

International development has put ‘democracy’ at its core since the early 1990s, following the logic that development requires democratisation and not vice versa (which was a prevalent assumption, however, in the preceding modernisation paradigm in development). In the African context, this turn of strategy can be seen as pushing the democracy’s second wave. While the first African wave of democracy is associated with liberation from colonialism following the decades after World War II (Hyden & Okigbo 2002, p. 41), the second relates to the many transitions from one-party autocracy to multi-party democracy in the early 1990s. With this transition came a new era for cultural and artistic expression in Malawi. Unlike other African countries, the retreat of colonial rule and national independence in 1964 did not mean the flourishing of local and cultural art forms (Chimombo & Chimombo 1996). The regime of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the “Life President” who was in power for more than 30 years, dominated artistic expression as well as any other aspect of social and political life. For instance, performing art-forms – such as dancing, drumming, singing, and drama, rooted in ethnic culture and typically connected to ceremonies or celebrations in rural village contexts – were submerged into nationalist conformity serving to appraise the government or suffered strict censorship. Of course, Kamuzu’s regime also dominated newspapers as well as broadcast media: It was not legal to own a television set and only one station was allowed, aired by the government-owned Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation (MBC). Paradoxically, with liberation from colonisation the throttling grasp of cultural imperialism became even stronger, albeit this time based on a culture from within, and dissidents had to flee or remain silent. When the second African wave of democracy reached Malawi – which canonically happened in March 1992 with a public and until
then unheard-of government criticism issued by a circle of catholic bishops followed up by strikes, police violence, and international pressure – the government was forced to call a referendum for one- versus multi-partyism. In this process, dissident artists took part in criticising, mobilising, and even defining prospects for a future multi-party democracy state.

Indeed, arts and culture were included and appraised by the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), and Kamuzu’s then ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP) manifestoes. They wrote generally of guarding “age-old traditional values” (UDF, who won the 1994 election), of encouraging “creative portrayal of traditional music, dance, the arts, [and] literature” (AFORD), and accordingly to give “direction” to Malawians by “exploring how best culture can contribute to development.” (MCP) These statements should be read in the light of the idea that mobilising artists “to educate and influence, if not manipulate, a large part of the population” would be a tremendous resource for pertaining power, and that “the politicians knew it.” (Chimombo & Chimombo 1996, p. 17-21) Nonetheless, while the cultural and political landscape shifted from homogenous, conformity to heterogeneous, plurality, Kamuzu’s repressive regime had caused most Malawians to retreat into a culture of silence – and reclaiming the trust and courage to speak up again was, and still is, but a slow, gradual process.

Quite recently, in May 2012, vice-president Joyce Banda took over the presidential office from late Bingu wa Mutharika, the second president after Bakili Muluzi who won the first multi-party general elections in May 1994.

While most Malawians recall Mutharika’s first period (2004-9) as marked by progress, the second showed him as increasingly autocratic and less in favor of freedom of expression. In January 2010, for instance, the popular songs of former member of parliament Lucious Banda were removed from MBC, allegedly for criticising Mutharika, who is Lhomwe by tribe, for “offering key roles to officials because they are from the Lhomwe region” (Schmidt et al. 2010, p. 179). Moreover, in January 2011, Mutharika passed the Section 46 Amendment Bill that allowed the government in power to shut down any publication deemed “contrary to public interest” (Malumo 2012). In February of the same year, academic freedom deteriorated with the imprisonment of four lecturers on Chancellor College on the grounds that they taught students that “the way to
overthrow this government is to follow what is happening in Egypt” (Mutharika 11 March 2011, quoted in Lungu 2011).

Up until these severe acts of state censorship, however, freedom of expression remained more or less formally intact. I deliberately use ‘formally’ to indicate a reservation with what was and probably still is happening ‘informally’ to public sphere deliberation in Malawi. Despite it being almost 20 years since the democratic transition, media institutions still suffer many objectionable constraints, including what seems to be politically motivated, indirect censorship mechanisms enforced by the government’s Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) as well as the fact that there is a political candidate, oppositional or otherwise, and thus a party affiliation with every newspaper and broadcasting corporation. Although the last objection might not be very different in any Western context, at least not if we disregard public service institutions, it is a fact that the Malawian members of audience that I have been talking to throughout my studies, from media industry practitioners to rural village dwellers, did perceive the tendency to politicise especially news coverage to undermine journalistic objectivity.

Malawian Mediascapes: Criticism, Culture and Development Discourse

Radio is by far the strongest mass medium in Sub-Saharan Africa, both in terms of access and political impact. In Malawi, the hegemony of the politicised mediascape is upheld through MACRA’s three-tier licensing system for public, commercial, and community broadcasting (cf. Malawi Communications Act, MACRA 1998, § 47f). As a ‘public broadcaster’, MBC is not to be confused with a public service broadcaster, since its obligation is to disseminate information in the government’s interest, rather than adjusting its content to what is conceived of ‘public interest’. Although some programming might coincide with what is of public interest to the peoples of Malawi, this definition does often not extend to the facilitation of political action and to criticising the government (with some exceptions, see below). Commercial radio stations are, however, ahead of MBC in this regard, as are, as a more recent development, also newspapers when it comes to conducting political criticism. This is often accomplished by subscribing to well-known ‘watch dog’ role of popular media, which is mostly done in mainstream formats such as news bulletins and talk shows. The general news coverage of Radio Zodiak and Capital FM’s “Straight Talk” are examples of this.
According to social anthropologist Harri Englund (2011), an interesting ‘fissure’ in the Malawian mediascape – that is, a counter-example of the established media discourse hegemony (Rodriguez 2001) – is found in a popular radio program, Nkhani Zam’mboma (News Stories from the Districts). In spite of being aired by MBC, and by the virtue of Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) journalists moving into the rural areas to record material, this daily ten-minute slot represents “the perspective of the downtrodden,” Englund argues, and provides “insight into the experience and conceptualization of injustice” found at grassroots level. On the content level, Nkhani Zam’mboma is a kind of citizens’ media that brings up small scale flows of communication to national level. In spite of being broadcast on a station that otherwise enforces strict limitations on airing issues perceived of as in opposition to government politics, an intriguing point noted by Englund (2011) is the ability of these voices and their listeners to infer indirect social and political critiques, especially by using Chichewa idioms and oral artistry. Englund refers to these listeners as a “knowledgeable community” that premised on long-lasting repression use “apparently localized and innocuous stories as allegories for the abuse of power at much higher level.” (p. 199)

This understanding of the ‘ordinary Malawian audience member’ as capable of conducting and comprehending social criticism in allegorical forms is central to understanding the ‘politics of storytelling’ (Furniss & Gunnar 1995; Jackson 2002), just as it is an important asset of my analysis in chapter 7. The same manoeuvre is also captured, both in rhetoric and meaning, by the quote that stroke the introduction keynote in this thesis, namely Mrs. Tambala’s allegory on innocent-looking boys outflanking church board members in the shape of mice scattering in a field.

The productions of the DBU and Nkhani Zam’mboma are not, however, the only radio programs that subscribe to culture-specific forms of expression. On public as well as commercial radio and television stations, especially theatre emerges as a traditional form of expression in new mediated contexts. While some productions are strictly commercial, the popular drama programs also include programs produced by local but internationally donor-funded NGOs, including among others: Pakachere’s One Love, funded by the Soul City Institute in South Africa; Story Workshop’s Zimachitika (It Happens), funded by the EU; and ADRA Malawi’s Tikuferanji? (Why Are We
Dying?), funded by the Danish International Development Agency, Danida. These NGO dramas combine education and entertainment by adapting a culturally encoded mode of expression, for instance traditional songs, dances, poems, and storytelling, to a mainstream soap format with recognisable characters enacting small stories in open-ended plots. The NGO drama programs are widely appreciated by most audiences: “We learn a lot from these radio programs,” as Gibson, a participant in one of my ADRA research interviews, notes: “We may not know that some of the things we do are harmful to us, so when we hear this on the radio we are able to learn and change”. In another interview, Gloria, Shira, and Florence agree: “We prefer drama programs because they communicate things in a direct way and educate us – they express experiences similar to the ones we have in our everyday lives.” (Jeppesen 2012, p. 27; appendix 1)

Rights Discourse in Development: A Perspective to Young

The NGO programs mentioned are strong mediators of what may be termed the general development discourse in Malawi. By development discourse, I mean a linguistically driven sign system that relates specific forms of expression from favourable positions of power, which reflects back on processes of identity formation of those subscribing to such a system. I took notice, for instance, of how the participants would use expert vocabulary of development workers to explain how they felt educated by listening to the dramas. It was often the case that the participants would refer to this learning process by using generalised development brands such as ‘child abuse’, ‘women’s rights’, and ‘environment preservation’, and it seemed clear that to them these concepts would relate perfectly to that of ‘development’ (chitukuko in Chichewa, meaning ‘progress’ or ‘prosperity’). The fact that the participants identified themselves with the dramas by subscribing to the development discourse can be seen as a result of at least two decades of development work done by NGOs and government organs, and also that development workers, who the participants have probably experienced propagating the development discourse in face-to-face forums as well as through the media, occupy privileged social positions in relation to the village dwellers. In addition, the way I see it, the use of development jargon in everyday discourse reveals that the strategic approaches of these NGOs and government organs share a dominant pattern: Development in Malawi is an industry controlled from the top.
In one of her later articles, Young (2004) recommends seeing human rights not as a set of universal principles but as ideals for making judgements from situated perspectives in a local context. In this way, a ‘right’ does not translate as a question of either or. Only one who has sufficient knowledge about the local context may agree to the appropriateness of such judgement. In Malawi, human rights are readily handed out as weapons of the weak. This is especially due to the fact that women generally are often considered the ‘marginalised social group’ \textit{per se}, but also because women in development jargon are considered ‘good investments’ in reducing poverty. This calculation is based on research pointing to the fact that, for instance, the education of women has a “dramatic impact on family size, family income, health, equality of resources and opportunities, aspirations, education of the next generation, and so on.” (Tacchi et al. 2003, p. 19). A conventional rights-based approach subscribed to by many NGOs and activist groups would teach women to say ‘this I can do’ – which could be to protect herself from unsafe sex, to manage the household economy, or to refuse to be beaten by her husband – because ‘that is my right’. Making this claim, however, does not necessitate that the woman obtains the power to enforce such a right. Although she might rise with dignity and resist the pressure on her own, she will probably need help either from her fellow sisters, either to support her emotionally, or to put pressure onto those offending her rights; from outside NGOs empowering her by giving her the means to resist; or better, from everyone concerned in the community, including those men that do not wish to reinforce oppression. But appealing to rights in this way does not facilitate understanding in the dialogic sense, and being in privileged positions often blinds those who otherwise would want to reach such an understanding. However reasonable the woman’s claim might be – say, I cannot afford to take care of my deceased bother’s orphan – her assertion might be looked upon as breaking with custom and therefore not socially legitimate. Why would she make this claim when tradition wills it otherwise? If it does not consider questions like these, the rights discourse cannot address the problem under discussion, but instead comes to the conclusion that there is nothing to discuss. When seen as “conclusive reasons”, instead of as addressing related duties and responsibilities, rights are asserted strategically “to end a discussion instead of continuing it.” (Wenar 2011, § 7.2) I interpret this core distinction between top-down application of the rights discourse and a socio-culturally informed bottom-up approach as parallel to
Tuft’s distinction between the two ComDev branches ‘advocacy communication’ and ‘communication for social change’ (2005, p. 117; cf. chapter 1). While advocacy implies to speak on behalf of, say, marginalised groups, the CFSC approach aim to empower marginalised groups to speak for themselves. Instead of acting from an activist or civil society platform subscribing to agonistics and contesting rhetoric (in this case women versus wife-beating men, or women versus tradition), a dialogically oriented CFSC approach recommends actively listening to the voices of those marginalized people, but doing so in the context other voices as well. That could the women’s men or the custodians of tradition offended by her claim to rights. This, in turn, increase chances to rework the structural conditions adding to the disenfranchisement of unprivileged individuals and groups. I return to a similar perspective in an analysis concerning traditional initiation ceremonies possibly reinforcing unjust conditions upon children and young people in Chisitu (ch. 6).

As Young (2004), I am not saying that human right should be abandoned for their ‘Western bias’. Nor would I make the claim that rights ought to be interpreted in local terms only. However, judgements based on human rights require objective knowledge of the local context, a ‘social objectivity’ of situated perspectives that can be ensured by adhering to the inclusion requirement of democratic dialogue (cf. ch 2). At best, the use of the rights discourse may provide a discursive platform from which to enter into a reflective dialogue that can serve as a reference that may provide reasons for, or in other ways make clear, in what ways, for instance, masculine malpractices cause harm to females. Making these connections and performing such dialogue, however, requires considerable communication skills and a critical insight which should not be taken for granted by human rights activists. The rallying call for human rights and dignity should come, therefore, with a plea to enter into inclusive dialogue in order to assert human rights legitimately and effectively.

Are Malawian CFSC Initiatives Culture Sensitive or Culture-Centred?

In the vocabulary of Indian CFSC scholar Mohan Dutta, a top-down yet culture-informed approach to development communication, such as NGO dramas, can immediately be categorised as a ‘cultural sensitive’ strategy. According to Dutta, cultural sensitivity entails “tailoring messages to cultural characteristics of audience members”, so that they
may “change individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors” to incorporate the expert knowledge of communication professionals (2007, p. 304-5). In this way, he argues, cultural sensitivity is a top-down effort that aims to change individual preferences. The success of a culture-sensitive communication intervention relates to the target audience’s ability to adapt to communicative messages in spite of their cultural bias, which is conceived of as ‘hindrances’ or ‘variables’, and it is therefore up to the communication expert to design a program that responds to the specific variables of a given cultural group. Dutta finds cultural sensitivity inappropriate mainly because the model risks reinforcing a status quo, that is the exclusion of powerless and marginalised people from the participation in articulation that would help them create the kind of society they want. As an appropriate alternative, Dutta suggests a culture-centred approach. A culture-centred communication program seeks to facilitate development and change structural inequalities “through dialogues with cultural members that create spaces for marginalized cultural voices” (305). The communication expert using a culture-centred approach, Dutta asserts, seeks to define problems that are meaningful seen from within that culture. This means that the problem has to originate from and be articulated in cooperation with members of the cultural community. The critical aim of such dialogue is to address taken-for-granted assumptions or silenced perspectives, in order to alleviate the underlying causes of the problem (p. 310-1). From a dialogic democracy viewpoint, the participatory process of articulating collective problems becomes a way of deliberating or finding solutions to such problems, an articulation process which in turn is evaluated with reference to the ideal of social objectivity and the epistemic inclusion requirement: Among those affected by a problem or its solution, especially the voices belonging to subaltern groups must be recognized as providing equally legitimate input in deliberative discourse as the voices of those pertaining privilege. If those voices are not taken into account, and the social forms of knowledge related to the particular problem or its solution are excluded, the overall epistemic quality of the deliberative process – that is, the degree to which such decisions are wise – will most likely deteriorate. As a consequence, this will affect in negative direction the degree to which such decisions are also just (cf. ch .2).

In line with Dutta and the dialogic democracy agenda of CFSC, Englund (2006) criticizes educated Malawians working in the development sector, including those
producing NGO dramas, for subscribing to a universal development discourse instead of conceptualising development objectives with respect to local contexts. As the Malawian mediascape is dominated by culture-sensitive approaches, he appreciates Nkhani Zam’mboma for its rare ability to mediate, in a more culture-centred fashion, “moral debate outside the purview of political leaders, human rights activists, and aid agencies” (2011, p. 3). To the extent that they disregard culture-specific and political forms of expression exerted by the subaltern social groups that are supposed to benefit from these development programs, I lament with Englund the dominance of human rights and development discourses. As a consequence of depoliticising the development discourse and using human rights as a shield against political attacks and reprisals, the argument goes, development workers risk betraying their own agenda. But if we look beyond the fact that development discourse often trivialises or ignores sensitive subjects that relate to party politics, which in my view indeed is a complex but huge problem, the points raised by Dutta and Englund do not go unnoticed by those they seek to criticise: Insofar as it is in the name of development, taking culture as a point of departure is considered a valuable and effective approach by the people working at the mentioned NGOs. As an attempt to apply this orientation in practice, the program production of Story Workshop and ADRA Malawi’s creates links to and articulate problems and needs identified by the people targeted by their respective field programs. In this way, by taking steps to either directly or indirectly convey voices and views from the ground level, the NGO programs aspire to act as citizens’ media – although in another shape than Englund’s Nkhani Zam’mboma. The NGOs must limit themselves to what is considered ‘safe’ development discourse, which has to do with the fact they must also navigate their status at higher political levels, and by doing so, they exclude otherwise evident possibilities for facilitating or conducting constructive social and political criticism.

On the other hand, while the aspiration to act as citizens’ media is there, top-down organisational structures do pose challenges for those who seek to justify the mentioned programs as culture-centred in Dutta’s vision. A first example of this is how the dependency on donors drives the NGOs to demonstrate effectiveness and develop objectives in advance of implementing a program, as well as to monitor and evaluate according to criteria set externally to the targeted community beneficiaries. Second, there might also be background organisations, in ADRA’s case the Seventh-day Adventist
(SDA) church, which have an interest in defining which problems that are legitimate to address. One example of this is based on the fact that SDA members abstain from using alcohol, and that the SDA board making decisions on ADRA Malawi’s behalf may be reluctant to give abuse issues publicity. Background organisations may also have an influence on how issues are to be addressed, for instance with regard to campaigning against HIV/AIDS. A popular strategy among Christian organisations is to promote the ABC priority: Abstinence first, Be faithful second, and use Condoms last. While the latter to some Christians signals promiscuity, adultery and altogether immoral behaviour, this prioritisation fails to target people who are seen to be in most danger of contracting HIV, that is, those who convince themselves and others that they live by Christian doctrine, while in fact they do not. To approximate Dutta, in my view, these top-down challenges are not insurmountable, but addressing them does require that Western donors and background organisations can be convinced of the value of taking on a culture-centred approach, that is, to include the program beneficiaries in articulating relevant issues and cooperate closely with them in working out solutions.

Disregarding the complexities of whether the existing CFSC-oriented cultural production models that dominate the Malawian mediascape exhibit mostly cultural sensitive or culture-centred tendencies, the above presentation does indicate that the efforts of NGOs and other media actors have resulted in a situation where culture and cultural forms of expression are principal elements that structure and shape the development discourse. This conclusion, as well as the discussion of how cultural expression had come to play this part, is an important backdrop and motivation for this study: As its ultimate aim, although in this context ROAR is limited to being a pilot project, it does seek to enter into these dynamics of culture-oriented development discourse, and thereby also changing them in a direction that concurs with the normative dialogic democracy ideals of accepting difference as a resource in democratic communication and striving towards making more socially just and wise democratic decisions.
Appendix 3

ICTs and Social Change Communication in Mulanje

In this section, I elaborate on my conception of ‘Mulanje communicative ecologies’ with special reference to development and social change communication. First of all, I base this conception on my own experiences while setting up and conducting research for in the Mulanje Boma and the Chisitu area, especially Nkhuta village. Second, although in a revised version, I reuse some parts of my report to ADRA Denmark (Jeppesen 2012, appendix 1), mostly quotes on relevant communication channels for social change communication as articulated by members of Manyumba and Mwawihe research participans in the Nkando area of Mulanje.

Communicating Face-to-Face: Mobilizing and Group Media

There are many types of mobilizing and group media used in the Mulanje communities, including informal and word-of-mouth methods, passing on written notes by sending messages boys and carrying out community meetings. Community meetings are typically arranged by or through the chief are held in high regard as an effective way of making decisions collectively, for instance when it comes to conducting traditional court cases and gathering people to discuss development issues. Mobilizing for these involves using face-to-face media, for instance by sending messenger boys with small written statements, and in rare cases phone calls, a costly affair compared to the message boys, and they are also conceived as a more reliable solution than SMS – SMSes have often delays in delivery due to network failure. (Jeppesen 2012)

In addition, traditional group media such as singing, dancing, and drumming (kuvina) are to some extent still being used to mobilize people for collective events, including community meetings and celebrations such as weddings and brick burning venues. In the latter two, however, it is also customary for those who can manage to hire PA and speakers to blast on through the night, even in the rural areas without electricity. Community theatre (severo) is a type of group media much appreciated. It is safe to say that Malawi has a strong tradition for using theatre and drama for social, educational, and political purposes (Chimombo & Chimombo, 1996), and in the areas I have been to – which have all been targeted and supported by ADRA Malawi – virtually every youth
club tour locally with more or less improvised plays on development issues. In this way community theatre is a strong mediator of general development discourses. “We did a drama on dropping out of school, and the parent of those children became truly concerned; we saw that they understood what was said, and they put their children back to school,” Regina from Mwawihe said, and supplemented by local farmer’s club chair Victor: “We have seen an increased enrolment after that drama!” Chairman Wallace from Chimwamezi, the local youth club in Mwawihe, came up with the following story as well: “We did a drama on a father mistreating his stepchild sexually while the mother was away. It was a true story, and he was exposed and eventually arrested. In this way, the drama did work very well.” Chimwamezi has been working with sexual behaviour and other HIV-related issues, and the same theme was later picked up by group secretary Daniel: “There is a ritual of transition, kusasa fumbi [removing the dust], which is still common around here.” In the boy’s initiation rite, he explained, boys are told about manhood at the age of ten years and up. Mostly the talk was about behaving as an adult and showing respect towards one’s parents, but on the sexual side of it, the initiates were told that the transition will not complete until they have had sex with a woman – although the sexual act was not included in the ritual as such, the participants maintain. “They say that for you to put into practice what you have learned here, you should sleep with a woman. We would go there and say; don’t do this,” Daniel explained, and Wallace elaborated: “We are raising awareness of this through drama, and the practice seems to be on retreat. We have played a role in this, even by going to samba [the secret initiation site] to persuade the initiates that what they should not listen to what they have taught about sex; it’s no good with HIV around.” (Jeppesen 2012) In Tambala, Chisitu, the Mikoko Youth Club performs similar plays under the active leadership of Mrs. Chitseko, the young prospect to take over from old chief Tambala, and the local theatre for development instructor Hope.

As part of the overall infrastructure of group media are also funerals, school classes and church meetings. Funerals, for instance, are an important social, cultural, and at times political events in the everyday lives of the community members. First of all, meeting up at a funeral underlines of course the importance of paying the last respects, thus reaffirming the social bonds of community solidarity, of brotherhood and sisterhood. When a member of a village community dies (even if that member has decided to move
away and make a living elsewhere), the whole village enters a stage of sorrow, and immerse into an emotionally loaded performance. The length depends on how the person has died; if it happened suddenly as in a car accident, the ceremony should happen fast, and the performance very intense. If it was one who died of illness, these practices will be stretched over a longer period. Branches with fresh leaves are laid out on the roads to mark that a funeral is taking place, which requires people passing by to dismount their bicycles or drive slowly and respectfully. Specified bodily postures – loose shoulders, eyes pointed toward the ground – are mandatory. As part of the ceremony, people will gather at the household who has lost a member to sing and contribute with money to support the family, before transporting the body to the consecrated burial grounds.⁶

Looking at funerals, schools, and churches as possible arenas for development and social change communication, if deemed relevant by people responsible for the occasion, they take the shape of a mobilization media. As a site for strategic forms of communication, funeral-, school- or church announcements can be used for one-way dissemination of messages that is relevant for the community at large. Examples could be time and location for the next subsidized fertilizer venue, communicating conclusions reached in a community meeting conducted by the chief, or using the venues to raise awareness of ongoing development campaigns.

Another traditional media that can be used creatively is the telling of folk-tales. Children as well as many grown-ups have an affection for these stories, and it is often mentioned that they provide them with lessons or life-guiding principles that still have some usefulness in their lives as adults. Lastly, poems or word-plays are in many cases miniature stories with hidden lessons or indirect messages. Used creatively, they can be just as effective as full-blown theatre for development performances. “Poems can be used to reflect both sides of an issue, the negative as well as the positive ones,” Duncan says, followed by Golden: “We use poems even in public meetings, it’s not just on the radio.”

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⁶ These remarks are based on informal interviews and taking part in such an event, 14 November 2011 in Tambala village Appendix 8, p. 54f).
Radio airwaves – the ‘wireless’

Turning to electronic means of communication, as expected, radio – in Chichewa known as wireless – is by far the strongest ICT medium present in the village communicative ecologies that I have visited. Radio airwaves provides news bullets, weather forecasts, music, sports, entertainment, and also educative content such as the agricultural and drama programs. In the Manyumba community meeting (39 people), we asked if it was men or women who had most access to radio. The participants (28 women) respond that men usually go out of the household to do business, leaving the radio in the household, so the woman can listen to it when she is around. Therefore, at least in terms of physical access, the woman is in control of the radio this particular social context, which is in contrast to the opinion held by most development workers in Malawi, ADRA staff included. (Jeppesen 2012)

On the content side of radio listening, apart from appreciating news and entertainment, the Manyumba participants conceive of radio programming as a crucial tool for improving the lives of themselves and the household. “Radio helps me to improve my family,” Clara in Manyumba says, “about reducing gender based violence, for instance. If my husband or the husband of a friend behaves in a strange way, I can get advice from Pakachere’s radio program One Love as to what a husband should do, and what he should not do.” It once again seems that especially women appreciate dramas relating to social change issues, such as One Love, Story Workshop’s Zimachitika, and Tikuferanji? produced by ADRA Malawi. “The drama programs provide comprehensive information about HIV/Aids, for instance on men going out with younger girls”, CBG Luwangula Girl’s Group member Regina explains. “If the man is punished in the drama, for instance, it teach everyone a lesson. People get excited about such a story, and shares it with other people to pick up the lessons as well. After listening such to a drama, we meet and discuss.” Everybody agrees that discussing the programs is a regular practice, both formally in the CBGs (in this case one that is supported by ADRA), and informally when occasionally meeting and having a chat.

The ADRA research participants in Mayumba furthermore stated that from the perspective of the general community – and not from groups with specific interests such as children, young people, men, and women – MBC Radio was the preferred broadcaster, especially Radio One. This, however, should be seen the light that other stations have
bad reception around these parts. The radio transistor might not be strong enough to receive the signal, or listening to other stations takes up too much battery. If they could, the participants say that the preferred station probably would be Radio Zodiak. “That station does not hide anything,” one man states, meaning that the station has become well-known for conducting critical journalism – no matter which political party they are interfering with, it is said. Felix maintains that, despite its political affiliation, Radio One remains the major channel in terms taking up development issues, and he mentions *Nkhani Zam’mboma* as well as, once again, obituary notices as essential elements on this broadcasting schedule.

To look upon funerals as venues for social and strategic forms of communication, as mentioned above, casts a new light upon the highly esteemed practice of listening for obituary messages on Radio One that mixes into this specific form of group mobilization media. This emphasizes an important point from the communicative ecology perspective, namely that the use of ICTs is embedded in a network of related social practices of more or less formal character, in this case funerals as a highly ritualized practice of tremendous social importance and concern with maintaining a sense of social cohesion in and between communities.

Returning to the question of radio preferences, those of the participants in Mwawihe are quite similar to the Manyumba statements discussed above – preferring Radio One for its general appeal and for taking up development issues – except that many people in Mwawihe receive well and listen to the catholic broadcaster Radio Maria. Especially the women in the interviews, like Chikwaza in Nkhuta, appreciate the spiritual programs and gospel music featured there. Zodiak journalist in Mulanje Hasting Jimani said in an interview, however, that Radio Maria does not avoid going into advocacy and development issues as such, and that they have programming that supports this. This could well be in line with recent developments in the media strategies of the Catholic church, and especially with respect to Latin America’s Freire-inspired ‘liberation theology’.

Liberation theology is a branch of, to begin with, Latin American church fathers reading Paulo Freire and taking their religious worldview a step towards his revolutionary pedagogy (which, indeed, is not far from Freire’s own understanding in his core writings). This ideology lies as a foundation for the establishment of “hundreds of
citizens' media, community media, radical media, and alternative media projects throughout the region” (Rodriguez 2003, p. 177). Breaking the “culture of silence” and giving credence to “love” and “hope” as sustaining human relationships (cf. Freire 1970) is indeed on the agenda of African Catholics as well. Most famous would be the former Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela’s *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in South Africa, a kind of transitional process that Malawi has not enjoyed after Kamuzu’s repressive regime. Nonetheless, the Catholic bishops in Malawi still played part in his downfall, as noted in chapter 4. I am not acquainted with the content of Radio Maria, except for what has been pointed out here, but I take note here that the ‘commercial’ and ‘religious’ broadcasters on MACRA’s list (2012) should be scrutinized critically when it comes to evaluating the possible channels for development and social change communication – from that point of view, it would be erroneous only to focus on those marked as ‘community’ broadcasters. When I conducted the media ethnography drawn upon in this thesis, however, I did not focus on pursuing this trail of citizens’ media among religious/commercial Malawian broadcasters.

**Mulanje: A need for community radio**

To elaborate on how this need is expressed by Mulanje community members – what they expect from having a community radio and how they would see it as fitting into the existing communicative landscape – lets me present the following revised section from the formative research on Participatory Community Media Content Production (PCMCP) that I conducted for ADRA, the *PCMCP Research Report* (Jeppesen 2012).[^7]

When opening discussion on community media, not everyone knew in fact what a community radio was. During the interviews we (the ADRA research team) described the idea and made sure that the participants knew that establishing such a station is not a day-to-day process. As opposed to when we presented other ideas for participatory community media content production (such setting up SMS services, a local newsletter, an internet venue, or a rural library), the interviewees did lighten up when realizing the

[^7]: I will introduce this research briefly and elaborate on the relation between my ADRA and MA research in the methods section of this chapter.
prospects of having a community radio, even as compared to recording for radio
programs broadcast on national level. Here are a few examples:

Listol, Catherine, and Luke did all reach the same conclusion when arguing that a
community radio would benefit them in, respectively, fighting HIV/Aids, improving
adult literacy, and preventing youths from dropping out of school. Compared to national
radio, a community radio would simply be more relevant and effective, they argued,
because it would target exclusively the areas where the content had been produced.
ADRA volunteer facilitator Lamec expressed that he would have liked community radio
programs to support the local culture, and elaborated that empowering their culture
would be a key for the youth to identify themselves and know their origin. “Traditional
knowledge is a valuable source for deciding how to live one’s life; youth will also learn
new things by encountering tradition,” he says. In a similar vein, PLWHA chairman
Ignesto saw the benefits of producer and media user being within the same community,
especially considering issues of HIV/Aids: “I can reveal my status on the radio, and
people can learn from this! This kind of exposure is important.” Catherine would catch
the opportunity to recruit members for CBOs through radio programs produced and
broadcasted locally, for example women’s groups and PLWHA, which would chiefly
concern the community members themselves and not people outside the communities as
such. Catherine’s suggestion would allow the community media to act as a tool for aiding
the course of CBOs and open discursive spaces to interact with a broader public. Finally,
Wyson stressed that community radio would be an attractive source of public service
information; for instance “funeral announcement would be a welcome feature,” he says.
In that line a community radio would serve the same purposes as Radio One and Nkhani
Zam’mboma, only that the news or stories from the communities can be broadcast in
larger quantities and on a more regular basis. If we compare with national radio, a
community radio station would indeed have more airtime for the individual story, and
stories that might not be relevant for a national audience still would have a chance here.

The comments above framed a recurrent theme in the research about using
community radio content to generate social pressure mechanisms – for instance for
Ignesto to reveal his HIV status and make an example for other to do the same, and for
Catherine to mobilise women for the CBGs. In this context, we can distinguish between
advocacy strategies aiming at generating social change or development processes within
the community (countering risky sexual behaviour, for instance), and strategies that are
supposed to reach outside the community (other communities, stakeholders and decision-
makers, local NGOs and politicians). This distinction does not work in every case,
however.

When we talked about strategies for reaching within the community, the
participants complained that community meetings and dramas only reach the people who
are already engaged and informed on those development and social change issues the
activists want to bring about. “These issues are brought the chief, and they are being used
in dramas, but the messages will not go far, it will not reach the perpetrators,” Janneth in
Manymba explained: “It will just circulate within a few people, and for instance these
men [the perpetrators] will not show up at the meetings.” Ignesio went on, saying that
group media did not work to their satisfaction, even when targeting people and issues
within the community: “Dramas and meetings do not bring about the change required,
they are not very effective; an audience showing up for a drama aiming a articulating
HIV issues already knows what there is to know; they take it for granted.” In Mwawihe,
Regina was reasoning in the same way: “We expect people to change according to the
message, but some people do ignore the call for change, especially in the chief setup.
Those people are not showing up!” We asked Chimwamezi youth club how they looked
upon this critique. They have grappled with sexual issues in the Mwawihe, including
some related to incest and exploitative aspects of initiation rites. “Radio reaches
everyone, whereas people do not always get the message through dramas”, chairman
Anderson confirms, “we want to target even those people who do bad things,
everybody!”

Of course, these statements should be read in the light that we were discussing
actually setting up alternatives like producing content for community radio, which would
make the participants excited about the knocking down arguments against it, saying that
local dramas are sufficient to cover their communicative needs. Nonetheless I still think
their critique of the insufficiency of some group media to communicate certain
development topics is relevant. “There are a lot of unacceptable, hiding cultural
practices”, Modesta concludes. “People do not have a channel where they can express
themselves on these issues, so if a community media can come in, that would help.”
In the case of reaching outside the community, the participants complained that raising their issues through the existing system of traditional leaders or by going to the DA is a long, if not hopeless process. In the Manyumba community meeting, we presented a scenario of how the community is going to handle the news that there would probably not be enough fertilizer for everybody. The participants explained: The chief will call for a meeting, but before this happens there would be gossip, people would share their worries. They said that they would fear to speak out on this issue, so the talk would be hidden, and there would be no deliberation towards changing the situation as such: “We discuss the issue, and it ends there,” one woman said. An elderly man says: “That challenge we face here is that even if we discuss the issue with the chief, it ends there. People just complain, and the chief has got no power to question the government as to why they have reduced the number of coupons, or why they fail to deliver. The chief can go through the traditional system; this is the only channel he can use. But he should go straight to the DC.” Alternatively, the people could travel to the District Assembly themselves to file a complaint. But this is a long process too, let alone the travelling distance, and through my MA research I learned also that there is not much trust or enthusiasm that these bureaucratic processes will actually change anything. However, when I interviewed the Mulanje DC, he did affirm to the need for more openness when it comes to addressing development issues. The capacity of the local government is very limited – for instance, he points out, the District Assembly has only got three cars at their disposal for servicing the more than half a million people living in the rural Mulanje region – and he admits that he and his colleagues have a hard time getting to know what is happening on the ground (except in their own villages). For the purpose of empowering the communities with tools for raising awareness on development issues, including criticizing the corruption practices within the fertilizer distribution system, he was welcoming a community media production initiative. A similar problem is faced by regional Zodiak Broadcasting Cooperation journalist in Mulanje, Hastings Jimani, who pointed in an interview out that he covered three districts (more than a million people) with no employees besides himself. The points raised here by community members, a politician and a journalist beckon for improving the communicative infrastructure in Mulanje.
Corruption is, by the way, an example of an issue that does not fit neatly into the ‘within or outside of the community’ categories when it comes to deciding who to blame and who to ask for help in an advocacy strategy. Corruption cuts across these boundaries, and indeed, some people within the communities play part in forcing others to buy coupons for government-subsidized fertilizer at increased prices. The participants had strong opinions towards this issue, and high expectations towards what a community radio would do about it: “A community radio would help to eradicate this problem, because the perpetrators would be exposed, and when they are exposed and arrested, others will learn lessons,” Ignesto commented, followed by Dixon: “This does not only counts for the example of fertilizer; corruption is everywhere, even in the health sector.”

**Why community radio and not mobile phones?**

Some of the above comments suggests using community radio as a mobilizing tool, a supplement to existing word-of-mouth methods which besides gossiping and informal talk include passing on written notes by sending messages boys, meeting at school or in church, or using the chief system to call for community meetings. One would think, now, that many of these tasks could be done by using 2G mobile phones which are indeed present in the villages, but, as Felix in Manyumba claims, people generally do not have first-hand access to them. According to other participants, however, there is roughly one phone per household, usually administrated by the husbands, but the wives represented in the meetings did not feel that this directly prevented them from using the phone. The problem is rather lack of money for airtime and getting the phone recharged. Furthermore, Rosaline adds that the network is not all that stable around these parts. Latency for up to hours or days rids SMSes of their advantage in terms of speed, compared to radio or in some cases even sending message boys or leaving notes.

The participants agree, however, that if they had the money, getting a mobile phone and airtime for it would be a high priority. On the other hand, they would prioritize fresh batteries for the radio above saving for a phone. Typically the phones are used to get in touch with people from far away, and to support the family bonds. Only a few people use the phone for business purposes, e.g. getting for instance market prices, since this would require them to spend too much airtime for their pockets. On the other hand, some participants still report using the phone on CBG or CBO level when mobilizing
community members for meetings, and the Manyumba youth clubs say that they use phones to for funeral announcements and other important messages too.

From a the viewpoint of a communication practitioner, however, it should not be a question of either or. Both radio and mobile phones should be taken into account in formulating strategic communication program, and preferably combined. A radical idea is to support callers or SMSers by even giving them airtime every time they interact in, say, a community radio program. In Kenya, SMS crowdsourcing pioneer Nathan Eagle used this strategy in relation to developing his TxtEagle platform, which initially received “basic text messages from nurses used to monitor supplies across the country. Initially a success, participation quickly fell off once nurses became unwilling to spend money on text messages to update inventories. To solve this problem, the business model was modified with small amounts of mobile airtime to compensate nurses for their help.” (Peters 2011) By compensating with airtime, perhaps just one kwacha (DKK 0.02) on top of the ordinary expense, and of course by limiting the maximum number of SMSes that one user can send, the stumbling block for participation is removed. Of course, this does not generate money as such, but models like this one and the possibility for pay-off in program participation should be worth exploring if the technological setup would allow it. That is not yet the case yet in Mulanje, however, and this is indeed a reason for why this is not dwelled upon more in the present study.

Other ICTs: Television, internet, and print media
In my experience from conducting studies in the field, print media was virtually of no significance in the development and social change communicative ecologies of Chisitu and Nkando, nor were newspapers or posters seen as interesting sources of news or anyhow relevant to the community members. The participants would have encountered some materials from time to time, including the so-called rural newspapers and educative materials distributed for free through the NGO network, and enjoyed for entertainment and education by those who are able to read (especially the young people who have been able to go to school), but not for the sake of following current affairs – for this purpose the relevant materials would simply be too outdated when they finally did reach the rural sites.
Apart from reciting news bullets on the radio, however, I came across one opening in the communicative network supporting news content, arriving at Nkhuta while still fresh; a man commuting to work at the district tea plantations was able to read and bring back news from the tabloids regularly kept at the workers’ lunchroom. In this way, newspaper content did eventually hit the radio trottoir from a firsthand reader, even in these more remote areas. This situation changed, of course, as soon as one did enter the proximity of a major trading centre or the Boma, when I returned to Chisitu in 2011 we was indeed installed a couple of solar panels and televisions more compared to the year before.
Appendix 4
A Visit at Mzimba Community Radio, Mzuzu

In December 2011, I visited Mzimba Community Radio which is received within hundreds of kilometres in the Northern Mzuzu district. Although this is not in accordance with the MACRA licensing system for community radios, CEO Lance Ngulube explained to me that they use the police radio antenna for regional broadcasting (with no money involved, but in exchange they give some free airtime for a special police program), which accidentally provides the extraordinary range. As of now, MACRA have not shut down the station on these grounds.

Establishing this radio station was a painstaking process, however, beginning in 2001 as a local initiative run by Mzimba Volunteers Association – which grew out of a need for a combination of local and long-distance forms of mass communication (the Mzuzu region is approximately the size of a smaller country itself, like Botswana) – and finally opening in 2006 with support from OSISA, before they pulled out of Malawi leaving a couple of other unrealised community radio projects behind. In 2007, however, a member of the Mzimba founding board mobilized people not otherwise involved in the project and convinced them that he was the rightful owner, and promised people who sympathized with him positions at the radio. Excited about the prospect that they could make a living of it, the sympathizers physically came and took over the board and the broadcasting operations. The mutiny crew managed to keep the radio afloat for about two years, until MACRA finally shut down the station during the general election campaign in 2009. This happened because political authorities complained that the radio did not serve the community, but rather made propaganda for one single opposition candidate (the same person, by the way, who paid the first year’s MACRA broadcasting license). OSISA’s donor, AMARC, then demanded a professional manager to run the station, and the choice fell on Lance Ngulube who is now officially the only non-voluntary employee at the station (the voluntary staffs still receive an allowance, however, but not more than MK 12,000 for one month of full time work).

Despite power cuts preventing the station from being operational on a regular basis, Mzimba Community Radio is growing in success and support from its listeners, which
was evident among the participants in the research that I conducted for ADRA in two Mzuzu communities. They favoured the radio station for its agricultural content, especially the Farmer Voice Radio program, and for “adding value to our local culture” through language learning and youth counselling programs, as one participant Gibson said (Jeppesen 2012, p. 28). Still, Ngulube agrees with the participants that the his radio is challenged in terms of including its listeners in program production, and explains that this is due to an inefficient and expensive setup where volunteer journalists have to travel long distances to record the voices of just a few remote communities. If the communities themselves had the appropriate equipment (say, a hand recorder) and a local organisation to back up participatory forms of content production (Ngulube would call it Radio Action Groups), the community radio station would be transformed into a hub for a radically improved communicative infrastructure. The case of the Mzimba rebellion is an example of how such an initiative quickly may drown in party politics, which again emphasizes the importance of attending first to community ownership and support, instead of risking corruption and misuse from non-elected board members.

Appendices 4-12 (please refer to the enclosed CD)

Appendix 5  : PCMCP Research Report (Jeppesen 2012)
Appendix 6  : Mini-Survey Data
Appendix 7  : Book of field notes, 2010
Appendix 8  : Book of field notes, 2011
Appendix 9  : [YouTube link] An Orphan/Mwana Mwamasiye (Jeppesen 2011)
Appendix 10 : [YouTube link] The Town Girl (Jeppesen 2010)
Appendix 11 : Full transcripts of ROAR audio and video recordings in
Appendix 12 : [YouTube link] Could you use of animal characters to make your story more like nthano? Excerpt from Tambala Storytelling Workshop.
Resumé (dansk)

Specialet Folktales for Social Change: A Study of Dialogic Democracy, Oral Culture, & Communication for Social Change in Rural Malawi forbinder fagene Filosofi og Kommunikation i en dobbelt undersøgelse af, for det første, mulighederne for at forankre og fra filosofisk hold retfærdiggøre en dialogisk demokrati-teoretisk retning for ’Communication for Social Change’-paradigmet (CFSC) inden for kommunikationsforskning og -praksis. For det andet undersøger specialet hvordan den samme teoretiske forankring kan bringes til anvendelse i planlægningen, udførelsen og analysen af det af forfatteren udviklede kommunikations- og aktionsforskningsprojekt, ROAR.

ROAR står for ’Remediating Orature through Action Research’. Projektet er indrammet af en etnografisk undersøgelse fra 2010, ligeledes foretaget af forfatteren, om mediebrug og hverdagspraksisser omkring eventyrfortælling i det sydøstafrikanske land Malawi. I november 2011 vendte forfatteren tilbage til det samme landområde for aktivt at interagere med indbyggerne fra to landsbyer, herunder de hverdagspraktiserende eventyrfortællere. ROAR-eksperimentet gik først ud på at identificere samfundsrelevante emner og problemer ved at afholde to landsbydialoger med tilslutning på tværs af alder, køn, og social status. Dernæst blev de prioriterede emner og problemer ført ind i en værkstedskonstekst, hvor de lokale og primært kvindelige fortællere blev udfordret til at bruge deres evner inden for improvisation af eventyr, for dermed at adressere det valgte emne eller problem for en bredere offentlighed.

ROAR-eksperimentet er inspireret af en række Malawianske NGO-initiativer som arbejder med kultursensitiv udviklingskommunikation. Modsat disse initiativer retter ROAR sig dog radikalt mod og diskuterer helt at overgive ejerskabet til lokale kræfter i landsbyerne. Dermed sigter ROAR mod at være en pilot for selvbærende og deltagende kreation af indhold til især lokale radiomedier.

I analysen beskæftiger specialet sig med at aktivere den dialogiske demokratiteori i forbindelse med ROAR. Dialogisk demokrati skal ses som en videreudvikling af de såkaldte deliberative og deltagende forgreninger indenfor politisk filosofisk tænkning. Det konkluderes blandt andet at Malawis traditionelle fortælleformer har den dialogiske kvalitet, ligesom mange andre typer fortælling, at kunne åbne op for hidtil ukendte sociale perspektiver for deres tilhørere, hvilket fra et offentlighedsperspektiv skaber grobund for en socialt velforankret og retfærdig form for demokratisk deliberation.
Farlige fortællinger

Af JONAS AGERBÆK JEPPESEN
Kommunikation & Filosofi, RUC

»Dem der taler med svag stemme, skal vise mere mod.«

»Det handler ikke om stemmekraft, men usikkerhed omkring hvad man skal sige,« Chikhwazas kommentar ud løser samstemmende pludren fra flokken: »Det kan få en til at ryste.« Ngomba tager igen ordet:

»I dag blev der nær slået én ihjel foran fordelingsstationen. Før var kunstgødning til at betale, se nu hvad der er sket!«

»Nok om det, det er os som er skyld i det her,« afbryder Malumba.

»Hvem? Var jeg ved stationen da de trampede på hende?«

»Det er det, som er pointen med at gøre det her til en fortælling. Det går ikke at kun at pege fingre!«


Kvinderne har valgt at fortælle om hungersnøden som de frygter kommer efter næste høst. Der er ikke nok land til den enkelte husholdning kan klare sig gen- nem mellempérioden, siger de. Siden hungersnøden i 2002 har Malawis regering med donormidler etableret en støtteordning med kunstgødning til kraftigt nedsatte priser, men nu giver den udpint jord ikke nok uden til- sætning. Dertil kommer at korruptionen for længst har æddet sig ind i distributionssystemet. Priserne på sort-
børsmarkedet er tredoblet, situationen ved fordelingsstationerne er deparat og som resultat er den billige kunstgødnings til at købe for dem som programmet ellers var tiltænkt: de allerfattigste.

Et komplekst samfundsproblem
I diktafonens lille højtaler skratter Ngombas stemme på fuld lydstyrke: "Der var engang to brødre – go! Som havde for lidt land – go! Priserne på kunstgødnud var for høje – go!"


Indrømmet, mere kunstgødninger er ikke en langsigtet løsning. Men i det tætbefolkede lokalområde sydøst for Mulanje-bjerget er mere kunstgødnings en nødvendighed, her og nu. Problematikken er kompleks og filtret ind i et net af magtrelationer og misbrug, fra lokalt til formodentlig nationalt niveau. Hvis ikke myndighederne og medierne er direkte involveret i korruptionen, er deres muligheder for at angribe problematikken begrænset så længe nyhederne fra landsbyen ikke når frem. Omvendt når der konventionelle medier så ikke langt ud i landområderne som de ville ønske. For eksempel repræsenterer kun en journalist fra den ellers kritiske Radio Zodiak de mere end én million mennesker som bor omkring Mulanje. Middelere er tilsvarende begrænset hos den lokale forsamling af folkemasserne vil kun tre biler til at nå ud i områdets afkroge og en grænse til at nå området. Fortælletraditionen og kultur, en situation hvor tavsheden er undertrykt, handlerum. Men i stedet for at forvente at andre skal opsøge de trængte mennesker, mener jeg det er nødvendigt at støtte befolkningens muligheder for og møder hvorpå de selv kan komme til orde i et offentligt rum.

For at komme til orde på et selvfølgelig nødvendigt med den fysiske mulighed eller adgang til et sådant rum. I første instans handler mit specialprojekt om at etablere lokalforankret medieproduktion og samt lokale radiostationer, der som ikke er mange af i Malawi. Dernæst kan vi tale om hvordan, altså på hvilke møder kvindegruppen skal komme til orde. Her foreslår jeg at trække på den eksisterende og populære fortællertradition. Vores ekspertise handler dermed ikke kun om at genfortælle de kendte eventyr. Det går også ud på at undersøge om det også er muligt med held at ændre på eventyrerne, og placere dem som strategiske og dialogiske input som led i at skabe mere demokratisk kommunikation.

Hvad kan eventyrerne bruges til?
Frie, lokale medier kan bruges til at lægge social og politisk pres netop hvor der er behov – i den lokale kontekst. Dette er den primære grund til at støtte dem. I speciale argumenterer jeg dernæst for nødvendigheden af at inddrage den eksisterende kommunikationskultur, herunder fortælletraditionen, i formuleringen af strategier som skal støtte demokratisk kommunikation lokalt. Som den indiske professor Mohan Dutta udtrykker det, så bør en sådan kommunikationsstrategi ikke blot tilpasses kulturen, kulturen skal derimod være udgangspunktet for strategien. Dermed opnår kulturens medlemmer anerkendelse, og deres værdier kommer i centrum for samfundsudviklingen. Strategien med at bruge fortælletraditionen som en mulig måde at komme til orde navigerer mellem disse to poler.

En fordel ved Malawi fortællekultur er at den kan bruges til at føre en indirekte social og politisk kritik. Landsbylederne har nemlig ret i at kvindegruppens første bud på en fortælling er for direkte, hvad Malumba også fremhæver i dialogen ovenfor: Den politiske kultur i Malawi bygger på respekt, og det går ikke at ‘pege fingre’.

En indirekte fortælling følger det politiske spils regler, men åbner samtidig en sprække som kvinderne kan udnytte i deres kamp for social retfærdighed og et mere demokratisk samfund. Almindeligt er hvad den latin-amerikanske pædagog Paulo Freire kalder ’tavshedens kultur’, en situation hvor tavsheden er undertrykte landsbyboeres eneste mulighed. Fortælletraditionen og muligheden for at bruge lokale medier udvider dette handlerum.

Ikke mere tavshed
Da jeg først ankom til landsbyen, var jeg blevet advaret mod at kritisere den daværende præsident Mutharika. Jeg skulle træde varsomt, ikke kun over for de lokale regeringsrepræsentanter, men også over for ganske almindelige folk. Præsidenten viser muligvis diktatoriske tendenser, men han kommer fra Mulanje-området, og her vil folk støtte ham til det sidste.

Jeg blev hurtigt bekæftet i antagelsen. Som det er skik og brug bliver en gæst budt velkommen med sang og dans: »Vi modtager dig med glæde, og dette skete under general Mutharika!« Men på dagen for min afrejse, hvor folk vidste hvem jeg var, og hvad jeg repræsen-
terede, sad selvsame sangerinde og proklamerede sin dybeste utilfredshed med den politiske situation. Tavsheden blev brudt, forherligelsen af præsidenten var blot en rutinmæssig afledningsmanøvre.

Ngomba, Chikhwaza, Malumba og de andre fortællere tog landsbypers kritik til efterretning og udformede en ny fortælling. Fortællingen er farlig i den forstand at den kritiserer korruptionsproblemet. Men ved at sigte bredt og gå indirekte til værks undgår den at udpege syndere og dermed skabe splid. En sådan taktik vil efter min overbevisning gøre det muligt for lokalmedier og befolkning at forbedre Malawis demokrati.
KOMMUNIKLATIONSPLAN

I det følgende gør jeg rede for de overvejelser jeg har gjort mig i forbindelse med udformningen af artiklen “Farlige Fortællinger” angående valg af målgruppe, medie, kommunikationssituation samt tekstens komposition (jf. udlydende bestemmelse om formidling i specialer på Kommunikation, revideret 9. december 2010).

Hvis artiklen udgives i de første to mulige angivne medier skal den oversættes til engelsk, men jeg har valgt at skrive den på dansk for at kunne blive vurderet på “dansk stave-, formidlings- og formuleringsevne” (Studieordning af 2006, § 44, stk. 2 og § 47/48, stk. 2)

Kommunikationsplanen er fratrukket noter på 4.786 af maksimum 4.800 enheder (2 ns).

“Farlige fortællinger” formidler nogle af de begrundelser for at anlægge en kulturcentreret strategi indenfor udviklingskommunikation som jeg når frem til i mit speciale. Desuden vil jeg med artiklen åbne spørgsmålet om der i Malawis fortælletraditioner gemmer sig en ressource for deltagende produktion af folkeligt inkluderende, socialpolitisk kritiske og dermed demokratiske former for udviklingskommunikation.

Artiklens placering: Målgruppe, media, og kommunikationssituation

Artiklen henvender sig på den ene side til folk med særinteresse indenfor social forandrings- og udviklingskommunikation (akademikere og praktikere indenfor CFSC, herunder ideudviklere og beslutningstagere i NGO-regi, samt studerende), og på den anden side også til læsere med bredere interesser indenfor kommunikation eller udvikling.

Målgruppen er altså en på én gang snæver og bredt defineret del-offentlighed. CFSC er et snævert fællesskab inden for fagfeltet kommunikation, hvorimod de øvrige to felter går på tværs af mange gruppens almene og faglige forforståelser. Teksten skal derfor ramme bredt, og skal derfor undgå at tage CFSC-paradigmets forbilleder for givet – herunder Dutta’s syn på kulturcentrerede og tilpassede kommunikationsstrategier, og Freire’s begreb om tavshedskultur.

Jeg forestiller mig at artiklen skal figurere i et udviklingsfagligt medie og gerne online, for eksempel www.cfsc.org eller www.orecomm.net. Førstnævnte har netudgivelsen MAZI som står for let tilgængelig formidling af CFSC-projekter, men det lader dog til at være udgået. Ørecomm bringer jævnligt gæsteblogindsag, løst defineret, dog mest mest klummer og kommentarer. Dansksporgede medier kunne være www.kommunikationsforum.dk, som har stærkt fokus på vidensdeling inden for bred kommunikationsfaglighed, eller Udenrigsministeriet magasin, Udvikling, om end de mest efterspørger reportager.

Kommunikationssituationen er ikke fagfaglig som sådan. Jeg forestiller mig at min læser søger de nævnte medier for deres brede tilgang til kommunikations- eller udviklingsfeltet (Kommunikationsforum eller magasinet Udvikling) eller delfeltet CFSC (de øvrige to netsteder), og for at blive pirret på nysgerrigheden. Der lægges op til legende læsning, hvor målet er at læserens givne interesse skal fænges og fastholdes, og

2 Se f.eks. http://orecomm.net/2012/guest-blogger-can-online-education-connect-the-world/
3 http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/retningslinjer-kontakt
det er på dette grundlag at jeg vælger et featureformat, som kræver nogen grad af fordybelse. I kontrast til dette står eksempelvis nyhedstrekantens artikelformat, hvor læsere konfigureres som informationshungrende og i tidsnød og derfor i princippet skal kunne nøjes med at læse det første afsnit.5

Komposition: Appel, sprog og stil

Artiklen er komponeret efter såkaldte “den tredje måde”, som kombinerer en narrativ stilistik med fakta- mættet indhold. Det bliver til tre fortællende (anslag, midte, udtoning) afsnit afløst af to BBI-afsnit – det er Boring But Important.7


Første BBI-afsnit er en kort indføring i fortælletraditionen, og der leveres viden som du skal bruge til at dechifrere radiofortællingens go! senere i teksten. Der følger en kort redegørelse for specialets ’eksperiment’, og der bliver presset fakta ind om hungersnød Malawi, om regeringens understøttelsesprogram og korruption i distributionen af kunstgødning.

Derpå når læsere til det midterste fortælleafsnit. Overgangen er brat, men Ngomas navn bliver nævnt for at etablere en forbindelse til den viden læsere nu har om projektet og kvindeguppen. Landsbyledernes interaktion er kogt ned, men afsnittet afsluttes af en direkte replik, som skal vække læsere kritiske sans: Er hele seancen i virkeligheden en farce?

Overgangen til næste BBI-afsnit sikres ved at tage fat hvor fortælleafsnittet slap, ved kunstgødnings, og emnet bruges til opbygge og eksplicitere artiklens idé.

Afsluttende fortælleafsnit starter med en afstikker. Læsere får at vide at Malawi for nylig har haft en præsident med diktatortendenser, men anekdoten om sangerinden skal først og fremmest give en aha-oplevelse, hvor det viser sig for læseren at der selv i en ’tavs kultur’ gemmer sig kritiske perspektiver.

Til sidst vender vi, som i en rammefortælling, tilbage til begyndelsen. Læsere har muligvis “slidt sig igennem” hele artiklen for dette øjeblik, for at ”høre hvordan det går videre med de personer de mødte i scene et.”9 Det er en åben slutning, men glædelig da vi hører at forællerne gør det godt. Endelig slås budskabet fast – via lokale medier kan befolkningen forbedre Malawis demokrat.

7 Formuleringen er Mikkel Hvids (se: “Featureartiklen – et signalement”. Fascinerende fortælling, UPDATE, 2007. 9-21), baseret på Clark, ”Two Ways to Read, Three Ways to Write”.
8 Fry. ”Unmuddling Middles”.