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UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Tough times, Hard choices: An examination of the implications of the rise of philanthro-investigative journalism in South Africa and Uganda

Research Report

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS (JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES)

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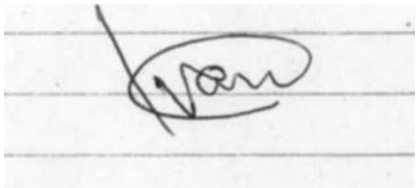
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Declaration

I, Ivan Okuda do hereby affirm that this research report is my original work and that it has never been presented to any other university or institution for the award of any academic qualification. Statements attributable to and sourced from other people's works have been duly acknowledged.



Signed……_____…….
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Approval

We, the undersigned hereby certify that we have read and therefore recommend for acceptance by the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, a research report titled, 'Tough times, Hard choices: An examination of the implications of the rise of philanthro-investigative journalism in South Africa and Uganda' in partial fulfillment of the award of the degree of Master of Arts (Journalism and Media Studies) by the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Signed……
Date:……

Prof. Anton Harber

Signed…….

Date:……

Prof. Franz Kruger

Dedication

To family, friends and all men and women whose contribution to my academic and professional career journey will forever be etched in indelible memory**.**

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Media Africa program for the scholarship that enabled me to undertake post graduate study at Wits University. To Ms. Brigitte Read, the ever caring and kind Program Manager and to Mr. Christoph Plate, the always witty and thoughtful director of the program, *danke*!

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AmaB……...AmaBhungane Center for Investigative Journalism

ABC…… Audit Bureau of Circulation

ANC…… African National Congress

Bhekisisa……. Bhekisisa Center for Health Journalism

CEO…… Chief Executive Officer

DGF…….Democratic Governance Facility

NMG……Nation Media Group

NRA/M……National Resistance Army/Movement

NTV…… Nation TV

NBS…… Nile Broadcasting Services

NGO……Non-Governmental Organisation

KAS…… Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

OSF…… Open Society Foundations

OSISA…… Open Society Initiative for South Africa

OSIEA……. ……. Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa

UNICEF……. United Nations Children Emergency Fund

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Abstract

The business model around which commercial media houses were built, one reliant on advertising and newspaper circulation, is facing an existential threat with technological advancements causing tectonic shifts in how audiences consume news. Advertising revenue is falling. The future of commercial media is grim. Efforts to save critical genres of journalism like investigative reporting are in high gear across the globe with philanthro-investigative journalism emerging as one of the approaches to support investigative reporting amidst commercial constraints afflicting the media. Drawing on critical political economy as the overarching theoretical framework, and media economics theory, with in-depth interviews and document analysis as research methodologies, this study, using South Africa's AmaBhungane and Uganda's *New Vision* as cases, examined the implications of this emerging model to journalistic roles, editorial independence, and teased out sustainability questions. It finds that there are concerns with editorial independence, credibility of grantee media houses and that donors are subtly setting the agenda for media houses through funding specific topics or issues, impacting on journalists' understanding of their role in society. It also finds that sustainability remains a contested question with no clear views on whether this model should be adopted as one that can sustainably support investigative reporting, or it should only be a stopgap measure to address commercial constraints in newsrooms. The study conclusively notes that the model is here to stay and there is recognition in the industry that it is one of the important approaches media organisations can explore to fund investigative journalism but they must insulate themselves from its associated threats to their own credibility and independence while continually reflecting on the sustainability conundrum.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the purpose of the study, its context and background, the main problems which have informed it, the aims and objectives of the research project as well as its significance.

1.1 Purpose of the study

Traditional media is entangled in turbulence with fundamental shifts in the business model that supported journalism for centuries losing ground to technological advancements. As means of information gathering, dissemination and access change the way audiences consume news, the advertising dynamics have equally transformed with legacy media competing for adverts with new media, chiefly social media giants like Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube. Media houses that have failed to adapt have either downsized, scaled down operations or closed shop. Others have sought partnerships with philanthropic entities to fund aspects of their journalism considered critical such as health and investigative reporting while nonprofit journalism entities supported by philanthropic and/or donor funding have emerged in Africa.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the emerging model of nonprofit investigative journalism arising from the commercial constraints afflicting traditional media in South Africa and Uganda. This study examines the implications of this model for content gathering processes, media ethics (without necessarily making an ethical inquiry but teasing out the ethical dilemmas especially editorial independence), the structure of news organisations and journalists' understanding of journalistic roles in society.

1.2 Context and background of the study

In the last decade, the media economics landscape across the globe in general, and Africa specifically, has radically changed. Legacy media, chiefly constituting the newspaper, magazine, television and radio station, have been affected by paradigm shifts in advertising revenue sources and stiff competition from social media.

Some scholars and commentators have written of the 'slow death' of traditional media (for example, Desjardins 2016) while in countries like Uganda, media practitioners and entrepreneurs familiar with the business environment there have predicted that in the next 10 years, "there will be no more newspapers, at least none making a profit from the business," (Kyamutetera 2019).

The old business model constructed around subscription, print copy sales and advertising revenue now competes with digital media which has opened the flood gates for innumerable websites, democratizing and liberalizing journalism in more ways than ever imagined. The monopoly of news production has been broken to the extent that anyone anywhere anytime can now open a website, claim to do journalism and compete in the crowded advertising pool. That includes "fake news" websites whose preoccupation is sensationalism to attract clicks.

Kruger has argued that, “The business model that has underpinned journalism in much of the world for at least a century is under strain and is unlikely to recover. Audiences are increasingly moving to new, largely free, media platforms to satisfy their information needs, leaving legacy media struggling to adapt,” (Kruger, 2016: ii).

To illustrate Kruger’s point, the number of South Africans on the internet suffices. As of 2019, there were no less than 31.18 million active internet users, 28.99 million active mobile internet users, and South Africa had 54 percent internet penetration (Statista, 2019).

In quarter four of 2018, the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) reported total newspaper circulation in South Africa declining by 1.6% on the previous quarter, against the backdrop of stagnant circulation in the second and first quarters (Breitenbach 2019).

A 2019 Reuters Institute Digital News Report indicated that, “while consumption of news in print form is declining (in South Africa), consumers are increasingly relying on digital platforms to get the news,” (Reuters, 2019). The report noted that whereas there was relatively high trust in the news, “revenue for news media has been on a downward spiral for several years, with a 12% drop in ad spend in 2018 for television, 5.6% for radio and 7.7% for print,” (Omarjee, 2019). Data covering the last decade points to a 49% decline in newspaper circulation in the country according to Omarjee (2019) and study showed that whereas audiences have migrated online in significant numbers, “most digital advertising revenue goes to big social media and search platforms”.

In Uganda, newspaper copy sales and commercial viability are dwindling. Kyamutetera (2019), in a 12-year analysis of reports from the Audit Bureau of Circulations which monitors newspapers in Uganda, notes that two of Uganda’s leading dailies (*The New Vision, Daily Monitor*) lost 28.2% of their circulation, dropping from a combined daily sales average of 59,279 to 42,193 copies. Weekend newspapers lost 55.6% of their circulation, dropping from a combined daily sales total of 59,897 copies in 2007 to 26,560 copies in December 2018.

Across the entire print industry, “Falling circulation, coupled with increased advertising rates continue to push away advertisers,” (Kyamutetera 2019: 2).

As a result of this and more evidence of a major shakeup in the media economics landscape, good journalism suffers. For instance, investigative journalism, that which Harber (2018) describes as bringing out, ‘the ugliest aspects of the societies we live in’ and involves journalists digging in the darkest nooks and crannies of our society, has been affected.

One American reporter remarked in an interview, “The advertising model that historically supported journalism is no longer there, and no area has suffered more than local investigative journalism,” (Ranalli, 2019).

At some point, Knobel notes, "staff cuts begin to erode even a committed newspaper's ability to perform the watchdog role," (Knobel, 2018:1). Whereas newspapers seek to watch the actions of those who wield power in society, the business side of the publication has bottom line targets to meet. At the same time, the public is demanding for more critical reporting on such social ills as corruption, crime and abuse of power.

As American economist and Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz notes, "Investigative journalism may have no market value, but it is done in the public good. I believe that with good journalism also with individual citizens and foundations and trusts committed to democracy, we will be able to pull back from the brink to reach a new progressive era," (Jones, 2017:1).

Kruger offers context to Stiglitz's assertion, "new political leaders, as in the USA, seem to take pride in asserting that truth is simply what they say it is, refusing to be held accountable by journalism. Are we really entering a post truth world? In fact, we would argue, journalism becomes more, not less important, even though its future shape is very unclear," (Kruger, 2016:12).

It is against this background that some philanthropic and non profit organisations have committed to fund critical genres of journalism because, they argue, watch dog journalism is too important to die (Froomkin, 2013).

This study interrogates the emergence of these models in Africa, such as South Africa's amaBhungane and the *New Vision* in Uganda, whose newsroom has received support for investigative reporting from European donors.

Grants from global philanthropy entities are ever more available for journalists to bolster their paltry investigative reporting budgets (Elliott, 2017), a phenomenon termed by the *Economist* newspaper in 2012 as 'philanthro-journalism'. In the context of this study's scope I call it philanthro-investigative journalism.

Some of the foundation donors supporting philanthro-investigative journalism in the world include Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Knight Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation (Benson, 2016).

In developed democracies such as Finland, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, the state gives subsidies to support public media which fall in the two categories of public service broadcasting that is "focused on the public good and is independent but is often financially supported by the state," and state owned media which is controlled and directly funded by the state (Aceproject, 2019).

Nielsen and Linnebank (2011) observe that in those cases, "governments offer more indirect than direct support for private sector while Finland, France, and Italy offer direct subsidies; in Finland

and France almost exclusively for the printed press, in Italy also to local broadcasters," (Nielsen and Linnebank, 2011:6).

In South Africa and Uganda, public broadcasters rely on advertising to support their operations, but they still receive support from the state, including when they are in financial distress. In 2019 for instance, SABC received a R2.1 billion bailout as a 'short-term turnaround plan' from government to support its public broadcasting service mandate *(Businesstech,* 2019). It has, thereafter continued to appeal for more support from the state. The same is true with the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) which continually runs to the state for bail outs. In 2017 for example, the government of Uganda earmarked Uganda shillings 20 billion (US $6 million) to clear the company's debts in a bid to revamp the national broadcaster (Uganda Radio Network, 2017). Under section 14 of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Act, 2005, the funding of the corporation consists of grants of a capital nature from the government, donations that may be made to the corporation, any loan from government, television viewing license fees and advertising revenue. The law therefore envisages the Ugandan taxpayer funding UBC while expecting it to raise revenue from advertising.

There has also been foreign aid funding to the media in Africa by states like the USA and UK. This predates the current crisis in traditional media. That funding, as a foreign policy tool to advance the interests of countries like the USA, went into media development programs as opposed to actual journalism (newsroom operations). Programs such as training for journalists, development of the legal and policy framework governing the media, were the key focus. The rise of China as a global powerhouse has seen the Asian nation practically follow the script of the west, putting substantial money into African media, in advancement of its strategic interests.

Essa (2018) notes that in 1999, "China embarked on an economic and social outreach program to the continent, known as its 'Going Out" policy, in which it injected millions of dollars of investment into the African media," (Essa, 2018: 2). This, the author argues, was to, "counter the rampant negative perceptions of China in Western media, the project looked to take back control of the country's image in a continent where its interests were only set to grow."

This study is alive to the existence and history of these funding interventions but focuses on philanthro-investigative journalism which is distinct from state funding to public broadcasters and foreign aid support to the media in Africa.

Some journalists and editors are apprehensive of this model and yet there are notable outcomes with respectable bodies of work churned out by reporters funded through philanthropy receiving recognition through such prestigious awards as the Taco Kuiper Award for Investigative Journalism in South Africa.

There are concerns that the same fears the media had with corporate advertisers seeking to influence the news agenda are bouncing back to haunt the media, this time in the name of philanthropy. Other concerns arise: 'Whose interests do these philanthropies serve/ what is their

agenda?' And how this can affect news production processes and content especially if news organisations take to the advocacy rostrum in the name of journalism.

1.3 Problem Statement

Whereas there is considerable research on the crisis in legacy media and its business model in Africa, there is noticeable scarcity of scholarship and knowledge on the alternatives that have emerged as part of the solution to this predicament. There is a gap in terms of study of alternative funding sources for the media and business models in Africa. Ntibinyane (2018) notes for instance, that eight years after the first non-profit investigative journalism organization was set up in South Africa, "not much has been done to investigate motives behind their creation, funding structures, examine, assess and evaluate their impact or lack thereof in the continent and the challenges they face," (Ntibinyane, 2018:10). This is attributable to the fact that this is a relatively new phenomenon and therefore not much academic work has been produced around not-for-profit investigative journalism in Africa (Ntibinyane, 2018). This context informs this research project.

1.4 Aims and objectives of the research

This research aims to interrogate the implications of philanthropic funding of investigative journalism in South Africa and Uganda with specific emphasis on two cases (South Africa's Amabhungane and Uganda's *New Vision* newspaper).

Using these two cases, this project aims to explore the nature of the relationship that exists between donors and the media organisations they fund, how they balance varying interests, the meeting point between journalism ethics (independence) and donors' interests. The research project also aims to cast light on how the model is affecting newsroom structures and news gathering processes.

1.5 Research questions

1. What are the implications of the emerging model of philanthro-investigative journalism for the practice of journalism, particularly the process of news production?
2. Does this model influence what is published and if so, how?
3. What do the donors and/or philanthropic foundations want out of this relationship with media organisations and if conflicts of interest arise in the relationship, how are those managed by the donor organisations and the news organisation?

1.6 Rationale

This research arises from recognition of the fact that the business environment of legacy media can only get harsher as technology companies compete with traditional media for advertising and audiences.

Studies such as Ntibinyane's (2018) have focused on non-profit investigative journalism organizations like Amabhungane in South Africa. Most of these studies also tend to praise the

new model without asking critical questions such as those raised in this research project, including the nature of tradeoffs between media organisations and their funders and the impact of donor funding on the journalism process. Ntibinyane (2018), for instance, projects these outfits as the magic bullet for a failing media business model but is there such a thing as 'the only solution' to the commercial constraints afflicting media houses today? This research project interrogates the emergence of philanthro-investigative journalism with a more inquisitive and cynical lens rather than approach it as the 'magic bullet' which should be embraced by all and sundry.

Some studies have explored the likely challenges of this model and queried the agenda of philanthropic foundations, where they invest and why in those specific areas, its sustainability, and the challenge of little known newspapers who may not catch the donor's eye (see: Browne 2010, Ibrisevic 2019, Oldroyd 2017, Meiksins and McCambridge 2019, Yuqing shi 2018, Sillesen 2015).

This research project studies two different cases, the mainstream commercial media organization (*New Vision*) which adopts a philanthro-investigative journalism approach to fund some aspects of its journalism and a standalone organization (Amabhungane) which is founded purely as a donor funded media house. Whereas the research project is not comparative in nature, it seeks to interrogate the experiences of the two approaches in their uniqueness and appreciate, in ways not done before, what the distinctive experiences of these organisations are.

There is also need to study the emerging trend of philanthro-investigative journalism in Uganda and South Africa because it is becoming an increasingly important approach to funding and some would argue, sustaining investigative journalism on the continent and globally. It is important therefore, that this model is studied and understood better.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This project draws on critical political economy theory and media economics theory to explore the rise of philanthro-investigative journalism in South Africa and Uganda.

2.2 Critical political economy theory

At the heart of critical political economy is the idea that the varied ways in which the media is organized and financed have a correlation with the nature and scope of media content, how it plays its role in society and how society consumes its products and services.

As a theory, critical political economy of the media can be traced to two sources of inspiration: Marxist thought and democratic politics (Hardy, 2016). On the one hand, according to Hardy, critical political economy interrogates power in relation to the media and its association with the conditions for attaining democracy. On the other hand, the theory questions, "the structuring influence of capitalist economic and social arrangements," (Hardy, 2016:6).

In its classic and contemporary forms, critical political economy is shaped by what Hardy calls a reductive determinism that tends to pay attention to the relative, "autonomy of the political sphere and civil sphere, to agency and structure, to the interplay of the symbolic and economic," (Hardy, 2016:6).

In line with critical political economy theory being built in part on democratic ideals, McChesney makes a case for the news media to support democratic self-government and supports the ideal of, "a heterogeneous system, with different structures and subsidy systems, and significant nonprofit competition with an immediate expansion of public, community, and student media," (McChesney, 2013). These objectives however, Hardy agues, conflict with the capitalist foundations of commercial news media because, "This requires competition between providers, but also significant material resources to organise journalism. It must be an open system, so anyone can practise, but it requires "great institutions", with paid journalists as well as copyeditors, fact checkers and proofreaders and the institutional muscle to stand up to governments and corporate power," (Hardy, 2016:18).

This theory is relevant in the analysis of the media in 21st century information society. Scholars such as Fuchs argue that classical critical political economy theory, "can play a role in analyzing the information society and the information economy, as well as analyzing the role of the media and the information economy in economic development, the new imperialism, and the new economic crisis," (Fuchs, 2011:1).

Some scholars find fault with reliance on this theory as a tool of analysis of the media on account of its history, especially the Marxist school of thought and its fascination with dialectical

materialism. This point of departure arises from the reductionist approach of the theory. That reductionism is attributable to Marxist thought through the lens of dialectical materialism and its emphasis on the importance of real-world conditions, in terms of class, labour, and socioeconomic interactions (Wikipedia, 2020).

Hardy for instance disagrees with Fuchs to the extent that the critical political economy tradition originated from strong critiques of economism, "and other tendencies of "vulgar" Marxism to offer reductive and rigid explanations derived from the selective application of Marx's nineteenth-century writings," (Hardy, 2016:7). Hardy does not dismiss Marxist thought (as one of the inspirations of this theory) because, as he admits, Marxism provides a rich and important historical-conceptual framework but, "the critical political economy tradition incorporates broader insights to understand the symbolic as well as economic dimensions of cultural production and communications, and the public good values that influence journalisms."

There are concerns, in some scholarly circles, about whether critical political economy is in tune with the changing power relations that underpin media production processes today. Mansell (2004) avers that it is timely to renew studies in the tradition of the political economy of media and communications, "in order to develop a critical and comprehensive analysis of the social and economic dynamics of the production and consumption of new media," and, "on the way changing power relationships are informing the development and application of new media products and services," (Mansel, 2004:4).

To Mansell, any political economy of the (new) media, "must be as concerned with symbolic form, meaning and action as it is with structures of power and institutions," because, he argues, "If resources are scarce and if power is unequally distributed in society, then the key issue is how these scarce resources are allocated and controlled and with what consequences for human action. Distinctions between the older and newer media relate to how and why scarcity conditions emerge and the extent to which they contribute to the reproduction of unequal social conditions. Without research that gives a central place to power as a 'headline' issue in new media studies, we can only speculate about how inequality may be reproduced and then seen as the 'natural' outcome of innovations in new media technologies," (Mansell: 2004:4).

Whichever way one looks at it, the value of critical political economy theory in understanding economic and political power and its interface with the media cannot be overemphasized. Hardy concedes that critical political economy has contributed to analysis of, "the internetization of mass media, the relationships between legacy media and digital natives and the implications of how journalism is financed, resourced and organized."

Critical political economists concern themselves with the relationship between funding, ownership, legal and political power and how that affects the media's role in society. The theory's origins are anchored in 'traditional' media (print and broadcasting) but with

technological advancements considering the fourth industrial revolution, the theory can play a role in how we appreciate media networks today.

Critical political economists are also interested in analysis of political power and its relationship with such phenomena as public broadcasting as well as the practice of journalism and delivery of news.

This is relatable when one reflects on some of the world's media empires such as *Time Warner, Disney, News Corp., Bertelsmann, CBS, NBC,* and V*iacom* whose presence have a global footprint. They also produce, reproduce, and distribute significant socio-economic, political, and cultural power, the so-called soft power. The networked nature of organization, production, and distribution that underpins how the world's multi-national media organizations operate is one that is best examined using critical political economy theory. What, for example, are the production and distribution arrangements and the financial partnerships between conglomerates and regional and local media organizations? What links exist between them and business, political power centers around the globe? Critical political economy theory helps answer such questions.

Arsenault observes that, "contemporary processes of globalization, digitization, networking, and cultural differentiation of media have induced new forms of organization, production, and distribution through which these multi-national media businesses operate. The global network of media organizations is a vast and complex entity constituted by countless players," (Arsenault, 2008:707). Accordingly, critical political economists are interested in examining the intersectionality of these power relations and the media.

Media regulation (and deregulation) in relation to critical political economy theory

Like cultural studies, critical political economy analyses the constitution and exercise of power and how that power, in all its manifestations, affects the media. Critical political economists are also intrigued by another source of power that is not funding but the state whose power over the media is exercised through such interventions as legal and policy reform in determining the media's conduct.

In the study of the media through critical political economy, we are interested in the 'wider structures' as an operative context of these processes, the social relations, the power play and what Murdorch (2005) calls, "structured asymmetries in social relations".

Instrumentalists perceive privately owned media as tools and re-enforcements of class domination as argued by Herman and Chomsky (1998). Murdoch has challenged this view, proposing that whereas it is true that the state and business elites have considerable power over the press and advertisers influence content, it is important to reflect on the fact that they operate in the context of structures. Those structures, "impose limits, offer opportunity or facilitate," (Murdoch, 2005:63).

In relation to this research project, Wasserman, Gadzekpo and Paterson (2019:5) have noted that there is a combination of, "somewhat coordinated efforts by Northern governments and foundations to support an institutional journalism that follows substantially American norms; efforts by specific governments, but mostly by foundations and NGOs, to promote specific messages or topics of news coverage; and quite different—even ideologically diametrical—Chinese media development efforts focused on the promotion of Chinese–African cooperation."

To illustrate the ways in which these power relations shape the media's conduct, the case of regulation versus deregulation, privatization and liberalization suffices.

Sterling argues that through deregulation, liberalization and privatization, the media landscape across the world has transformed. The establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, followed by calls for media privatization by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international regulatory bodies played a critical role in liberalizing the processes of media production and distribution (Sterling, 2000).

Arsenault notes that media regulatory institutions around the world have also played an integral role, "The role of the United States Congress and the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in relaxing media ownership regulations through the 1996 Telecommunications Act and subsequent rulings is just one example. News Corp. was only able to expand its Star Satellite network into the lucrative Indian and Chinese markets after leveraging political networks for favorable regulation," (Arsenault, 2007:709).

By allowing investors and media companies more latitude and by bringing down the barriers historically set up to prevent the formation of monopolies, Arsenault argues, "governments have left market strategies to reconfigure the media business environment," but as so often happens with unconstrained markets, he adds, "the net result has not been diversification of ownership, nor has it been an increase in citizen control over media. Instead, in a market with fewer regulations, the power of major corporations is unmatched by the regulator. Global and local oligopolistic networks are solidifying," (Arsenault, 2007:709).

Therefore, when we talk of critical political economy, the word 'critical' carries nuance because it is critical in a sense which, according to (Murdoch and Golding, 2005:61-64), "necessarily engages with empirical research and which has no qualms about addressing issues of pragmatic and policy concern. It draws on a theoretically informed understanding of the social order in which communications and cultural phenomena are being studied."

In relation to this research project, whose focus is philanthro-investigative journalism, critical political economy theory enables us to understand the nature of these complex power relations to how the media plays its role or even understands that role. There is for example, what some have described as 'passive editorial interference' by donors. It is this power and its impact on editorial independence that a critical political economist looks out for.

As a theoretical approach, critical political economy is important in appreciating ideas like the sociology of news production which is relevant to this study because it recognizes that journalists operate in a context which is sociological (occupational and organizational). That context is itself determined, in the grand scheme of things, by the politics and economics of production of meaning.

For instance, if the donor's interest is in funding only investigative journalism that exposes human rights violations, to what extent does this limit the agility of the journalist to investigate other forms of abuse of power? It is these limitations and constraining forces that sociology of production of news looks at and the overarching theory of critical political economy pays attention to.

German sociologist and political economist (1864-1920) Max Webber traced the function and place of a journalist as a political person (Schudson, 1989) in their search for knowledge on how a press tradition built on such virtues as fairness, balance, pluralism was established in 19th century Europe (Dickson 2013).

In Webber's world view, according to Dickson, "The way the press was organized, owned and controlled, its performance in upholding these values, the performance and conduct of journalists, and the ways these varied internationally needed sociology's urgent attention," (Dickson, 2013:6).

Therefore, the funding models of journalism and the journalist's execution of their role are important aspects of the theory because we are conscious of the fact that the two processes are interdependent. Hardy observes that, "how journalism is financed is a shared concern for mainstream and critical economists," but where critical political economy stands out is it is interest in, "how different forms of financing influence what is produced, what kinds of content and viewpoints are favoured and disfavoured," (Hardy, 2016: 15).

This point is reinforced by the idea of the 'gatekeeper' as propounded by the German psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) whose interest was in personal discernment and how a human being appreciated the world around them (physical, mental and social) through frequent conversation and acknowledgement of memories, desire, and goals (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). Accordingly, these ideas such as sociology of news production and gatekeeping can still be traced back to the political economy of journalism processes because they arise out of that context of complex economic and political power relations.

In this research project, critical political economy theory is relevant to the extent that it helps answer the question of how newsroom structures are evolving as business models of old get strained and emerging funding models like philanthro- investigative journalism take shape. How is this affecting journalism?

2.3 Media economics theory

Media economics theory is a useful tool of analysis for understanding the processes and dynamics of journalism's production, journalistic labour, journalism institutions and the supply and demand for journalism. Media economics theory examines the business of news and such dynamics as the economics of journalism, commercial value of news, news audience behaviour, the price of news that consumers are willing to pay, how that payment is structured and opportunities for non-market funding (Picard, 2016).

The study of media economics involves the use of economic theory to explain the workings of media industries and firms, and how the economic, financial and regulatory forces influence the operations of media markets and their effects on society (Picard, 1997). Media economists therefore, "study how economic factors produce the kinds of media systems found in societies, determine the ways in which media operate, affect the choice of content and reveal their implication on culture, politics and society," (Picard, 1997:16).

Concerns of financial and economic nature are integral in appreciating media systems as well as formulation of public policies in respect of the media. Media economics theory situates the challenges, risks, opportunities, and threats that the media as an industry faces in the wider context of the economic circumstances of the day. This is illustrated by Jorgensen who argues that journalism today as an industry and profession, "is characterised by ever-increasing turbulence and change, for better and for worse. Profound transformations affect every aspect of the institution, including the economic health of journalism, the conditions and self-understandings of its practitioners, its ability to serve as a watchdog on concentrations of power, its engagement with and relationship to its audience, and its future prospects. This emerging and dynamic ecology can be viewed as a unique constellation of challenges and opportunities," (Jorgensen, et al, 2016: 801).

And yet, Picard argues, there is really no such thing as media economics but rather, "there is the application of economic perspectives to explain media structures and economic forces on media and how they are affected by the environment surrounding them and secondly, employing that knowledge in attempts to achieve business and policy outcomes," (Picard, 1997: 17).

There are three main traditions noticeable in how media economics is studied: a theoretical tradition, an applied tradition, and a critical tradition. The theoretical tradition is concerned with producer and consumer choices and other economic factors affecting media (Picard, 1997).

The theoretical tradition is grounded in classical and neo-classical economics and the approach tends to be used, "in explaining underlying forces that affect media firms and market activities and to theoretically establish optimal outcomes involving regulatory and policy options," (Picard, 1997:18).

On the other hand, the applied tradition is concerned with media market structures, trends, and changes, as well as cost structures and revenue in firms. Companies use this approach to assist them in decision making and to provide proof for choices in policy bodies (Picard, 1997).

The critical tradition is based on normative outcome preferences and factors that inhibit or would promote those outcomes and has its roots, "in political economy and political sociology concerns that linked economics to social and political outcomes from Marxist and non-Marxist perspectives," (Picard, 1997:18). The theoretical and applied traditions, Picard notes, "have used both micro economic and macroeconomic approaches whereas the critical tradition takes a broader view that considers overall effects of the economic, political and social bases of the communications systems and the constraints that are placed upon the systems. Each of the approaches contributes evidence and explanation for analyzing and understanding media and the environment in which they operate," (Picard, 1997:18)

Appreciation of this theory helps unpack concepts like funding model and business model which tend to be used inter-changeably, yet they mean different things. The term funding model, according to Picard, "refers to how an enterprise makes money," but this is only one part of the firm's broader business model that, "specifies the firm's business logic, value proposition, value configuration, processes and relationships, and customer interactions," (Picard, 2011:19). Those issues, he argues, are critical for the success of the funding model.

It is important, as a function of media economics theory, to study funding, funding models and business models because these affect or are affected by the costs of production and distribution of news or investigative reporting, in the context of this research project. With the advent of digital journalism, the cost structure of production of news is evolving fast.

Digital journalism, Picard argues, "alters the cost structures that exist when journalism is practised in print," adding that, "Digital operations do so by ending costs that previously existed for making newspaper copies and delivering them. In physical production (print), profitable operation is pursued by managing variable costs. This requires seeking efficiency in the unit costs of producing copies through economies of scale and reducing transaction costs," (Picard, 2011: 1). Newspapers with bigger audiences (readers) benefit from this (economies of scale). As sales dwindle and readers migrate online however, this advantage is lost.

In digital operations, however, "serving additional digital copies has little cost effect and competitors tend to operate with relatively similar cost structures regardless of the number of customers. Costs are primarily affected by the scale and scope of content provided rather than scale and scope of copying and distribution costs. In this environment managing fixed costs becomes the challenge," (Picard, 2011:1).

Although digital journalism reduces the cost of production and distribution, he argues, it does not necessarily lower the cost of news gathering and processing. Even more, he contends, "news

organisations have threshold level production and distribution costs that must be borne regardless whether they serve smaller or larger digital audiences."

Media economics theory is a useful guide for us to unpack all these and more dynamics at play.

How did we get here? Brief history of today's crisis through a media economics theory lens

Whereas it is tempting to look at the financial crisis that media houses find themselves in today as a new development attributable to the advancements of the digital revolution, a survey of the history of the media shows evidence to the contrary. Media economics theory guides our understanding of the media landscape today by using history to give context to the structural nature of the challenges that the media faces today.

As social and economic conditions have changed, modifying existing demand for or revenue sources of the press, the media has been faced with the type of challenges that we see today (Picard, 2013).

Picard debunks the narrative that the internet has dealt a blow to the newspaper industry or legacy media for that matter and notes that the fundamental problem is that, "news itself has never been primarily financed by arrangements based on income derived from sources other than selling news to consumers," (Picard, 2013:16).

This begs a historical summary so that we appreciate today's context with some nuance.

In ancient times, information gathering, and dissemination was funded by emperors and kings who hired staff through out their territories to source information, share it with the center and spread it across their kingdoms or empires. In other countries, what we know as journalism today was a function of envoys or ambassadors financed by their governments (Picard, 2013).

The imperial finance model, Picard observes, "was based on official subsidy because it served the interests of the state, not to inform and empower the public but preserve the power of the state," (Picard, 2013:59).

However, as merchants gained wealth from international trade in commodities like porcelain, spices, linen, wines and spirits in the Middle Ages, there arose need for information on economic and political developments in the lands with which these merchants traded (Picard, 2013). They employed reporters to source and send them information and this in effect, "created a subsidy for news financed by commercial elites who would gain financial advantage from the information," (Picard, 2013:60). This enabled them to accrue and not necessarily distribute financial power.

As the merchant classes and landed gentry grew in the 18th and 19th centuries, "their interest in domestic and foreign news increased. Richer consumers paid high prices for news and wider distribution was made possible by making newspapers available in taverns, cafes, restaurants, and a subsidy from proprietors was offered as a value-added service," (Picard, 2013: 60).

This growth in the market for and interest in newspapers did not translate into economic viability and publishers subsidized some production through profits from commercial printing activities (Picard, 2013). Merchant associations, political parties, and governments offered financial support to competing newspapers sympathetic to their interests but, "despite this social elite financing model and multiple sources of revenue, newspapers remained financially weak and unstable," (Picard, 2013:60). This, all the same, made news more available, liberalized information flow and considerably diminished the power of the elite, opening room for democratic ideas such as the concept of a self-governing and informed public.

Picard notes that social changes occasioned by the industrial revolution such as wage earning, urbanization, production of finished products in the 18th and 19th centuries, "spurred mass production of news and development of the newspaper industry and solidified the idea that news was central to democratic governance," (Picard, 2013:62). Social movements, parties and liberal democracy emerged.

Despite these developments, the public still showed reluctance to pay for news. This led to development of the mass media finance model that was based on, "generating large audiences by keeping newspaper prices low and subsidizing costs with advertising income that was supported by the sale of consumer goods," (Picard, 2013: 62). Consequently, public interest in the newspaper was bolstered through addition of features, entertainment, sports, lifestyle pages and the newspaper became closer to society and not the state (Picard, 2013).

When radio and television emerged in the 20th century, "the problem of consumer payment for news, information, and general entertainment was recognized early, leading companies and governments to decide it should be funded by advertising or license fees," (Picard, 2013: 65).

During the late 20th century, when the commercial mass media model was at its height, "the model revealed its limitations. Because of cost effectiveness, advertisers favored the largest newspapers in the market, leaving smaller newspapers starved of revenue, which affected the quality and quantity of their output, and reduced circulation and made them even less attractive to advertisers," (Picard, 2013:66). Effectively, it is around this time that the cracks in the commercial mass media model became glaring. What Picard calls the winner-takes-all phenomenon around the 1950s and 1970s, when the big newspapers hogged advertising revenue to the exclusion of smaller ones, led to the collapse of several newspapers in Europe and North America. It is then that calls for government subsidies to save the industry started (Picard, 2013).

Media economists took the call for government intervention with a pinch of salt. To them, Picard reasons, "this was ineffectual in addressing the fundamental economic challenges of the industry. High fixed costs, significant advantages from economies of scale and the disproportionate influence of advertisers that kept the dual product market (advertising and consumer sales) from operating efficiently," (Picard 2003, 2007). I have shared this history because it speaks to the

power of media economics theory as a tool of analysis of the fundamental economic challenges of the media industry.

The situation today and what media economics theory teaches us

From the above brief historical account of the commercial mass media model, it becomes increasingly clear to the media economics theorist that the business foundation of the media was, for ages, built on quicksand. It has always been a bubble waiting to burst as evidenced by the evolutionary nature of the challenges the media has faced across history. With the emergence of radio and television, digital news available across multiple internet platforms, the consumption habits and habitats of the public have fundamentally changed as audiences shift from newspapers as their primary news source. Advertisers have followed these audiences and now focus on establishing contact with the public and using alternative media to reach their target markets.

This, Picard argues, is not a creation of a decade ago or the digital revolution but has been happening for the last 50 years and only reached its critical point with the development of digital news.

Kung (2008) argues that the internet was and is not the fundamental cause of newspapers' problems, but it only worsened those problems. The core problem, he notes, is that the public has numerous choices in terms of sources of information and it is preferring these varied choices to newspapers. Media economics theory enables us to study these choices more critically.

Social and lifestyle changes related to urbanization, Picard notes, "have reduced the time spent at home and increased commuting time, leisure time has shifted heavily to television and related audiovisual media, increased equality for women has created opportunities outside the home and globalization has altered work and the necessity of global connectivity. All these have reduced the effectiveness and centrality of newspapers in meeting the news and information needs of the public," (Picard, 2013: 68)

Now that we have surveyed the historical and contemporary media economics landscape, it is important to state the relevance of this theory to our study of the media today and emerging funding models such as philanthro-investigative journalism.

Albarran (1998) argues that media economics theory contributes to our understanding of the media in three ways. It (a) provides a means to understand media as economic institutions; (b) helps further understanding of continual globalization of media industries; and (c) offers an interdisciplinary focus to contemporary mass communications research.

Research such as that by Picard, demonstrates the nexus between economics and the production processes of the media. The media exists in a context and a discussion of paradigm shifts in the market devoid of a media economics insight would be unhelpful in terms of understanding where we are and how we got here. Media economists like Picard have argued that, "Media companies

are being confronted with market changes that are destabilising successful mature markets, undermining long-term relationships with audiences and advertisers, and threatening the sustainability of their business models," (Picard, 2004:v).

Media economics theory therefore, is at the heart of appreciating these dynamics and how they play out in everyday journalistic practice. For the purpose of this research project, the idea in drawing on this theory is to use it to explain the background and context of philanthro-journalism and what media economics teaches us about the trend.

This theorical approach is relevant to this study as it helps unpack how the nonprofit model interacts and interfaces with the market especially where recipients are profit driven entities like the *New Vision*. The theory is also relevant for nonprofit organisations like Amabhungane which have diversified income streams and find themselves in the market. More importantly, this theoretical approach helps us to ask questions about the structural nature of the problems that led to the rise of the philanthro-investigative journalism model and interrogate whether interventions like this address the structural issues abound.

Gieber (1964) has written of the production of news and the attendant routine as a rigid process while Sigelman (1973) argues that journalists are by and large obedient and always acting in compliance with the broader goals of the organization to avoid skirmishes with management. This argument is central to media economics theory. For the purpose of this study, these schools of thought are relevant to the extent that they help answer some of this research project's questions such as 'how does this model influence what is published and how are newsrooms managing the journalism ethic of independence? And 'how are journalistic roles changing with the model?'

Through a media economics theoretical approach, we can start to ask questions such as, 'does the nonprofit funding model actually address the core or fundamental problems of the industry?' especially now that we have the benefit of examining the history of the media's problems and situating them in the business and funding mechanisms as core to the issue at hand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.4 Introduction

This section reviews published literature related to this topic and is arranged according to ideas and topics; how the media industry has changed and the challenge of the old business model under which investigative reporting thrived. The second part reviews research on philanthro-journalism as an emerging model, its history and rise.

2.5 Brief history of donor funding of journalism in Africa

Wasserman, Paterson and Gadzekpo (2018) have traced donor funding of journalism in Africa from as far back as the period after the Second World War and argued that foreign aid to Africa extended to the media too, with the objective of establishing and entrenching, "a model of

journalism practice and education that is aligned with the interests of (wealthy, industrialised, Northern) donor nations," (Wasserman, Paterson and Gadzekpo, 2018:3).

That brand of journalism, the authors argue, focuses on factual rather than structural analysis and foreign aid that went to the media served the purpose of entrenching this trend.

The period after the Marshall Plan saw donors deploy foreign aid to configure the politics and institutional set up of countries that received this aid while advancing strategic interests of the donors as Nielsen and Nielsen, (2010) have argued.

Bermeo and Blodgett (2007) have noted that as the United States and the Soviet Union competed during the Cold War (1947-1991), aid became a central aspect of this competition with each side trying to win allies.

The American Centre for International Media Assistance in 2018 reported that no less than $600m is spent annually on media development in Africa by both state and private funders (Wasserman, Gadzekpo and Paterson, 2019). They estimate that if the amount China spends on media programs is added, the figure (globally) could hit $1 billion with Africa taking the biggest chunk.

Wasserman, Gadzekpo and Paterson (2019) have asked whether underfunded African journalists should receive donor funding.

They opine, "There are risks that come from shunning aid. This includes missed opportunities to develop African media or report independently on local power brokers. On the other hand, aid can be used to coerce journalists to change their norms and practices unduly," (Wasserman, Gadzekpo and Paterson, 2019:3).

From this historical perspective, we appreciate that efforts to support journalism aren't exactly new. What changes are the forms of and reasons for that support with the passage of time.

Lewis argues that, "never in our lifetime has there arguably been a greater public need for independent, high quality journalism in the United States," (Lewis, 2007) and one can add, in the world.

Lewis quotes journalism professor Knight Chair who wrote in his seminal 2004 book, *The Vanishing Newspaper* that, "The only way to save journalism is to develop a new model that finds profit in truth, vigilance and social responsibility," (Lewis 2007:6). Lewis avers that in the case of USA, nonprofit entities like National Public Radio and the Center for Public Integrity, "represent such models for the future."

He cites the case of America's privately and publicly funded non-profit membership media organization, National Public Radio (NPR (founded in 1970) which as of 2018 had over 36 bureaus worldwide and 26 million listeners a week (Wikipedia, 2019). The entity was

established by an Act of Congress under the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 and most of its member stations are owned by government entities (Wikipedia, 2019).

The Center for Public Integrity founded in 1989 in USA demonstrates the early emergence of the standalone model (outside the mainstream newsroom and funded through philanthropy). There is also the Center for Investigative Reporting in California (1977), Investigative Reporters and Editors in Missouri (1975), the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington (1969) and the Center for Investigative Journalism in the UK established in 2003. There are more recent examples like ProPublica in the USA (founded in 2007) and the Institute for Non-Profit News (2009).

Similarly, Rodney traces the growth of donor funded journalism to the mid-2000s and singles out philanthropic foundations (Ford, Gates, Open Society, Knight, etc.) as having played a particularly important role in what was seen as, "a means of transcending the previous market/civic compromise in order to focus solely on public service," (Rodney, 2017:2). Accordingly, such support has seen entities like the Center for Investigative Reporting which was the first nonprofit investigative journalism organization in the USA (1977) invest in projects like Reveal, a website where its investigative reporting is published (Reveal News, 2019). Through philanthro-investigative journalism, Reveal has been able to, "hold the powerful accountable and reveal government fraud and waste of taxpayer funds, human rights violations, environmental degradation and threats to public safety," (Reveal News, 2019: 5).

Castro argues that, "now, more than ever, philanthropy and the media don't just need to work more effectively together, they actually need each other to fulfil their respective missions," (Castro, 2017:2).

2.6 Criticism against philanthro-journalism

However, the model has come under criticism from some quarters.

Rodney (2017) for instance asserts that, "media organizations dependent on foundation project-based funding risk being captured by foundation agendas and thus less able to investigate the issues they deem most important," (Rodney, 2017:1).

Jurkowitz, Mitchell, Holcomb et al (2013) have written of the economic hardships (mainly sustainability and funding being limited to what donors can fund) media organisations receiving donor funding are grappling with, terming their operating environment, a fragile one. To achieve financial stability, such entities in the USA are expanding their revenue sources.

Describing the intervention of donors in boosting the Mail and Guardian's health reporting desk under what has become a non-government organization working directly with the newspaper, as Bhekisisa Health Journalism Centre (since 2013), Malan (2018) shares mixed feelings. She notes that whereas donor support has helped the organization produce in-depth, analytical coverage of

health and social justice issues in Africa, it has come at a cost. Job descriptions of writers, editors have radically changed to encompass the day to day demands of an otherwise bureaucratic donor funded institution. Writers and editors have had to spend less time on stories as they must juggle writing grant proposals, organizing trainings and other administrative duties. This has admittedly affected the quality of output.

This concern raises the aspect of the Chinese wall, an imaginary wall that separates the financial side of the operation from the editor to keep conflicts of interest at bay.

According to Segal (2010), "The idea is to divide one piece of an institution — often the part that makes money — from another, usually the part that is focused on something other than profits. Cash, it seems, will put duty in a headlock. That's why they can't play in the same room."

In relation to this research project, it is important to ask grantees how, considering these changing roles, they are managing potential conflicts of interest and the impact on editorial independence.

Ferrucci and Nelson (2019) contend that there is reason for concern about the rise of philanthro-journalism as journalists in nonprofit newsrooms are surrendering their agency to foundational donors and even more, in the long term, credibility of the media is under threat from this model.

Citing Coddington (2015) they argue that, "Journalists who once worked within the traditional newsrooms perceived strict separation between advertising and editorial, which resulted in a perceived sense of autonomy over editorial content. Yet journalists within nonprofit newsrooms that receive foundation funding now find themselves in a situation where this symbolic separation between business and reporting no longer exists." Furthermore, they note, in agreement with Birnbauer (2018), "because these newsrooms face a limited pool of alternative options for funding, this power imbalance has the potential to make nonprofits susceptible to the whims of their funders (Birnbauer, 2018: 177)

They argue that the media is already battling for the soul of its credibility and trust in the eyes of the public and whereas foundations may solve the immediate financial hardship facing media houses today, "they may worsen the credibility crisis in the long term," (Ferrucci and Nelson, 2019).

According to a report from the American Press Institute, "the ethics of taking grants from foundations and gifts from donors to produce news is still evolving," while Rosenstiel, Buzenberg, Connelly and Loker (2016) argue that, "a set of guidelines would benefit the industry."

2.7 Sustainability concerns abound

The sustainability of journalism is central to the quality of journalism. In the worst-case scenario, once the news organization turns out financially unsustainable, then journalism ceases as we have seen newspapers fold.

At the sixth world conference of science journalists, held in June 2009 in London, the question of sustaining science journalism around the world was widely discussed with some proposing that they should interest philanthropic foundations (Nodine 2009).

This line of thinking has since been adopted around the world, mainly starting in the United States of America and spreading to Europe, Africa and Asia.

Gillmor (2010) makes a case for journalism schools to, in their fine tuning of training to meet today's challenges, interest themselves in business models of journalism, among which is 'for-profit and not-for-profit methods' of raising funds to sustain the modern newsroom.

The meeting point between Gillmor and Bhardwaj's views is that sustainability of journalism must be at the core of the discourse.

Discussing the state of the newspaper in Nigeria, Olorunyomi admits that print media, 'is virtually under water today. Its business model has totally collapsed," (Olorunyomi, 2018:33-34). He proposes, as a model to sustain print, 'a donation or supporters' model' such as South Africa's amaBhungane. His proposition is that the philanthropy model adopted by entities like AmaB should play a complementary role for profit driven companies. In other words, he argues, profit oriented newsrooms should consider, as part of diversifying their income streams, opening up nonprofit outlets to fund aspects of investigative journalism.

The strength of Olorunyomi's idea of philanthropic support to journalism is that it emphasizes the power of agency on the part of the media entrepreneur. To him, innovation must continue and complacency must not set in.

That reasoning is like that of Odindo (2018) who proposes a four-element strategy that includes: diversification, development of new ad revenue streams, donor funding and partnerships.

Odindo asserts that, "A key responsibility of a corporate affairs manager today is to cultivate relations with development and civil society organisations with the aim of securing sponsorships for content aligned to the agenda of those organisations," (Odindo, 2018: 40-41). The challenge with Odindo's proposition here is that newsrooms would have to tailor their editorial content and judgement of what stories to investigate to the 'agenda of those organisations' funding them. This may have far reaching implications for editorial independence in so far as journalists and editors would be serving the interests of their donors and mortgaging their independence to whoever has the money and is ready to fund them.

In Kenya for instance, the Nation Media Group, the biggest media company in East Africa that publishes the *Daily Nation* has partnered with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to do in depth

reporting on health. That, however, comes as a complementary effort by the donor in so far as the newspaper continues to fund other aspects of its journalism and only sought support from the philanthropic foundation for health reporting. This fortifies the argument by Odindo and Olorunyomi that individual media organisations must, as of necessity, take the lead in sustaining their operations.

Lister (2018) writing on the story of the Namibian newspaper since 1985 raises an important point which Kasenally et al (2018) do not interrogate deeply; that of the 'what next' if the donor pulls out. In the case of the Namibian newspaper which had relied on donor funding throughout the struggle for independence by the former South West Africa, when the country attained independence in 1990, the donors closed their taps and the paper had to either rely on the market for survival or fold.

Lister avers that her newspaper's trust model (wherein her company created a trust-the equivalent of a nonprofit outlet within the commercial entity, to support investigative reporting through philanthro-investigative journalism) allows her to source for donor funds to strengthen the Namibian's in-house investigative journalism and training needs. However, the history of the newspaper and donors is not lost on her, so she does not, in her outlook to staying afloat for African newspapers, assume the donors are a magic bullet. Newspapers must continue to innovate.

Charalambous writes of South Africa's *Daily Maverick* as, "a hybrid operation, with a non-profit vehicle to fund our investigative unit and projects that can simply not be funded in any other way besides grant or donor funding," (Charalambous, 2018:59-60). This hybrid model is situated in the commercial, for-profit news organization which adopts a non-profit approach to raising funds to support investigative journalism. It is the combination of the (for-profit) and the (nonprofit) that makes it a hybrid model.

The idea of a nonprofit in the same commercially driven organization or what the writer calls a hybrid model is not entirely unique because as Odindo (2018) has noted, in Kenya, just like Olorunyomi (2018) has stated in Nigeria and Lister (2018) for the case of Namibia, newspapers are embracing philanthro-journalism. They have accordingly adopted the hybrid model of the *Daily Maverick.*

Ntibinyane has, on the other hand, explored investigative journalism organisations in Africa funded by donors and philanthropic entities. The exploratory study was done 10 years after the first not-for-profit investigative journalism center was founded in Africa. He studied South Africa's Amabhungane, Nigeria's Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism and Botswana's INK Centre for Investigative Journalism.

By the time of Ntibinyane's research in 2018, similar centers had been set up in more than 20 countries on the continent. Ntibinyane interrogates what the motivating factors behind the spread of these organizations in Africa are, who funds them and how and whether they are making any

impact in the different countries of operation. Ntibinyane starts his analysis from the premise that traditional media organizations are increasingly failing to hold power to account, and that, "not-for-profit organizations are leading by example, setting the agenda and constantly scrutinizing those in power."

He argues that traditional media ownership of news organizations is, "a hindrance to quality investigative journalism and not-for-profit organizations are serving the public much better without profit motives," (Ntibinyane, 2018: 56).

Ntibinyane's study makes three interesting findings; firstly, he notes that while the impact of the not-for-profit organizations in Africa is generally profound, it differs from country to country. In South Africa and Nigeria, "the impact in recent years has been more sudden as compared to Botswana. This, however, does not erase the fact that organizations such as INK continue to produce good investigative journalism work," (Ntibinyane, 2018:27). He attributes this to the fact that South Africa and Nigeria have more vibrant oversight institutions such as parliament, Ombudsman, and judiciary to complement the work of investigative journalists. According to him, the impact of these centers affirms the social responsibility theory argument that investigative journalism has a responsibility to bring about change and to reveal wrongdoings by those in positions of power.

Secondly, the centers he studied are setting the agenda in their countries of operation and this in his view, "proved that traditional news organizations such as newspapers and TV stations are slowly losing their ability to set the agenda. For example, in South Africa, it was mostly Amabhungane's exposes that brought to the fore the alleged corrupt relationship between President Zuma and the Gupta family. In Botswana, it was INK that revealed that former President Ian Khama was constructing an airstrip and a holiday home using the military," (Ntibinyane, 2018:57).

Ntibinyane also cites the unsustainable funding model of these not-for-profit organizations as a dominant feature and argues that while the organisations' contribution towards holding power to account is not in dispute, "this might be hampered by the fact that the organizations are currently riding on a very flawed funding model." He contends that this funding model is faulty because philanthropy in Africa is underdeveloped and most not-for-profit investigative journalism organizations in Africa rely heavily on funding from international donor organizations. He also found that there was over reliance on a single donor with majority of these organizations in Africa being founded with seed funding from Open Society Foundations. There is also the challenge of short-term funding with most donor organizations preferring to award organizations grants annually. This means that these organizations asked to submit proposals for funding yearly, something that is, "a time-consuming exercise that also brings about uncertainty and has a potential of destabilizing the organizations," (Ntibinyane, 2018:58).

Additionally, there is lack of grassroots support for nonprofit investigative journalism centers on the continent. Except for Amabhungane which managed to raise 19% of its annual budget from crowdfunding, Ntibinyane argues, “most centres in Africa do not have the ability to mobilise funding from the grassroots. In most cases this is because a significant number of citizens do not have the technology and the financial infrastructure to donate or subscribe online,” (Ntibinyane, 2018:58).

My own appreciation of this study is that Ntibinyane adopts a celebrant attitude towards these non-profit investigative journalism centers and barely interrogates the history of the structural limitations and commercial constraints that led to their formation in the first place and whether this intervention (non-profit journalism model) actually responds to the structural challenges afflicting the media today though he adequately discusses the sustainability question. Ntibinyane’s study argues that the establishment of independent centres of investigative journalism in Africa is an important step in fulfilling one of journalism’s most important contributions to society; that of an independent monitor of power. In his view, journalists are hindered from playing that role because of the commercial constraints afflicting legacy media establishments and their complicity with power through the profit motive. Investigative journalism centers, in his opinion, fill that vacuum. In filling this vacuum however, Ntibinyane appears to project non-profit investigative journalism organisations as above reproach in terms of independence, especially when he writes off traditional media houses as not independent enough to monitor power and these emerging outfits as the solution.

My research project approaches this issue with more intellectual curiosity, caution, and skepticism. It seeks not to find evidence of philanthro-investigative journalism as the answer to the collapsing commercial mass media model because there is a challenge with such a comparative perspective given the difference in context of the two models. Instead, I interrogate the emergence of this model in terms of its implications for editorial independence, what the agendas of the funders are, how grantees are dealing with real or perceived conflict of interest and also tease out sustainability questions using a media economics theory approach that critically examines this model through the wider scheme of structural challenges that have afflicted journalism as a profession and business, which challenges may not necessarily be solved just by funding alone.

Yuqingshi speaks to the reality of agenda driven funding for investigative reporting when she notes that, “A survey from the American Press Institute found that more than half of the sampled funders made media grants to advance specific agendas. It also reported that 60 percent of nonprofit media outlets had never turned down grant money,” (2018:15). The report by the American Press Institute (API) explored the ethical terrain of nonprofit journalism by, “examining the kinds of grants made, the nature of communication between funders and grantees, existence of journalistic firewalls, and the prevalence of written guidelines,” (American Press Institute, 2016). That study found that, “there are relatively high levels of transparency about funding sources and what is being underwritten and little evidence was found to suggest

that donors insist on or have any editorial review and most never see content before publication," (American Press Institute, 2016).

The survey also, "identified a number of areas of sensitivity and potential controversy. Many funders for instance, finance media in areas where they also do public policy work. A growing amount of funding is for coverage of specific problems and even specific investigations, not just general coverage areas or by providing more general grants for operations." The study also found that there were fairly few written guidelines setting out rules for editorial independence as this was, "left to good intentions".

Whereas this is a study that was done in the USA and evidence of this nature has not been researched and published in Africa, there is reason for reflection on the issue of agendas of the philanthropic foundations.

2.8 On editorial independence

Independence goes to the root of journalism ethics. It fosters trust from audiences and lends credibility to the journalist and their media house. Where there is real or perceived loss of independence, credibility and trust are eroded. Whereas this research project does not seek to undertake an ethical inquiry, it poses the question: how is editorial independence treated in media organizations whose reporting is funded through philanthro-journalism?

Karppinen and Moe (2016:1) opine that, "Media independence is a contested concept that carries different meanings in different contexts."

As a normative ideal, they assert, independence is capable of multi-layered discussion and sometimes the term is used in inconsistent ways.

Be that as it may however, by publicly committing to independence from the state and forces of the market, the authors contend, journalists and media houses, "seek to bolster their legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of audiences, peers as well as policy-makers."

This notion is in sync with the position of Black et al who avow that journalists must be free from associations and activities that may dent their integrity and the media house's credibility.

Kruger argues that, "independence is one of the fundamental principles of journalism ethics because it sets up a defence against conflicts of interest and competing loyalties," (Kruger, 2004: 95).

A journalist's work is guided by allegiance to professional standards, ethics and the audience (Kruger, 2004).

According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014), the role of the press, in fulfillment of their watchdog function, is to keep an eye on power (government, business and all other forms of power that impact on society), a duty that must be executed without fear or favour.

Die Burger's code of ethics stresses the importance of independence by asking two rhetorical questions: "Can you say in all honesty that the relevant favour or offer whether it is a cup of coffee, a cigar, a week in Mauritius or a visit to the Middle East on the invitation of the Arab League or to Israel on the invitation of the Jewish Board of Deputies-won't have an influence on your impartiality? Will your readers be sure of your credibility, even if you don't have any doubts?"

Credibility, Kruger argues, "May be affected if people know about a conflict of interest-even if no fault can be found with the actual reporting," (Kruger, 2004).

Wilkins and Brennan note that, "Conflict of interest is one of the few areas of professional ethics where perception of 'reality' has equal standing in a moral sense with the actual reality. The goal here is twofold: first, to circumscribe the sorts of influences that can erode professional judgment, and second, to maintain the bond of trust and authority between professionals and the larger society," (2004: 03).

Considering these positions on independence, this study takes cognizance of the fact that philanthro-journalism comes with its own share of situations that can test the independence of the journalist or media house. What happens, for instance, if a donor's business conduct warrants investigation by the same newspaper they fund?

Typically, these are the challenges editors and reporters deal with in relation to advertisers, causing a clash between the editorial and business side of the media organization in extreme cases. How these organisations deal with these situations and their own reflections on real or perceived conflict of interest is an important question this study seeks to answer.

In a study of foundations and public policy, Roelofs (2003) illustrates how some and certainly not all, philanthropic foundations use the power of grants to shape public opinion and insulate their capitalistic interests from potential attack. Whereas the goals appear noble on paper, in actual sense capitalism masked in philanthropy, is only preserving itself.

She argues, "groups and movements that might challenge the status quo are nudged into line with grants and technical assistance, and foundations also have considerable power to shape such things as public opinion, higher education, and elite ideology," (Roelofs, 2003: 1).

The net outcome of this is what she calls a depoliticizing effect, "one that preserves the hegemony of neoliberal institutions." This criticism is relevant in this study's interrogation of independence of media funded through philanthropic foundations. How do they navigate through these complex and concealed interests that Roelofs argues are intended to preserve the hegemony of capital?

Another missing link in Odindo et al (2018) is the aspect of what news organisations are doing to sustain their operations beyond the reliance on the donor organisations. Whereas Lister and

Odindo (2018) point out the aspect of diversification and Olorunyomi (2018) emphasizes agency on the part of the news organisations while relying on donors to fund the investigative units of their newsrooms, there is not a concrete discussion of what newsrooms such as those that largely rely on donors like amaBhungane should do to ensure they are sustainable.

Birnbauer is skeptical and argues, "Foundations usually want something. They either want media reporting of an issue they fund through other grants or that they care about, and in some instances, they have democracy or journalism programs. It is not unusual today for foundations to fund the reporting of an issue such as education or the environment at a news nonprofit," (Birnbauer 2009:1). A review of literature on this subject does reveal that different grantees have different attitudes to donor funding just like different donors have different attitudes to the model. Some donors and grantees are comfortable, for instance, funding specific aspects such as health, environmental and human rights reporting while others are happy funding investigative journalism broadly, leaving the grantees to use their discretion to determine which areas to undertake investigative reporting on.

Sillesen (2015) gives credence to this assertion and argues that whereas funding by philanthropies has grown to support journalism, concerns include the fact that this money is not going to fund all newsroom production costs but specific beats such as climate change, governance, health and others that interest the donors.

To what extent all this affects editorial processes and news gathering in South Africa and Uganda has not been adequately interrogated by available research, yet it is paramount. This research project sought to contribute to filling that gap in knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the methods deployed in collection of data for this study and their justification as well as merits and demerits of each approach.

The research project draws on qualitative research methods particularly interviews and a study of public documents related to the topic. It uses two cases (not necessarily case studies in the strict sense of the word).

A researcher who employs the qualitative method is interested in arriving at enlightenment about phenomena in society, appreciate the world and explain trends and patterns. Why for instance, do organisations or people behave the way they do, how do trends in society affect a group of people and what explains trends, practices or norms in society emerging at the time they do?

According to Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, the essence of the qualitative method of research is the focus on, "how people or groups of people can have (somewhat) different ways of looking at reality (usually social or psychological reality), takes account of complexity by incorporating the real-world context – can take different perspectives on board, focuses on reports of experience or on data which cannot be adequately expressed numerically, " (Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2009:6).

3.2 Interviews

Interviews are an integral aspect of qualitative research and can usually take on a structured approach with, "questions prepared and presented to each interviewee in an identical way using a strict predetermined order or completely unstructured, like a free-flowing conversation," (Hancock et al, 2009:16).

Drawing on this method, this research project adopts a semi structured interview format which allows for open ended questions to the interviewees with emphasis on the research questions that the project aims to answer and room for greater detail to be covered.

Dörnyei (2007) opines that a qualitative research interview ought to flow naturally and be rich in detail.

Discussing the merits of using interviews, Blaxter (2006) argues that the method gives a researcher the flexibility to dig out data that he or she ordinarily wouldn't find using several other approaches like the questionnaire or observation. Interviews, the author posits, are a research tool whose importance stretches beyond collection of data and that given the natural context and setting of the interview, valuable discourse ensues between the interviewer and interviewee, allowing for in-depth interrogation of the issues at hand.

On the other hand, Dörnyei (2007: 143) agrees that considering that rapport is established, there is room for the interviewer to seek clarification on answers the interviewee gives and for the interviewee to seek clarification in respect of the interviewer's questions. This is not possible with a questionnaire as a case in point.

Brown (2001) has however, offered the challenges with interviews as: not guaranteeing complete anonymity for interviewees who may demand it, costly in terms of time, resources (such as transport costs), potential unreliability and distortion by bias.

Summing up the pros and cons of interviews, Robson (2002) and Ho (2006) have posited that although interviews are a particularly useful approach to obtain comprehensive understanding of the topic under study, it should be utilized alongside other methods such as observation which give the interviewer the benefit of putting to test the interviewee's responses.

Interviews were conducted with managers, editors and journalists from the *New Vision* and amaBhungane. More interviews in this category were conducted with founders, journalists and editors of other philanthro-investigative journalism centers in South Africa, Nigeria and Botswana to tap into their unique experiences and perspectives on this emerging model.

The other category of interviewees included foundational funders and donor organisations supporting media houses through a philanthro-investigative journalism approach or those that work with the media but do not directly support them through funding their journalism such as the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

I also interviewed scholars, media practitioners and researchers who do work related to this approach from the United States of America, Uganda, Nigeria and South Africa. The interviews lasted an average of 60-120 minutes and the typical experience in the industry (media, academia and foundational work) of each interviewee was 10-30 years.

3.3 Focus of the interviews: Two cases

This research project focuses on two cases by looking at two different but comparable entities: South Africa's AmaBhungane and Uganda's *New Vision*. Whereas amaBhungane describes itself as a non-profit newsroom that exposes wrongdoing, empowering people to hold power to account, *New Vision* is a commercial entity which has in the recent past received donor funding from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF).

DGF was established in July 2011 by eight Development Partners (Austria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK and the European Union) as a five year governance programme, "aimed at providing harmonized, coherent and well-coordinated support to state and nonstate entities to strengthen democratization, protect human rights, improve access to justice and enhance accountability in Uganda," (Democratic Governance Facilty, 2019).

According to the European Union's (EU) 2011 Agenda for Change, EU assistance is concentrated in two overall priority areas: human rights, democracy and other aspects of good governance and inclusive and sustainable growth, to help create growth in developing countries, "so poor people have the means to lift themselves out of poverty," (European Commission, 2020:3). It follows therefore that European development aid and grants in Africa are largely targeted to programs on human rights, democracy, and other aspects of good governance. It is against this backdrop that EU funded entities like the Democratic Governance Facility in Uganda, as the chapter on findings will show, direct their funding to organisations that serve this greater goal of EU's development assistance, including commercial outfits like the *New Vision* which may have programs that fit into the EU's wider priority areas.

Since the 1990s, European countries have invested significant sums of their development aid monies into the 'development and democracy' project in sub-Saharan Africa (Pemunta, 2018). In the case of the European Union, development aid is sourced from the EU's general budget and through the European Development Fund (EDF). The EDF is accessible to the 79 members of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific group (ACP) of developing countries who mainly have colonial ties with the EU (Dearden, 2008). Consequently, platforms like the DGF in Uganda fall in the wider development aid agenda of the EU and its stated objectives as captured by the European Commission.

Pemunta argues that in sub-Saharan Africa, "the equating of aid with democratic reforms not only has a longstanding precedent but has since the 1990s received heightened attention in the wake of calls for democratic reforms," (Pemunta, 2018: 2).

Whereas this source and type of funding is different from philanthropy, the meeting point, when contrasted with the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA) which also funds investigative reporting for instance, is that they pursue ideals that are not starkly different.

OSIEA's vision is 'a just, inclusive and vibrant Eastern Africa where all people live in dignity, equality and participate meaningfully in society' (OSIEA, 2020).

Also, important to note is the difference between the *New Vision* and *Amabhungane* models. Whereas Amabhungane is a standalone nonprofit investigative journalism center, the *New Vision* is a state-owned commercial news organization tapping into donor funding to support its investigative journalism.

Through a study of these two cases, I compare their different experiences arising from a Ugandan and South African context.

This research project does not however, restrict itself to these two media organisations (Amabhungane and *New Vision*) nor does it seek to compare them but only uses them as examples. Additionally, this project explores other donor funded newsroom models in Africa to have a broader perspective.

3.4 Document analysis

This research project reviews and analyses publicly available data, records and documents relating to the topic. This is achieved through reading and analysis of public documents such as annual reports of the organisations, public presentations and scholarly research reports on this subject matter.

Bowen (2009:30) has observed that analysis of documents, "can provide data on the context within which research participants operate. Bearing witness to past events, documents provide background information as well as historical insight. Such information and insight can help researchers understand the historical roots of specific issues and can indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomena currently under investigation. The researcher can use data drawn from documents, for example, to contextualise data collected during interviews."

For this research project, review and analysis of documents was particularly instrumental in so far as it helped generate further questions for interviewees and verify information they shared during interviews.

3.5 Justification for choice of the two cases for interviews

It is imperative to point out that there exist various funded models of journalism around the world. There are standalone institutions started by individuals, usually as nonprofit organisations, with a view to advancing investigative and other genres of reporting. A case in point is Amabhungane in South Africa, Nigeria's Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism and Botswana's INK Centre for Investigative Journalism. These may sell (as a sustainability mechanism) or share for free their content and sometimes partner in journalistic programs with mainstream media houses.

Closely related to this is the model adopted within non-government organisations such as South Africa's Corruption Watch, a non-profit organisation that relies on the public to report corruption which the organization then investigates and publishes on its website. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch too invest resources in investigative reporting. These are advocacy organisations which make use of investigative journalism as one arm of what they do but are not primarily journalism organisations.

There is the donor funded model situated within the larger newsroom where commercial entities like the *Daily Maverick, Mail and Guardian*, Kenya's *Daily Nation*, and Uganda's *New Vision* either reach out to or are approached by potential donors and grants are offered.

This research project studies two unique cases, Uganda's *New Vision* which is a profit-oriented company receiving funding from donors to bolster their investigative journalism and South Africa's AmaBhungane which is a standalone entity doing investigative reporting with funding from donors.

Amabhungane (isiZulu for “the dung beetles”) was launched in 2010 as an independent, non-profit newsroom in South Africa to develop investigative journalism that contributes to free, capable media and open, accountable, just democracy. It has roots in the *Mail and Guardian* where in 2009 two journalists registered a non-profit investigative journalism organization which was then known as M&G Centre for Investigative Journalism (Ntibinyane 2018).

The organization aids other media entities through training, collaborative projects and institutional support. The company also lobbies, campaigns, “exercises laws and litigates to help secure the information rights – access to information and media freedoms – that are the lifeblood of our field,” (Amabhungane 2019).

Stories are published on their site (https://amabhungane.org) and through publication partners and platforms.

The company is answerable to the board led by Prof. Tawana Kupe (chair), Nic Dawes, Sithembile Mbete, Sisonke Msimang, Angela Quintal, Sally Evans (staff rep), Stefaans Brümmer and Stephen (Sam) Sole. Brummer and Sole are executive directors.

Amabhungane’s investigative stories — “exposés on institutional independence being undermined, corruption, corporate malfeasance and “state capture” – have contributed to political and corporate changes that included the resignation of South Africa’s president in February 2018,” (Amabhungane 2019).

The center assists other media organisations to develop their investigative journalism potential with over 60 fellows hosted and regular workshops that have led to formation of similar entities in Southern Africa whom AmaBhungane collaborates with. The organization has also participated in litigation in South African courts that has led to precedents being set regarding access to information (Amabhungane, 2018).

A key milestone for the organization has been its lead role in the famous Gupta Leaks story which was published on (www.gupta-leaks.com). Its collaborative efforts saw it join troops with *Daily Maverick* and *Media24*, *Finance Uncovered*, *Open Up*, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project that offered technical support (Amabhungane, 2018).

One of its main funders right from the start has been the Open Society Foundations South Africa (OSFSA). It also received initial funding from the *Mail and Guardian* with whom the organization parted ways in 2016, “to be able to share content and work on collaborative projects with more media houses,” (interview with founders). Other funders have since included: Bertha Foundation, Millennium Trust, Raith Foundation, Social Justice Initiative, and Claude Leon Foundation (Ntibinyane, 2018).

This organization was selected for this research project owing to its track record and body of work which offers enough room for interrogation of the funded journalism model by a leader in the sector with a demonstrated record of trailblazing work and easily verifiable output.

On the other hand, Uganda's *New Vision* can be traced to 1955 when the British colonial administration established the Uganda Argus newspaper which continued to run after the East African country attained self-rule in 1962. The ascent to power by General Idi Amin Dada who overthrew the country's founding leader Milton Obote in 1971 saw the newspaper change name to Voice of Uganda. Amin's overthrow in 1979 by Ugandans in exile bolstered by Tanzania's Julius Nyerere saw Obote return to power after a contentious 1980 election. He renamed the newspaper Uganda Times (Wikipedia, 2020). Obote's second lease at the presidency was short lived, ending in 1985 when his government was overthrown by another of his military points men, Tito Okello Lutwa who had an even shorter stint at the presidency. He too was overthrown by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's National Resistance Army/Movement which has held power since then. The new administration changed the newspaper's name to *New Vision* (Wikipedia, 2020).

The New Vision Printing & Publishing Company Limited (NVPPCL), the publishers of the *New Vision* and nine other titles, was registered as a public limited liability company in 2002 and in 2004 it was listed on the Uganda Securities Exchange. Government of Uganda is the majority shareholder with 53.3% shareholding and the public holds the remaining 46.7% (Vision Group, 2019).

For the purpose of this study, *New Vision's* model is different from Amabhungane in the sense that it is a profit-oriented company with shareholders (government of Uganda as a 49% shareholder and the public taking up the rest of the shares).

The *New Vision* however received donor funding for its investigations desk from the Democratic Governance Facility early 2019 to the tune of $500,000 to boost its human rights and access to justice reporting. That donor funding has seen the newspaper's reporters embark on stories that have exposed gross corruption at the heart of Uganda's police, prisons and court system as well as the challenges of poor people seeking justice in a criminal justice system that works for those with means in society.

Why the two cases

Lastly, this research project studies the two cases because of their inherent uniqueness in terms of their business and funding models and even the history of their existence. Amabhungane was founded purely as a nonprofit investigative journalism outfit. Its founders have, from the outset, been clear as the chapter on findings will demonstrate, that the organisation is neither a commercial outfit nor does it consider venturing into commercial projects to sustain its operations. Its investigative reporting is funded through philanthropic foundations and the public. Additionally, the organisation was founded by journalists who once worked with a commercial

newspaper (*Mail and Guardian*) and left it to establish Amabhungane as a separate nonprofit investigative reporting unit.

In contrast, the *New Vision* is a commercial newspaper in which government of Uganda has majority shareholding and, as the chapter on findings will show, the *New Vision's* approach of having some components of its investigative reporting funded through donor funds is not the mainstay source of funding for its journalism processes. It remains a commercial institution with shareholders unlike Amabhungane which is an entirely nonprofit investigative reporting outfit. These outstanding differences offer unique perspectives and contexts that make for richer analysis than if the study looked at one of the institutions independently. It is for this reason that these two media organisations, also located in different economic and political contexts, are being studied.

A brief note on the editorial independence of *New Vision*

Being a newspaper in which government of Uganda has majority shareholding, questions are bound to be asked about the publication's independence. Despite being a newspaper with majority shareholding by the government, the *New Vision's* coverage has been commended as balanced. In one report for example, "Monitoring Media Coverage of the 2016 General Elections in Uganda" by the Kampala based NGO, African Center for Media Excellence (ACME), lead researcher George Lugalambi noted, "When you look at the *New Vision*, regardless of its relationship with the government, it did a great job to balance its coverage more than UBC (Uganda Broadcasting Corporation) and other private media institutions," (Lule, 2016).

William Pike, the British journalist who was appointed to revamp the government newspaper, then called Uganda Times and renamed *New Vision* in 1986 and led the company till 2006 offers insight into the debate on *New Vision's* independence in his 2019 autobiography.

Pike argues that whereas ideologically the *New Vision* supported government, they still broke many key investigative stories.

"In all the years that I was Editor-in-Chief, I lost count of how many times I was asked the question, 'how free is the *New Vision?*' and I always answered, 'Tell me one story that you think should have appeared in the Uganda media but which has not appeared." And no ambassador or academic ever came up with a story that he or she thought should have appeared in the papers but had not," (Pike, 2019: 245).

There was only one occasion in 20 years, Pike writes, when the newspaper practiced outright censorship. This was, "when we removed a story that had been scheduled for publication. That was in March 1997, a week before Hillary Clinton, the first lady of America, visited Uganda," (Pike, 2019: 274). A *New Vision* reporter had filed a story reporting that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the USA had set up a listening station in Uganda's western town of Fort Portal to track the progress of Congolese rebels towards that country's capital Kinshasa and the

eventual overthrow of its president Mobutu Sese Seko. Uncomfortable with this story that the reporter was working on, the USA embassy in Kampala when contacted for a comment by the newspaper, instead later beseeched the government of Uganda to ask the *New Vision* to drop the story (Pike, 2019).

Pike claims that, "The only time that the *New Vision* ever practised outright censorship was at the request of the American government," (Pike, 2019: 247).

In principle, Pike noted in his autobiography, "We (*New Visio*n) were like the BBC, an independent news gathering corporation established by government, but, in practice, we were less impartial than the BBC. We did support the National Resistance Movement (ruling party in Uganda) in our leader articles although this did not extend to defending the NRM's mistakes," (Pike, 2019: 247). This, he wrote, was because the newspaper had to remain competitive in a market where there were over 20 newspapers so the *New Vision* could not afford to pander to government too slavishly as its readers would turn away. Therefore, it was crucial that the newspaper investigated political wrongdoing, human rights abuses and corruption (Pike, 2019). Part of its strategy was to draw a distinction between news and opinions because, "the newspaper had a duty to publish news that was objective and drawn from all parts of the country. In addition, the *New Vision* was specifically supposed to, "voice public opinion and criticism of given government policy in a fair and objective manner without becoming an institutional opponent to the government of Uganda," (Pike, 2019: 247).

Pike does not exactly say that the *New Vision* was entirely independent of the government but discusses that question in the specific context of the newspaper's political environment. Laying emphasis on the independence of a newspaper like the *New Vision*, although it is an important debate, can easily end up as a hair-splitting exercise. It is neither here nor there. We can as well ask how independent the other newspapers in Uganda are from the influence of their owners and the interconnected business relations that they have with the Ugandan state.

In fact, the media economics scholar Picard, in a discussion on whether governments should give subsidies to the news industry, debunks the myth of an absolutely independent press and argues that those who address the issue of state support for news, "as a simplistic dichotomy between remaining free of government favours or becoming puppets of those who control government do a great disservice to the contemplation of the broader issues and the development of effective policies," adding that, "The press has never been fully free and independent from government or other major institutions in any democratic society: nor can it be because to do so would destroy the social arrangements that make society possible," (Picard, 2013: 53). This is because, Picard avers, "the market, cannot function without the state and states have not been successful without the market. The market requires the state because market participants require currency, legal recognition of property and contracts, and protections against market manipulation. The state plays a vital role in organising and directing markets and in creating conditions that support media operations," (Picard, 2013: 53).

Consequently, media markets are subject to political and legal influences and controls as well as social, cultural, and economic pressures and restrictions exercised in their environments (Picard, 2013). It is in this context that the *New Vision's* editorial independence or lack thereof, should be debated in my considered view.

3.6 List of interviewees

Sam Sole and Stefaans Brümmer-Founders of Amabhungane.

Mia Malan-Founding director and editor of the Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism

Alvin Ntibinyanye Ntibinyane- Founder of the INK Center for Investigative Journalism in Botwansa and a media scholar currently based in Canada.

Oyedapo Olorunyomi- Nigerian journalist, editor and founder of the Premium Times Center for Investigative Journalism.

Cecilia Okoth- Ugandan investigative journalist with the *New Vision* newspaper.

Carol Natukunda- Ugandan investigative journalist working with the *New Vision*.

Daniel Kalinaki- General Manager (Editorial) for the Nation Media Group- Uganda.

Joachim Buwembo- Ugandan journalist, editor and editorial coordinator of the *New Vision's* philanthro-investigative journalism desk.

Anya Schiffrin- Director of the Technology, Media and Communications specialization at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Robert Kabushenga, CEO, New Vision Printing and Publishing Company.

Lucy Peace Nantume- Program Manager, Democratic Governance Facility (DGF)

Richard Mayanja- Program Manager, Democratic Governance Facility (DGF)

Richard Mugisha- Consultant with the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA)

Christopher Plate- Director, KAS Media Africa

Susan Valentine, Program Manager, Opening Journalism, Program on Independent Journalism at the Open Society Foundations.

3.7 Ethical considerations

This research project considers ethical issues underpinning academic research. Since the project draws on interviews and case study approaches, both of which involve human participants, it was imperative to adhere to the ethics guiding this research method (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

The University of the Witwatersrand requires that ethics clearance be obtained by students who are doing research where participants are human subjects, and no data collection can start without having an ethics clearance and protocol number issued (University of the Witwatersrand, 2019).

Cohen (2007) asserts that by their nature, interviews invade the privacy of respondents given that they devote their time and accept to respond to sometimes uncomfortable questions therefore there must be utmost regard for ethics in these processes of the research project. Consent for instance, must be obtained from the respondent beforehand and an allowance for withdrawal from the project or to retract responses guaranteed. Ethical clearance was applied for and given by the University under ethical clearance number JOMS/2019/10.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The findings in this chapter focus on Amabhungane. The chapter captures a synopsis of the work they do, how they do it, how they fund their investigative journalism and delves into aspects of editorial independence and sustainability as well as the wider implications of the philanthro-investigative journalism model on their journalism.

4.2 AMABHUNGANE

The Amabhungane Center for Investigative Journalism has signed publication agreements with multiple media houses through a distributed publication model, in a bid to reach wider audiences by tapping into the market leverage of dynamic publishers. These platforms include *News24* (SA's largest online news site), the *Daily Maverick*, the *Mail & Guardian, City Press, Business Day* and *Financial Mail*. It also publishes through its own platforms such as the website (amaBhungane.org) launched in August 2018, newsletters, Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook. Partner media houses are not charged a fee for the publication of Amabhungane's work, but they carry the risk should legal challenges arise from the publication (interview with Amabhungane's founders).

The idea here is that, "The model means that the biggest readership numbers come not from our platforms, but from newspapers and popular news sites like News24 and the Daily Maverick. But again, direct readership is not all that matters. A much more important indicator is whether a story "grows legs", i.e. is picked up by other media and commentators and helps to set the national agenda/bring about change. The model has ticked this box too," (AmaBhungane, 2019).

The website is a pivotal aspect of the company's work with such features as the Open Newsroom which has a "meet the team" facility. Using the *iVestigate* section, citizen investigators and journalists have access to tools online that they may find useful for their investigative journalism work. There is also a section for tips from potential news sources while the *Open Investigations* section show cases stories journalists are working on. The site has a section called *Inside Story* whence the team picks up trending news items, breaks them down for the audience and helps them make sense of these stories.

4.3 Funding of their journalism

Amabhungane does not believe in monetizing its content for, in the words of one of the directors in an interview for this research project, "We don't think that access to information should be limited to those with a plastic card (money)." They also don't intend to finance investigative journalism by going commercial. Resources to support their reporting and advocacy, they believe, can be mobilized using other means but not the commercialization of content.

Accordingly, the company maintains free access to content for readers as well as its publication partners and prefers to source for funding elsewhere.

One of those means is crowdfunding where Amabhungane readers make voluntary contributions to the company. This accounted for 28% of their operating expenses in financial year 2017/18, partly attributable to the success of the #GuptaLeaks. As of 2019 the company had managed to raise R2.2 million (24.6%) of their operational expenses from the public (AmaBhungane, 2019).

Support from readers has been the single biggest source of income for the company in the last two years, since 2017 (AmaBhungane, 2019). The target is to raise the threshold to 50%, a move seen as integral to safeguarding the editorial independence of the organization and ensuring its sustainability.

4.4 Foundational grant funding

Whereas the single biggest source of funds for Amabhungane currently comes from crowdfunding, it only accounts for less than a quarter of its operational expenses. That means the other 75% of the bills are picked by other sources who precisely, are philanthropic foundations.

According to the company's Statement of Comprehensive Income, in 2019 it received foundational grant funding to the tune of R7,463,727 as opposed to R6,705,690 in 2018 and donations (*GivenGain*) worth R1,256,314 as opposed to R1,221,353 in 2018 (Amabhungane, 2019).

Below is a breakdown of each foundation's contribution to AmaB for the year 2019 (AmaBhungane, 2019).

Funder	**Amount**
Bertha Foundation	R600,000
Claude Leon Foundation	R540,889
Millennium Trust	R1,900,000
Omidyar Network/Luminate	R989,633
Open Society Foundation	R1,500,000
Open Society Foundation Initiative for Southern Africa	R714,872
RAITH Foundation	R904,959
Social Justice Initiative	R180,957
Social Justice Initiative (via Millennium Trust)	R132,417

Total	**R7,463,727**

4.5 What is the net effect of this on journalism?

Amabhungane's funding policy expressly states that they are not bound to, for instance, share with a donor their story ideas or projects and even in the reporting of their output they have steered clear of being measured against the donors' parameters that sometimes include pushing the journalist to activism around topics they have published.

In 2018 the company's income statement shows, it had a surplus of R964,648 and in 2019 it was R1,074,476. And, one must add, the crowdfunding model is picking pace with a quarter of operations now funded by the public (readers). Additionally, they have existed for a decade and have built such credibility that they can afford to limit how much funding a single donor can advance them. That level of comfort and contentment affords them, the partners agree, "the leeway to set the terms of engagement with a donor. Other centers are, of course, not as lucky and have to dance to the tune of the donors' demands, affecting more grossly, the redefinition of their professional roles," (interview with Brummer).

The managing partners, who are still active journalists, find themselves having to coordinate the three core functions of the center; best practice investigative journalism, training and advocacy, a reality that means, unlike when they were at the *Mail and Guardian* as journalists purely, they now have to wear different hats.

The thinking at Amabhungane is that the reality with this model is that the old wide spectrum approach to journalism is well past behind us and today's challenges require a specialized approach.

When Amabhungane attempted to approach a donor with a specific theme they would fund, they regretted the same and now think it is a bad idea.

"We had one experiment with project funding, so we got money to work on a particular topic and employed somebody for a year to work it. We found that wasn't a good experience for us because there's often not enough resources for such an undertaking. It was a difficult topic (political party funding) and it wasn't enough for that person to do that," Brummer shared. The challenge with this approach, he argued, "is that it distorts your own news agenda decisions." Ideally a newsroom, even when it is super specialized as say, focusing on investigations or health, "should be free to set its own story priorities as events unfold and not be limited to the funded themes."

Amabhungane's rejection of funded themes or approaching donors with topics they want to investigate gives them the latitude to determine their own stories and what they think is important to cover.

4.6 Amabhungane and editorial independence

Amabhungane is conscious of perceptions of bias and influence on its editorial independence and it is partly why the directors say, they abandoned the approach of project funding.

Editorial independence is much about journalists and editors being free of influences as it is about the perception the readers or viewers and general public have, a matter that goes to the root of any media organisation's credibility. Perception then becomes as important as reality.

Brumer shared, "Compared to colleagues in the rest of Africa we are in a very fortunate position because we can make these demands so we don't take money from governments, don't take money from corporates, don't take money from sort of quasi government organizations like USAID."

The company undertakes due diligence on its own foundation funders. First, they cannot, under the funding policy, take more than 20% funding from one single donor. That foundation must have demonstrable independent decision making, credibility and track record of supporting journalism. This way, the entity is assured of safeguarding its editorial independence and credibility.

Amabhungane thinks it important to start, as Brummer observed, "in the medium to long term, a conversation within the industry (foundation supported investigative journalism centers) on how to foster public trust in the model." They seek to allay fears of critics who wish it away on the basis that donor funding affects editorial independence.

To have similar centers whose editorial independence and credibility is not guaranteed, the founders noted, "is problematic both to those organisations and other entities like Amabhungane. The donors too, must appreciate these nuances, not out of courtesy but because their conduct of affairs with grantees raises legitimate questions about the independence of those institutions."

"We want funders to understand that they must fund the core. They must fund journalists to do journalism and not to do specific things because the more specific it becomes the more open the entire system is to dominance," Sole noted further in an interview.

Even more, Amabhungane occupies a unique position that gives it a bird's eye view of what happens in similar centers in SADC region. It appears, from their observation, "that there is emergence of outfits that are simply looking out for money, chasing the next donor whose door is open, and happy to play by their rules."

Whereas this does not relate to Amabhungane, the focus of this chapter's findings, it points to a threat, at least even within the outlook of the team at the center, to editorial independence of those nonprofit centers.

There is a threat therefore, that these centers could then get vulgarized by and with journalists getting reduced to chasing money without journalism as the core center of interest and ethical

guidelines such as editorial independence being sacrificed at the altar of expediency (interview with Brummer). Amabhungane shares that from their experience, “As soon as you have that kind of corporate or quasi corporate funders entering the game, they're always in it for something you don’t know and they are going to start distorting outcomes and we think that's where one needs this industry wide discussion, an agreement on the basic principles of this game.”

But there is also the concern that philanthropy is how capitalism insulates itself from criticism and makes allies using soft power to entrench its own interests.

In interviews with the team at Amabhungane, they concede that this criticism (about their funders) is valid. Brummer observed, “It probably is one of the mechanisms used by the super wealthy to deflect criticism, but I think the future, when it comes to true foundations, are the ones that are not simply a front for individuals. You'll see that in the nature of the independent structure of the board and that changes a lot.”

They are persuaded by their own experience over the last 10 years that, “the foundational model is one that probably has fewer risks than any of the other models out there. Nothing is risk free but it's about the best you know. So, if you're a newspaper with 100 big advertisers you have potentially a hundred no go areas and if you're a small nonprofit with three big foundations and donors you potentially have three no go areas.”

Even then, they argue, for all the criticism about these foundational funders, there exist entities such as the Open Society Foundations whose commitment to the idea of a robust, independent media, the concept of an open and just society, has been time tested.

4.7 But how much arm's length does Amabhungane have with these donors?

The relationship between Amabhungane and its funders, if one sought to tease out editorial independence as a core issue, is one characterized by, ‘normal arm’s length’ between the donor and the center; one sufficient to give the organization what the partners call ‘breathing space’ that allows them safeguard their independence from funders’ influences.

There arise, occasionally, instances where this relationship is tested as exemplified by this scenario shared by Sole, “We've had a few instances where someone from a donor organization would essentially come forward as a source. They're not saying do this story, but they would say you know there's this issue and there's a good source you can talk to who can tell you much more about it.” In that case, they observe, one has got to apply their mind, assess the facts, distill the issues and determine if to pursue the tip or let go, but overall, “These are small and isolated incidents, it's not something that we've had to deal with.”

4.8 Amabhungane and the sustainability question

Can we confidently say that this can be a model of financing investigative journalism, that it's not an emergency approach but one that can answer the challenges of the constrained business

model of journalism? That it can be a model that keeps organizations that are smart and get their act together, much the same way the old advertising model for example, worked?

To sustain this model, according to Amabhungane, “the reader must be brought in the picture, this time to support processes of good journalism. That is why the organization took to the reader through the crowdfunding model such that users pay voluntarily.”

Effectively, “Poor users won't pay at all or pay very little and richer users will subsidize for the poor to have access,” Brummer noted.

In principle, Brummer notes, “the idea of governments in Africa recognizing independent journalism as a public good and stepping in to support credible centers like these, is not a bad one.” Whereas this works in some Nordic countries, Amabhungane is conscious of its own operating context and thinks this idea would be a possible sustainability model as an ideal rather than a feasible solution.

“Obviously in South Africa because there is a history of the capture of institutions one is worried that something like that with the best of intentions would be abused, such as being used to support certain kinds of media against others and again buy sympathy but ultimately it is not a bad idea. In principle it's a good element,” Amabhungane managers opined.

Sole shares Amabhungane’s worry considering the same foundational funders, in their work with other centers, are trying to reinvent the wheel. One of them, (name left out on interviewee’s request), “has been going around doing workshops on media sustainability and some of the centers that we work with now have this idea after those workshops that they are going to start full profit wings that will do daily news online. My first question is, if everyone else is failing with this commercial model, what makes them think they are going to not only survive, make that thing work but also make it work well enough to fund their journalism?”

With that, the center posits, arises a kind of identity crisis. On the one hand one is a nonprofit center for investigative journalism and on the other they are a commercial online site. What is the problem with this approach to sustainability?

“I don't think that really works. If we had to look carefully at how we would use our resources to also become a full profit outlet, we'd probably invest in short selling because we can do very good research on companies and we could play the market and use the access to information we have to make money on the stock market which would obviously undermine the core ethical purpose of what we do,” Sole noted.

Their other worry with going commercial as a solution to the sustainability challenge, is that they could easily find themselves returning to the same stage of the marketplace (state and private capital) that, “undermines independent journalism.”

Additionally, in the case of Amabhungane, part of the reason for their departure from *Mail and Guardian* was the conflict of interest between the nonprofit investigative center and the mainstream newspaper whose interests were anchored in profit. Even when the Amabhungane team could afford to stand up, on editorial principle, to the newspaper, "there remained levels of discomfort," that necessitated the 'divorce'. A case in point is when management, at one time felt the Amabhungane team was suited to cover the Oscar Pistorious murder trial in 2014. It was the latter's considered view that the trial, "an ongoing news event, was not our area but the management considered the story an extremely important one given the level of public interest and the commercial implications of that."

Frictions like these led to clashes with management. In substance, they noted, "it points to what can go wrong when the commercial side of the business collides with the philanthro-investigative-journalism side. Reconciliation of interests becomes a slippery affair and sometimes the only way out is to opt out as we did." There is, therefore, the team at Amabhungane argues, "a case to be made for one to be clear on who they are, a profit or nonprofit. Attempting, in the name of sustainability to intermarry the two approaches to journalism financing, is recipe for trouble," in Amabhungane's view.

4.9 How do donors measure success at Amabhungane?

As captured in the literature review in the case of Bhekisisa by Malan (2018), donors' metrics of success can be laborious, ranging from tracking a grantee's online presence and growth to expecting them to influence public policy and debate.

In the case of Amabhungane, Sam Sole shared, "We have resisted quite well having to go into any of that detailed stuff. I think with journalism that (pinning down grantees on impact) is a very dangerous road because you could potentially find yourself chasing stars."

It appears therefore, he added, "that there is a question of power relations here. Entities like Amabhungane can determine how they report to donors and agree on how their impact is assessed while others who don't enjoy similar privilege (to call it that), find themselves subjected to metrics they may not necessarily agree to."

There is a danger, Amabhungane notes, in defence of its strictness around donors not determining impact for them, in chasing clicks on the internet for example.

As one of the managing partners put it, "It is dangerous because what is popular is not necessarily what is in the public interest. If you were to follow the logic of that, you should be a publisher of pornography, that's what's going to get a website clicks and we're not going there. I think that the notion that you need to understand what's going on in terms of your readership is fair enough."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE *NEW VISION*

The *New Vision*, one of the two major newspapers in the Republic of Uganda, has a daily circulation of not more than 28,000 copies per day (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2019).

On what the media economics landscape in Uganda looks like today, Robert Kabushenga, the newspaper's Chief Executive Officer asserted in an interview, "It's looking bad because the very viability of media as a business is under threat. So much content is out there, the market doesn't feel the need to pay for good journalism which has created an existential challenge for most media houses especially in a market like ours where economies are weak, and this makes the cost of doing business high."

He added, "We are faced with the challenge of how to base primarily, on media and make money and play our role because the credibility and the ability to deliver our mandate is dependent on our ability to generate income."

5.1 How the philanthro-investigative journalism model works at the *New Vision*

For the *New Vision*, Kabushenga admits, sourcing for donor funding was a do or die matter. The company's top executives in several interviews conducted are confident that when they did this, they had an idea about the mind of the donor and how to achieve a convergence of interests between themselves and whichever donor was available for a conversation about supporting the company's watchdog reporting. According to Kabushenga, the company has approached several donors with a view to persuading them to support their journalistic work.

"The newspaper needs the donor to overcome some of its financial constraints to be able to facilitate investigative reporting," Kabushenga opined, adding, "On the other hand, the donor also needs a credible newspaper with a track record of practicing good journalism whose experience, audience and platforms the donor needs to advance their own interests and agenda." Whereas the newspaper needs funds to support critical aspects of its journalism, the donor, according to the *Vision* school of thought, "also needs the newspaper to advance their own set objectives such as advocacy."

Kabushenga shared that the donors, "have realized that to achieve the advocacy objectives they are looking for, they need the media and so they have intervened to sustain the media financially, allowing it to carryout journalism and play its role without worrying about money."

One must underline the choice of the words, 'sustain the media financially' to be able to 'carryout journalism' without worrying about money. Why? The *New Vision* is conscious that the donor is not, cannot and will not, probably should not be, the answer to their business survival in the grand scheme of things. According to the executives at the newspaper, they are

under no illusion that they can rely on donor funding to sustain their business and keep the shareholders happy.

Rather, the CEO said, "all we need from the donor is money to keep doing good journalism without say, firing reporters as a cost saving measure or simply freezing investigative reporting projects simply because there is no money. So, the donor's intervention here is not to fix the business but to fix the financing aspects of investigative reporting, which is important for the business."

Although the *New Vision* is struggling like many other media houses in the world, "it is not on the verge of collapse so the donor's only intervention is to fund investigative journalism or other journalism projects where the two of us (donor and media house) have mutual interests," according to Kabushenga.

The *New Vision* looks at the business of sustaining its business as a going concern as its business and not that of a donor. The donor's intervention, the CEO emphasized, "is only intermediary and not a lifetime approach to addressing our challenges."

What then, is the meeting point between the business and donor funding of the work of a business? The *New Vision* sees the donor funding as a contribution to their business success; both have an agenda and for the newspaper; their agenda is to improve their financial position. This means that philanthropic or donor funding, according to him, "is a means to that end, not the end."

Kabushenga contends that the cost of doing business is high, the market is shrinking, it is saturated and news is commoditized so they are now faced with a challenge, "The credibility and ability to deliver on our mandate is based on our ability to generate money. The philanthropists are discovering that for their work, they need an effective media for their advocacy, if the media is threatened by lack of resources, they intervene to sustain the media."

"The reality is that the market context in which we operate; advertising revenues dropping, market changing its methods, is harsh. So, we need to adapt, if there's demand for our work (journalism) and someone is willing to pay and it's something that can be handled by the system, I'm okay with it," Kabushenga averred.

In line with this outlook, the company has embarked on an aggressive resource mobilization drive from different donor organisations and philanthropists. The *New Vision,* according to Kabushenga, "has in the recent past received funding from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support its (*New Vision's*) reporting on children issues, Swedish International Development Agency for climate change related journalism, Irish Aid for reporting on the education sector, the Netherlands embassy in Uganda to do stories on agriculture and now we are in talks with the Chinese to see what partnerships are possible."

For the purpose of this research project, focus is restricted to the current partnership with the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) which falls more clearly in the philanthro-investigative journalism model under study to the extent that DGF is a donor organization, although not, in the strictest sense of the word, a philanthropic foundation since it is funded by taxpayers of European countries. The facility has a board comprised of; Ambassadors of Denmark, Ireland, Austria, Sweden, Netherlands to Uganda as well as the Head of Delegation of the EU to Uganda and receives its funding from the home countries of the EU and the respective participating embassies based in Uganda (Democratic Governance Facility, 2019).

5.2 A tale of convolution?

Unlike the *Mail and Guardian* that established a nonprofit investigative journalism center as independent outfits (Amabhungane and Bhekisisa) but kept them within the organization (until the two parted ways), the *New Vision,* at least at the time of writing this report, had not yet registered a separate legal entity. There was also no discussion or plan to set up a separate entity and, according to the CEO, "the newspaper is happy to engage with the philanthro-journalism model under the current arrangement," without going *the Mail and Guardian* or the *Namibian* or the *Premium Times* in Nigeria way. The company's board, "is comfortable not creating a separate entity for the nonprofit funding we receive for investigative reporting," according to Mr. Kabushenga, because, "we and our partners are happy working under the current arrangement and no law bars such an arrangement."

Compared to similar entities in Nigeria, Namibia and South Africa, the *New Vision's* approach is unique to the extent that there is no dividing line between the company and the nonprofit side of the funding for journalism it gets. There is a peculiarity here that needs explaining. A good number of foundations and donors (and certainly European government funders) usually give money to a non-profit structure and this is why these organisations set up trusts, a case in point being the *Namibian* newspaper in Namibia that established a trust to anchor its philanthro-investigative journalism component. The question then is why these donor organisations would give money to a commercial organization. According to Kabushenga, "the law does not really bar this kind of arrangement and donor organisations often work with commercial entities depending on the facts of each case."

Kabushenga adds, "*New Vision* has a very strong governance structure, all these collaborations go through negotiations, they must comply with legal requirements, we have a board editorial committee that examines and supervises these partnerships to ensure that they don't slide into difficult waters so we do reports to the board and they are checking all the time." Not to tamper with this 'strong governance structure' and to keep it intact, Kabushenga shares, the company's board prefers donor funded projects to be run under one roof, hence not creating a trust or separate nonprofit outfit. Should the board in the future, according to the CEO, reconsider its position, the newspaper will not have qualms registering a trust or nonprofit investigative journalism center.

The editorial coordinator of the program, Joachim Buwembo noted in an interview, "It is the entire newsroom that is involved in the donor funded investigative journalism project, there's no dedicated journalist or team for the project. I identify and assign different tasks to different people in their specific roles. So, for any given story you have 4-6 people on it who comprise of a TV, radio and print journalist, the most important being the TV because whatever footage he has can be used to generate material for the other platforms." In terms of accountability for the 'DGF money' however, Buwembo says, "the money to facilitate the journalist going to the field is signed for by the particular journalist who later accounts for it but the editor has the discretion to assign other reporters to accompany that reporter since they are part of one newsroom. In other words, the DGF money would not be used to facilitate the other accompanying reporters since they are facilitated by the newsroom funds under normal news operations. Additionally, the DGF money is restricted to stories on human rights and access to justice."

5.3 How it works

The DGF money is sent to the newspaper and managed by its company accountants. There is a senior editor in charge of investigations who edits stories from the project as part of 'added responsibilities' within the scope of his day to day editing duties. Then there is an editorial coordinator who also works as a consultant for the company's other journalism projects. This project was assigned to him as an added-on duty (interview with Buwembo).

The team then uses the same investigative journalism desk and occasionally picks on reporters from other sections of the company's ecosystem (radio, television and online) for collaborative projects.

At the accounting stage however, there is a separate bank account for these DGF funds and the accountant reports both to the *New Vision* management and DGF quarterly on the project's financials.

As the CEO shared, "the team working under this project has no additional benefits such as salary variation or revised contract terms with the company." This, however, is a major cause of discontent with the project as some interviewees pointed out.

"The DGF money, as the case is with the other monies we have received from other donors like SIDA, UNICEF and Irish Aid, is to facilitate the reporter to go to the field and get a story which ordinarily we would struggle to facilitate. This arrangement is not designed to enhance their salary or pay them better than other reporters," Kabushenga noted.

One reporter who spoke on condition of anonymity noted that they were, "frustrated and disappointed," with the donor funded project because it did not make any difference in their own financial situation. The average pay for a senior reporter in the newspaper is $900 (R13,500) while a junior reporter could take home half or even less than that (interviews with reporters).

However, "what the project's funds have changed is the availability of resources for reporters to do stories that they ordinarily would not get financing to do as the company embarks on cost cutting," Carol Natukunda, a senior reporter attached to the project noted.

In an interview, Lucy Peace Nantume the Program Manager- Human rights and Access to Justice at DGF who oversees the partnership with *New Vision,* noted that the newspaper responded to a call for proposals and grant applications, and it is treated, "like any other grantee." That means that issues of salary structure are left to the grantee organization to deal with.

Ordinarily, if a reporter was travelling from Kampala, the capital city, to pursue a story in Mukono, a nearby district (the distance is approximately from Johannesburg to Pretoria), the newspaper would give them no more than $10 for that. With the DGF pool of funds though, the same distance and length of time for a similar story gets financed to a tune of up to $150 (interview with reporters and editors). That is five times more facilitation for the reporter.

For a story up country, say 300 kilometers from the city, where a reporter would use a company car and be given, for a period of five days $100 (that is a budget of $20 per day), Natukunda noted, "the journalist would have to get low end accommodation and cheap food in the country side but the DGF project will give them five times that amount ($500."

However, according to the editorial coordinator of this project, he now finds it difficult to maintain a team of investigative journalists for the project's stories.

"They say the DGF project is very stressful. It is more demanding in many ways, suddenly, my reporters are supposed to start writing narrative and finance reporters from their field activities. This irritates them so some now prefer to work on the normal newspaper stories where these requirements aren't there," the coordinator said. Under the DGF arrangement, Buwembo explains, the reporter is expected to file a report detailing what they did in the field, "a kind of breakdown of activities, what they set out to achieve and what they achieved, challenges encountered and accompany that with further break down of how each penny that was advanced to them was used, with documentary evidence like receipts."

One reporter, speaking on condition of anonymity, while appreciating that she now had more resources at her disposal to pull off powerful stories, and that the facilitation for her work was five times better, had one down side, "the complex and laborious accounting expected is a turn off." She did a couple of stories under the project and, tired of the 'stressful DGF procedures' (such as writing narrative and financial reports, being called by auditors to offer explanation on some expenditures, attending meetings with donors) told her editor she was happy working on stories other than those funded by DGF. The editors on the other hand find themselves having to attend meeting after meeting and writing one report after another. Sometimes they claim, they are summoned by the donor for impromptu meetings. This, they say, comes at a colossal cost to their time and planning, affecting newsroom duties in the sense that they find themselves, according to two reporters interviewed separately, having to attend more meetings than they are

used to under the normal newsroom operations, taking time off to write detailed narrative and financial reports (something they are not required to do under the normal newsroom framework).

5.4 How has the funding impacted content and its quality?

"It has made more content available for example the feature with UNICEF allowed us do stories on children that we hadn't had an opportunity to do and now with the grant from DGF we are paying a lot more attention to access to justice and human rights stories," said the CEO. The editorial coordinator of the DGF project shared that the quality and impact of stories under the human rights and justice project funded by DGF has significantly improved as evidenced by more reader interest and in some cases, presidential attention and action on some of the issues they have uncovered.

Buwembo's assessment, as the editor coordinating this project was, "The impact has been amazing. We have worked on six projects; bribery in courtrooms, corruption at police stations, human trafficking, prisoners' rights, brokers hijacking hospital management and other smaller stories like effectiveness of the CCTV cameras that government setup around the city to curb crime. I think there has been immediate impact because we invest so much on the editing of the investigations and the reporters do a thorough job."

Above all, the editor is under more pressure when handling a donor funded story because, as Buwembo, puts it, "When you are the editor supervising the donor funded program you wouldn't allow shoddy work so the immediate impact is that the journalists have to do a thorough job and it's required that they do an in depth job."

This, he explains, is partly because of the different layers of accountability, "The donor expects better quality stories as his measure of good return on investment while the reader too expects superior quality considering that the stories are flagged as 'funded by DGF' so the impression is that they are better facilitated."

Senior reporter Natukunda said, "It's a good thing, it's exciting because if you've worked in the newsroom in Uganda you know what it means for a journalist to undertake a special investigation. It makes a difference, ideally if you are to do an investigative project, you barely have funds, even basic transport. You have fixed rates, if I'm supposed to meet a source in town maybe they'll just give me less than one dollar and then I get there and this source I'm going to meet probably postpones the meeting. That means I must foot my bills but the DGF support makes it all exciting because everything is catered for; transportation, gadgets and whatever else you need."

She too takes exception with the rigorous accounting, "Journalists have been having problems because we don't like too much accounting procedures. I want to sign a voucher, go to the field and do my work, so to ask me for reports, invite me to audit meetings to answer queries about receipts I submitted and things like that are quite discomforting. I assume that if I've gone out to do a story, it (story) should be the accountability because I don't create the story in my head. So

what happens is that you go out, do your story and come back, the DGF secretariat (at the donor's head office in Kampala) does their auditing, so once the story is run you sit down and break the costs then hand them in for auditing."

To a journalist used to signing a voucher, presenting it to the editor and finance office for approval then receiving cash to go to the field, do the story, submit it and go home without being asked to turn up to answer audit queries, write a narrative and financial accountability report, the DGF funded project, "becomes a thorn in the flesh," according to Natukunda.

In response to these reservations, DGF's Nantume asserted that the donor organization cannot compromise its strict accountability standards in the name of flexibility for journalists and the unique nature of their work. All grantees, regardless of the nature of work they do, DGF insists, must strictly abide by the accountability systems of the institution.

She noted, "We treat them like any other partner. They report quarterly on their activities like all other partners using the Management Information System. We didn't create unique terms and conditions for them."

According to Natukunda, the consequence of the failure to separate the company's operations and editorial teams from the nonprofit journalism side, "is that the reporters and editors' performance review dynamics have changed. Under the DGF project, one has money enough to undertake a story project for up to four weeks. That, however, is counted as one story when the human resource department is evaluating one's performance."

In Ugandan newsrooms, she adds, performance is largely based on story count more than quality. Some reporters, she said, "developed cold feet when editors and the human resource officers started writing emails alerting them of low story count and a need to have a conversation about their performance. In precarious times when the axe is hovering in the newsroom as Ugandan journalists love to refer to retrenchment, this is a genuine worry and point of concern."

I did find that there was neither clarity nor harmonization on how the nonprofit side of the newsroom and the nature of stories done, would be reconciled with reporters' and editors' performance appraisal. Unsure of the future, fearsome of the unknown, another reporter said in an interview, "some reporters took to going slow on the DGF stories while paying more attention to achieving the bare minimum story count spelt out in their employment contract."

5.5 On editorial independence

To interrogate how the newspaper is managing aspects of editorial independence, it is important to ask the question, whose interest is DGF working for? What is in it for them and is there a chance that that will affect the newspaper's independence?

Kabushenga argues that this is a wrong premise to start from because it presupposes that the grantee either has no interests or isn't clear about them.

“Why do you think that I have no interests? What makes you think that in my collaboration with DGF, I haven’t secured my interests? Yes, I have interests. Those people have their interests, but the media houses need to define and protect their interests in these collaborations,” he opined in an interview at his Kampala office in September 2019.

Once one has clarity of interest, then they can tackle how to protect both their credibility and editorial independence from the onset. In other words, if, as a grantee, Kabushenga argues, “I know your agenda, your direction, your thought process, your track record as a foundational funder, that gives me, as the grantee, latitude to appreciate how to deal with you. Should the grantee, arising from due diligence, discover that the donor is one who wants to have their way and push their agenda at all costs, then they had better decide whether to take their money or not.”

So, does the grantee then protect their editorial independence in the agreement with the donor, demarcating boundaries, no go areas and off limits? In the *New Vision* case, Kabushenga weighs in, “Independence is not secured by agreements. The key issue is to figure out the partners’ interests and agenda and find out if you are willing to do it. The independence of media houses cannot be guaranteed in advance of concluding the partnership.”

The executives at the company are more interested in, Kabushenga said, “undertaking due diligence on our donors and determining whether to even initiate a conversation or not with them.”

For instance, he adds by way of example, Uganda remains a homophobic country with a law that was put in place by the British colonialists still in the nation’s Penal Code Act, the so called, “sex against the order of nature.” According to Kabushenga, using this as an example to tease out why he is more concerned about the convergence of interests than agreements and funding policies, “if a philanthropist who openly campaigns for homosexuality approached us with a million dollars, we would turn that down because it will put us in conflict with our shareholders (government and public).”

The same standard, he says, “would apply to a philanthropist who, for instance, openly supports abortion (also criminal under Ugandan law).”

So, the *New Vision* approach according to the CEO, “is that the character, track record and publicly stated ideological position of the philanthropist is what determines if they will be troublesome in terms of our editorial independence.”

As it stands, the company is confident that the current funders do not pose a threat to their independence considering that they have a clear position as advocates for democracy, human rights, rule of law and justice. So, when engaging DGF, *New Vision* engages someone whose agenda is clear, and they do not have to worry for their independence.

But then if there was say a procurement scandal at DGF, would the newspaper report it?

"Yes, because either way we will die. If we don't report it we will be killed by the readers for not reporting, if we do DGF may cut the partnership with us, so we are bound by our code as journalists to report and that is what guides us," Kabushenga shared.

However, does the partnership agreement envisage such scenarios and institute mechanisms of addressing them should they arise? Even then what does the partnership agreement say? Nantume (official at DGF) said they did not sign a unique partnership agreement with *New Vision*.

She noted that as a donor, "We read the stories they publish like anyone else, when those stories are published. They only brief us in their reporting documents on the number of stories they have done, their impact and that is where it ends. We never look at what stories they plan to do."

To bolster this point, she shared an incident that exemplifies the respect for editorial independence the donor has for its partner (*New Vision*).

After the partnership agreement had been signed in March 2019, Nantume shared, "*New Vision* and other Ugandan newspapers ran a story claiming DGF had cut funding to Ugandan NGOS due to accountability challenges. The story was not accurate and we invited the *New Vision* journalist just as we did with other reporters for a press briefing where we made it categorically clear that we didn't want to compromise them and all we wanted was accurate reporting and our side of the story to be heard."

Accuracy and balance, she said, are a bare minimum expected of any journalist and that was the only time they engaged the newspaper over stories about DGF. If there is any lesson from this experience she noted, "it is that the newspaper is independent and free to report on one of its funders. Their independence and our resolve to respect it, is best demonstrated by that incident. In short, they are free to write anything about us. We can only get concerned, as anyone else would, if the story is not accurate and our side of the story was not heard."

Kabushenga views the ability of the donor to respect editorial independence as a factor of 'journalistic context'. That context according to him, is determined by the background of the country in which the media is operating, how media business there is run and even the individual journalist and his methods of work. In a weak journalistic context, "the philanthropists will seek to control the agenda of the media house, if they find themselves in a strong one, they will respect the boundaries and accept the little one is able to concede and pay for it."

This could possibly explain why a philanthropist operating in South Africa, he said, "a country with a history of the media pushing back against excesses and abuse of power, will easily concede when Amabhungane sets the boundaries for them. Chances are not high that a donor will try to influence a grantee in a South African context but for a country with a weak media the

philanthropist, aware of this background and expecting the grantee not to fight back, may want to assert his influence and financial handshake beyond the proverbial elbow." These nuances to him, are important in debating the influence of donors or philanthropists on editorial independence.

5.6 Sustainability and the future of philanthro-investigative journalism at *New Vision*

DGF's funding model, according to Nantume, is such that a new grantee starts off with 18 months, and based on satisfactory performance, that funding is renewed, and the periods lengthened to three years. That raises serious concerns about the 'what next' should that funding not be renewed after the initial 18 months' period.

Kabushenga argues that philanthropy, "will end, the rich man tomorrow could become poor, they could pick a fight with the regulator, it is good in the short term but it is a thin end of the wedge, we should be careful about philanthropy because it is not altruistic per se. I think the best time for media was when it was a profitable business because you could figure out your way. So, we need to go back to the drawing board on what we can do to become profitable again."

However, whereas the company does not intend to invest much hope in philanthropy to sustain its investigative journalism, it is also conscious of the fact that as long as philanthropy and accountability are key in a project, "then the media partnership will always remain. If philanthropy has a publishing need the media will always be available for them to engage with and fund," (interview with Kabushenga).

However, "your principles versus their objectives should help guide you on noticing legitimate philanthropy and the Trojan horses."

There is a worry from the editorial coordinator that this DGF model of funding is not sustainable in a fast-paced media environment. The average time it takes to negotiate and put in place all the paperwork needed for funding to be approved is no less than three-four months or even more, according to his experience. In that time so much is happening in the country and the world that needs investigative reporters to go to the field. How does one reconcile that with a donor who approaches funding for investigative reporting using the same approach they use when dealing with a non-government organization specializing in say, fighting corruption?

Nantume noted that DGF is not concerned about *New Vision's* sustainability challenges because that is best left to them to figure out. As a donor, their intervention is only to the extent that they can advance their human rights and access to justice programs in Uganda and if a newspaper applies for support in that regard, they are happy to engage that media house on the same terms they engage any other grantee. Sustenance of the media house's investigative journalism undertaking she noted, "is purely their business."

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 PERSPECTIVES OF THE PHILANTHROPISTS/DONORS

To interrogate the role of philanthropy in journalism in South Africa and Uganda, and the globe for that matter, this chapter is an attempt to enter the mind of the philanthropist or donors.

Among those interviewed was Susan Valentine from the Program on Independent Journalism at the Open Society Foundations. She heads the Opening Journalism portfolio that supports startups, slightly older digital organizations focusing on how best to engage with audiences and how to think about business models. They also support some media experiments.

In an interview in October 2019, Valentine shared the thinking behind OSF's support to the media.

The Open Society Foundations is one of the foundational funders deeply invested in supporting investigative journalism centers across Africa. Amabhungane, like other centers in Nigeria, Namibia and Botswana owe their initial funding to this organization (interviews with founders). OSF is popular among journalists for its flexibility when dealing with startups. Where other foundations insist on one presenting corporate governance structure documents, audited books of accounts before considering their applications for funding, OSF is happy to start the journey with a startup, tolerate them and walk that distance to maturity with them. In fact, without OSF initial seed funding, some of the independent investigative journalism centers would hardly have taken off (interview with Valentine).

Open Society Foundations, she shared, "stands for values of open societies where citizens have access to information and where they can actually participate in how they are governed. We believe that journalism is essential for an open society and for democracy, it should be serving audiences with impartial, independent information about what is happening and citizens can make up their minds and choose how they want to vote, what they want to support based on information that is accurate and has evidence behind it, that is as truthful as possible."

Against this background, OSF's conviction is that journalism is, "like the canary in a coal mine in the sense that when you start seeing governments attack the media, it's often a sign that democratic spaces are closing down and that's why we believe it's important to support them, keep them as strong and sustainable as possible," she shared.

On how the foundation determines whom to work with, Valentine said, "Well, either we are approached or we travel and see who is trying to do journalism in this new digital world, who is thinking how they can meet a need that is not being met by the media. These would usually be daily journalists although my colleagues work with investigative journalists, so we would either be approached by them or identify them through various networks or meet them from visiting a country and talking to other journalists or talking to people in civil society and supporting them

if they produce quality content and are very clear what their aims are and the audiences they are going to reach."

She noted that these are the questions the Program on Independent Journalism (PIJ) believes are very important in today's digital world, because the media needs to be extremely clear about who they are trying to reach and, "what relevance you are going to give them because there's a lot of stuff you can get online these days, so how does journalism look different from anybody starting a blogpost."

As Valentine contended in the interview, "the ideological disposition underpinning the PIJ's intervention is that the media is a strategic ally for the achievement of that core objective. In effect, if the media dies or is weakened to a point of being incapable of performing its role, then OSF's 'open and just' society work is significantly affected."

She believes there is a symbiotic relationship between media freedom and democratic societies. Open societies need free and independent journalism. However, in her considered opinion, philanthro-investigative journalism is not the entire answer.

She noted, "There are tough questions to be asked because the dam can be emptied, and I put in another two glasses of water and in no time the dam is empty again. Unless we find a way to either plug the holes or whatever the problem is in the dam, I think short term emergencies can keep the lights on but you're not fixing the problem," adding, "It's actually exhausting and stressful for the organization that may have enough money for another twelve months but no time to organize another fundraising strategy or business plan and at the end of twelve months nothing is going to change."

She added, "So I think it's important to ask why you're in this predicament, yes it could have happened because of the business model but also it could be because you are not providing journalism that is useful and valuable and the people rather consume journalism from somewhere else and you can keep pouring money into that organization but if it isn't an effective organization, you won't change much."

That is why in talking about how Open Society Foundations' PIJ supports startups or older organizations, she shared, "the question is how are you engaging your audience? Unless you focus on that, you will struggle. Obviously, you need to have a revenue stream, but being dependent on donors can constrain your activities. Often, donor money is offered only for a particular project and then it means you're very shackled to that project, whereas if you can earn your own money you can spend it anyhow you like."

Valentine further noted, "I would say that yes, emergency money can be appropriate if there's a particular reason for why you've been just cut off. For example, say you had a healthy advertising base but your media outlet antagonizes government and then potential advertisers became scared to associate with it, we could give you enough money to do some more planning

for how you are going to sustain yourself for longer," adding, "If you are going to use that money and burn through it and pay journalists, that's not a sustainable strategy. If you can't get funding you have to rely on donors, but try to diversify and get money from a number of sources, so the answer is yes to emergency funding but a very big 'but' comes after it."

Richard Mugisha, who worked with the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA) in Uganda and now does consulting for the organization oversaw the organization extend what for all intents and purposes was, "a kiss of life" to media organisations that were on the verge of closure.

OSIEA, in tandem with the wider OSF outlook to their work with the media, is concerned, at least in the Ugandan case, Mugisha said, "with the concept of independent media. In our world view independent media is the middle of the road media, a balance between state-controlled media and private media."

In that case OSF's interest, "is in a middleman who will represent questions of human rights, of fairness in electoral processes and of government accountability."

Yet, which is where OSIEA justifies its intervention, according to Mugisha, "democratic space in Uganda has shrunk. A ruler who has been in power since 1986 and is determined to rule for life has become increasingly intolerant of dissent, censorship of the press is increasing and journalists, bloggers, social media activists are arrested and intimidated at will while human rights violations continue unabated."

For OSIEA therefore, one of the surest ways it can make its contribution towards widening democratic space and ensuring justice and human rights observance, is by supporting the media to undertake investigative reporting.

But, Mugisha clarifies, "Our interest is independent media; it's not a particular newspaper or particular set of stories or thematic areas. So, we work with a newspaper to the point where it is more effective in bringing out the independent voice."

Overall, as Mugisha puts it, "Clearly as OSIEA we have a position, and our position is that of liberal democracy. Ideas like representation, equality before the law, rule of law, democratic infrastructure, there must be right to information, right to access legal aid, right to justice and the right to participation."

For DGF, entering the partnership with *New Vision*, a commercial entity with government holding majority shares was largely because, as Nantume noted, there was a merger of interests between the donor and the newspaper around human rights and access to justice in Uganda.

Nantume shared that DGF was conscious of the fact that government has majority shareholding in the *New Vision*, and they pondered over what that meant for their editorial independence. When the newspaper applied for funding, these issues were discussed with the donor and, as she

stated, “we decided to give it a try and see how far we can go. So far we are impressed with them.”

“We thought it would go two ways; as a newspaper with majority shares held by government, we thought that when they raise human rights and access to justice issues, the state being the biggest violator of human rights, a government newspaper raising these issues would make a difference and we trusted that they would be bold enough to raise them,” the DGF official shared, adding, “Secondly, they also have access to power and convening power as a newspaper for activities like public debates on human rights using their different platforms. In the end we left it to them to grapple with editorial independence around these issues in lieu of their position after we were satisfied that we could trust them.”

It is the first time DGF is directly funding a media house, “but it is a journey we were excited to explore because *New Vision*, despite being a commercial outfit, had approached us in their application for funding with a project that was not for direct private gain. It would have been different if they wanted support for direct commercial undertakings because we wouldn’t take it on but to the extent that this was a nonprofit journalism project geared towards advancement of human rights and access to justice which is one of our program areas, we were happy to give it a shot,” Nantume said.

6.1 On criticism against foundational funders

What both donors and grantees interviewed do not dispute, as shown in the literature review and repeated herein by Mugisha, “is that there is a possibility, sometimes a remote one, that foundations may interfere with editorial independence, affect the credibility of a media house and sometimes, use the media to further agendas that are not necessarily in the public interest.” The chance that that can happen is agreed to by all the interviewees across the spectrum.

On criticism that foundational funders could influence editorial independence, Mugisha said, “We don’t control editorial policy. But I think it’s possible that philanthropists can be passive editors.”

There is agreement that the possibility of editorial independence getting dented by philanthro-journalism exists, but all interviewees did not think it was a major issue. In fact, all denied there ever being a scenario where the interests of the funder clashed with the editorial direction of the journalists.

Valentine argued, “You need to scrutinize the funders of the media, media first of all has to be transparent about where their money comes from, it’s a concern but I don’t think that philanthropy is any more dangerous than commercial models and arguably more transparent, it’s really important for journalism to know what its values are and who it’s prepared to take money from, it really comes down to one’s own conscience and what you are prepared to do. I agree that

it’s a potential danger that the media could be hijacked by philanthropists with their own agendas.”

For that reason, she contended, it’s important to know who the funder is, the values they have, their behavior with other people, and to ask questions around values, principles, beliefs, and behavior.

Journalists, she observed, “talk about becoming pretzels changing into different shapes for different funders and it’s exhausting to try and find a match, that’s why I would argue that increasingly, where possible we should be giving funding that covers core organizational costs. Another thing organizations should consider in their funding proposals is requesting extra amounts from funders to build up reserves in a way that any responsible business would have in bank accounts.”

It is important to approach the foundations supporting investigative journalism like this, according to Valentine, so that when the funder suddenly drops or there’s an emergency, the media house can keep going.

Christoph Plate, the Director of the Konrad Adenaeur Stiftung (KAS) Media Africa program which works closely with media practitioners, entrepreneurs and academics in Africa argued in an interview that the clarity of the agenda of especially American based foundations such as Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Open Society Foundations, is a useful starting point to debate whether their funding would adversely influence the editorial independence of those investigative journalism centers they fund.

“Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are very focused on health journalism. Okay, that's fair and understood. I think George Soros or the Open Society Foundations are more into financing journalism. I don't really see that they have a hidden agenda. I mean, the Gates are sharing their wealth. George Soros is sharing his wealth and I think that when we look at values that they stand for, I've not heard that they would ever demand that there wouldn't be freedom of speech or that media should not be the fourth estate,” Plate noted.

From the interviews with actors in the philanthropy and donor space, it was abundantly clear that there is consensus within that community that editorial independence of grantees and partners is sacrosanct and must be respected. It was also clear that whereas the donors are concerned about the sustainability of the investigative journalism projects they fund, they honestly believe this issue must remain business of the media houses. It was also noticeable across the board that donors fund investigative reporting projects that most closely align with their own program areas or advocacy agendas.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is analysis of the findings in chapters five and six. It pays attention to the key research questions of the project and the emerging themes from the research findings.

7.2 Discussion and analysis

The relationship between philanthro-investigative journalism and the evolving nature of journalistic roles, job descriptions and editorial independence

Critical political economy theory interrogates the relationship between funding and ownership of the media and how that affects its role in society. The theory's origins are anchored in 'traditional' media (print and broadcast).

The theory is useful in analyzing political power and its relationship with such phenomena as public broadcasting as well as the practice of journalism and delivery of news.

For the purpose of this discussion, the aspect of the relationship between funding of the media and how that impacts its role in society is the point of focus.

Like cultural studies, critical political economy analyses the constitution and exercise of power and how that power, in all its manifestations, affects the media.

In the study of the media through critical political economy, we are interested in the 'wider structures' as an operative context of these processes, the social relations, the power play and what Murdoch (2005:63) calls, "structured asymmetries in social relations".

Consequently, it is imperative to analyse the emergence of philanthro-investigative journalism, from a critical political economy lens, to content, the areas grantees focus on and how that affects their journalistic function. In so doing however, we must examine the relevance of critical political economy critique in today's ever-changing media economics dynamics, recognizing that the theory has its roots in the commercial media model. Thus, I use the theory to help me interpret data collected from the field.

For the *New Vision* for instance, the donor (DGF) effectively determined the areas of focus for the newspaper's investigative desk through funding those areas (human rights and access to justice). The *New Vision* found itself walking the same path with the donor whose agenda in Uganda is contributing to human rights, rule of law, democracy and access to justice (DGF, 2019) as thematic areas of focus. As the advertiser subtly determined what gets published in the olden days, today the donor is the one determining, in this case of the *New Vision*, what the newspaper should consider important and cover more in a subtle manner through availing resources that enable journalists focus on those areas and not others. Either way the news agenda

gravitates towards the direction, terms and conditions of the funding. This power relation (between the grantee and funder) is at the heart of critical political economy.

In the case of Amabhungane, the emphasis on the Zuma-Gupta story falls well within the areas of its funders' interest. On analysis of the organisation's content and the stories that dominate their work, it is not farfetched to link the areas of the funders' interest and the company's journalistic agenda. The tagline for Amabhungane is *digging dung, fertilising democracy*. One of its key funders, the Open Society Foundations in South Africa is committed to, "promoting the values, institutions, and practices of an open, non-racial and non-sexist, democratic, civil society." The nexus between the organization's investigative and even advocacy agenda and the thematic focus of the donor is self-evident.

The meeting point of these interests is what in critical political economy theory helps explain why these nonprofit centers choose to focus on the areas that they choose to focus on and pay less attention to others. One would then ask, if today Amabhungane chose to focus on agriculture and climate change, would some of its core funders remain? Perhaps they would ask for a break to revisit their terms of engagement or the center would get a funder whose interests align with climate change as an issue. Similarly, if Bhekisisa chose to expand its scope to reporting on corruption, politics and human rights, one can safely argue that Bill and Melinda and Gates Foundation may most likely ask for a conversation about their partnership.

In equal measure, if the *New Vision* decided to focus less on human rights and access to justice and asked its investigative reporters to pay more attention to unearthing corruption, the funding from DGF which is tied to those thematic areas (human rights and access to justice) would be revisited. Effectively, there is a nexus between the donor's areas of interest which they go ahead and fund on the one hand and the content that the grantee media house eventually publishes. Whereas the donor is not directly influencing the editorial direction of the newsroom and respects the editorial independence of the media house, the same donor is still, through funding areas of their interest, subtly determining what the journalists should focus on. Either way the direction of editorial content is influenced by these factors.

With over $500,000 in his budget, the news or investigations editor at *New Vision* would not assign a reporter to cover a riot at Uganda's Makerere University unless that coverage is in line with access to justice and human rights. The editor would not assign reporters, using that money, to cover a corruption scandal in the sports sector or probe a minister alleged to have indulged in money laundering. The implication here is that the donor has whipped the editor and journalist so much as to determine for them the scope of their journalistic role by determining the journalistic boundary of what the editor can do with their funding in terms of areas of coverage. The editor and reporter are then limited to the areas that the donor considers important and has devoted resources to. In interviews with reporters and editors at the newspaper, they admitted that thanks to the funding from DGF, "the investigations desk is today more preoccupied with the project's core areas of focus; access to justice and human rights". In fact, on a weekly basis now, more

than before the funding came through, the newspaper's weekend editions have investigative stories focusing on those thematic areas. One can safely conclude that the investigative agenda of the newspaper is following the resources, in that where the money is available for investigative reporting is where that journalism genre is happening more. As the critical political economy mantra goes, 'follow the money'.

New Vision, it should be recalled, is a wide spectrum publication serving audiences of all age groups, readers of all socio-economic grades and political persuasions, covering sports, features, politics, business, national and regional news. Is it fair to argue that if a corruption scandal of the magnitude of billions of Uganda shillings broke out and the company's investigations desk is cash strapped, it should not touch the $500,000 that the DGF has dictated must only cover human rights and access to justice? This power relation, where the funder is paying the piper and calling the tunes, is what critical political economists are interested in.

In Nigeria and some SADC countries for instance, as one of the AmaB co-founders pointed out in an interview, the emerging nonprofit centers that originally set out to do investigative journalism now find themselves, in desperate search for a willing donor dangling a grant, changing focus. Overnight an investigative journalism centre is focusing on HIV/AIDS because that is where Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation money is. The nonprofits are choosing to follow the money and play by the rule book of those with the money. How different, one must ask then, is this from the advertiser, one as big as MTN Uganda, who is a passive editor, determining the tone, angle and sting of a story by a Ugandan newspaper reporting about its fights with the regulator?

Aware of the limitation (and risk?) of stretching this critical political economy lense too far and wide let alone confusing the theory's function in the commercial model with the nonprofit model, one must remain alive to the fact that the theory helps explain why institutions like the *New Vision* for instance, would have increased coverage of access to justice and human rights stories because that is where the funding dictates the newspaper's investigative journalism focus to go to. Similarly, it starts to make sense why a foundation like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's interest in health matters in Africa comes with increased media coverage of health issues from Kenya, South Africa to Nigeria. In other words, where the funding falls is where, in the philanthro-journalism model, the reporting goes. What the interviewees and findings demonstrate also, in this regard, is that philanthro-journalism centers' reporting focus tends to align with the donors' wider thematic areas of funding and operation. This is the case with OSF (as demonstrated by their grantees' admission that their journalism is to hold the powerful to account). My own interpretation of this is that sure as OSF is driven by such areas of interest as human rights, democracy and good governance, its grantees' understanding of their journalistic function, by default or probably by design, is aligned to these values and aspirations. Similarly, where the funding foundation's thematic focus is health or environmental issues, the grantees adjust their journalistic role and function to fit in this agenda.

As Schiffrin (2017) has observed, "By using journalism to promote coverage of health or governance or corruption or elections or criminal justice, donors are making decisions about what problems the public should know about and even pressure governments to fix. That involvement in agenda-setting and public policy affects everyone, and so it matters that donors and journalists work together."

Indeed, this project's findings are affirmed by Schiffrin's assertion in so far as one of the cases under study, the *New Vision,* has actively taken up access to justice and human rights as the focus of its investigative reporting precisely because the grant from the donor organization, DGF, dictates so. DGF is, to use Schiffrin's words, a case of, "donors making decisions about what problems the public should know about and even pressure governments to fix." Similarly, as Amabhungane prides itself in, *'digging dung fertilizing democracy'* it is also not farfetched to map out a pattern in terms of what thematic areas its core philanthropic funders, like OSF, are interested in. From the findings, beneficiaries of these grants, including Amabhungane, *New Vision* and Bhekisisa admit that the quality and quantity of stories they are able to churn out has tremendously improved, in part because the donor expects and demands better quality but also because there are a lot more resources dedicated to a specific genre of journalism at the media houses' disposal.

What emerges from this is the convergence of interests of the donors and the media houses they fund, a unity of purpose and, in some way, the foundational funders are co-opting (directly or indirectly) the journalists to move on the same wave length with them in terms of their agenda, aspirations and have these reflected in their reporting. This is what Schiffrin means when she talks of the donors' "involvement in agenda-setting and public policy' through the nonprofit journalism centers they fund.

This then begs the question of transparency. In the findings, all the interviewees noted that they are transparent about who their funders are. Amabhungane even publishes the list of its funders online, alongside their individual contributions. Their financial reports and audit reports are also uploaded online. The *New Vision's* stories funded through the DGF grant are clearly marked, '*this story was funded by the DGF as part of the access to justice and human rights program'*. The executives and editors at the newspaper are proud that this is part of their transparency and accountability to the public about the source of funding for such stories.

However, can the question of influence (real or perceived) be squarely answered through this accountability to the public and transparency on source of funding? Interviewees like Susan Valentine from OSF were confident that this is important to foster public confidence in the model and maintain credibility of the media house.

The nuances, as the findings show, are certainly deeper than that. It is one thing to be transparent about source of funding but what about that funding's power and capacity to set the agenda for the media house? Should this not be a point of concern?

My analysis of the different interviews tends to lean towards the perspective of Ferrucci and Nelson (2019) who argue that, "The impact of foundations on journalism parallels that of advertisers throughout the 20th century-with one important distinction: journalism practitioners and researchers have long forbidden the influence from advertisers on editorial decisions, seeing the blurring of the two as inherently unethical. Outside funding from foundations, on the other hand, is often premised on editorial influence, complicating efforts by journalists to maintain the firewall between the news revenue and production." In a way, this perspective by Ferrucci and Nelson implies that donor or philanthropic funding is even more agenda-shaping and influential in journalism, and more 'interfering' than advertising. This research project did not find evidence to support this claim except that in the case of the *New Vision*, clearly the donor determined the thematic focus of the investigative reporting that they funded to the extent that reporting on access to justice fits in DGF's priority areas. Whereas the donor influenced and narrowed down the reporting focus of the newspaper to the themes it funded, this did not necessarily translate into editorial interference considering that the donor and grantee respect editorial boundaries.

It is these nuances that critical political economy looks out for in discussing how funding of the journalistic process affects editorial independence and reporters' understanding of their journalistic role in society. Indeed, there is consensus among all the interviewees that there is a convergence of interests between them and their funders to the extent that the values and aspirations those funders stand for, they too stand for them hence the relationship existing between the two parties. Of course, scholars like Schiffrin see a problem with this just like Ferrucci and Nelson (2019) in the sense that this way, the foundations and donors are then able to shape public policy and expand frontiers of their own agendas using the media.

From the findings, whereas media practitioners receiving these grants don't see a problem with donors and foundations giving them money to report on specific areas aligned to their own thematic areas of operation, media scholars and members of the public who consume the journalistic product actually see something, if not everything, wrong with that. The credibility of these media houses could, in the long run, be on the line!

We must then interrogate where this leaves the philanthro-journalism model if media organisations, including some as sizeable as Uganda's *New Vision* that is even listed on the stock exchange, can easily bend to a donor determining what areas their money must cover. These delicate power relations, where the donor is the Almighty savior of the media whose programmatic interests must carry the day and the grantee media organization is a less privileged underling awaiting funding, then cause us to examine the future of this model in Africa, something this project did not explore. There is a kind of unholy alliance of theories here that needs mention. Survival of the media as a business, in typical media economics theory perspective requires that the media owner mobilises resources and other factors of production to facilitate the production process of news.

But then, and this is where the critical political economist weighs in, what is the cost of this media owner taking money from a donor whose interests they don't exactly align with?

It is important to tease out these issues because, as Christoph Plate pointed out in an interview, "it is not uncommon in the last few years, to attend global investigative journalism conferences and one finds sessions where editors and journalists, including some yet to master the art, are being coached how to write project proposals, which donors are available to them. The impact of this is that journalists now get reduced to hunting for donor monies and tailor making their content or editorial direction to suit the donor's interests."

As I have demonstrated using a media economics and critical political economy theoretical approach, the evidence, with the exception of Amabhungane, is that currently, nonprofit journalism projects (like *New Vision's*) and centers on the continent are happy to play ball with the donor and that greatly impacts their content, journalistic roles and areas of focus.

This then begs another question, what happens to other areas affecting society such as crime, income inequality, environmental degradation, the rise of populism around the globe, workers' rights, unemployment, which may not be funded or interest donors and foundations to the extent that those issues may not exactly be in sync with their own agendas, hence limited funding going there?

Schiffrin (2017) has argued that we live in a world today where the credibility of news is being contested and has become a polarizing issue with journalism under attack from demagogues around the globe.

Consequently, she posited, and I associate myself with her submission, "the question of funding sources and the effect they have on media independence is an important one. Just as we look at the influence of advertisers on newsroom independence, we also need to consider the new donors who give funding tied to coverage of specific issues and so determine the kinds of beats that get covered. Coverage of health, education, and development and even government accountability is happening in many countries largely because foundations are paying for it."

Amabhungane has reasoned that no donor affects their news or investigative journalism focus because under their funding policy, they do not seek project-based funding from donors. Well, if we go with Schiffrin's outlook, they surely are either not saying or seeing the entire picture. To the extent that the donor's points of interest are what Amabhungane too gives specifically more emphasis, under the tagline, '*digging dung. Fertilising democracy'* it is not an over stretch to argue, as Schiffrin does, that the donor is indirectly involved in, agenda setting and public policy as well as influencing debate through a media outlet whose own values coincide with the donor's. They do not have to stand in the corner of the newsroom with a whip to dictate to editors what stories they must cover but by availing resources for an investigation that fits in their scope of interests, they still achieve the same objective, in a subtle manner.

OSF's Valentine maintained that what some donors insist on, such as requiring the nonprofit to think about who the audience is, how they are engaging with the audience, how much time does the audience spend reading their articles, where the audience comes from, are basics that any entrepreneur trying to setup a media business would actually do if they were doing a good job. Today, she argues, you cannot just publish stories and move on to the next story. You need to know who it is reaching, if it's having any meaning in peoples' lives.

There is also a pattern that demonstrates that in the media economics theory realm, media entrepreneurs are doing everything in their means to mobilise resources, to innovate, to ensure the factors of production are in place so that journalism can thrive, and this includes tailoring ones journalistic focus to where the resources exist. We cannot, with certainty, conclude how far this can go or even its implications in the long term, to credibility and independence of these media organisations but what is clear is that there is reason for concern as Schiffrin pointed out.

7.3 On sustainability

One of the key questions of this research is to examine if philanthro-journalism can sustain investigative reporting with emphasis on what media organisations are doing to address sustainability concerns and their own reflections on sustainability of the model. There is a difference of opinion across the board, ranging from donors, their grantees to individual media practitioners on this issue. Perspectives on this question can be narrowed to two propositions:

(a) Philanthro-investigative journalism can and should emerge as a model of financing investigative reporting, much the same way donors fund NGOs or other charities.

(b) Philanthro-investigative journalism should only serve as a stopgap measure to help struggling media houses get breathing space, after which they should fix their own sustainability and viability as businesses.

The idea that philanthro-journalism can and should emerge as a model of financing investigative reporting, much the same way donors fund NGOs or other charities, was passionately mooted by the interviewees from Amabhungane. The premise of their argument is, firstly, that to attempt to envision nonprofit newsrooms reverting to aspects of commercializing content (as a means of sustaining operations) is to imagine one can rewind the wheel. By this they mean that the commercial model of journalism where readers bought newspapers and advertisers bought space is as good as dead. Journalists who choose to take the path of philanthro-journalism would effectively be flogging a dead horse by attempting to revert to elements of the commercial model.

Proponents of this school of thought argue that qualitatively this is a better model than advertising was and should be adopted on its own merits, "I would rather that there's a kind of

more honest adjudication where the alignment is right, where a board sits down and says, ‘these people have good systems in place and they're doing good work as journalists, let's send some money their way’. But it's far from the only solution and I don't think it should be the only solution.”

When Sole opines that this model should not be the only solution, it sounds a bit of an oxymoron in the sense that on the one hand, he is persuaded that philanthro-journalism should be accepted as a mechanism of funding investigative reporting in Africa. Then on the other hand he says it should not be the only solution. There is no contradiction. The thrust of his argument is that the model should be adopted as one that can support investigative reporting and indeed other genres of journalism, but efforts should be made to bolster it by, for instance, bringing on board readers through efforts like crowdfunding. In real terms, one can argue, crowdfunding too is, in a way, a form of philanthropy to the extent that members of society who treasure the work of the press and have means can contribute say, R200 every so often, subsiding for those with less means such that they too can get information for free. Whichever way one looks at it, the argument by Amabhungane is that this model, can on its own stand and become the ‘new normal’ of funding journalism in societies like South Africa where there exists a critical mass of people who can afford to contribute to the cause.

Brummer opined, “I think that's where donors have to decide what kind of areas, they fund which are going to deliver long term change and social growth. I think that investigative journalism is one of the best investments they could make. I think that for the investments that OSF made in Amabhungane, the returns that they have got from us are amazing, in donor terms. So, I think donor funded journalism is here to stay.”

The Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa’s Richard Mugisha agreed, at least ideologically, with Sole and Brummer. According to him, the collapse of the commercial model is, after all, not a bad thing because historically, the role of the media in society was distorted by the rise of capitalism which captured the press. Now that that model, built on the basis of advancing capitalism and its hegemonic structures is strained, the discourse on sustainability should not, in his view, be about how to make the media commercially viable or sustainable, but rather how to build sustainability of the media using other relationships such as philanthropy.

Mugisha argues that media of old didn’t have to be business oriented and when the media entered the business arena advertisement now controlled it as radical publications were starved of adverts. This line of argument is not entirely new as it is captured adequately in the literature review where Marxist thinkers like Antonio Gramsci are cited.

The central argument underpinning that school of thought is traceable to the invention of the printing press by Johannes Guttenberg in the 5th Century (1440 AD) which McFaden (2018) considers, “one of the most important inventions of all time,” whose development, “would destroy the hegemonic control of information in Europe and change the course of history

forever." Thinkers of the Marxist tradition generally tend to be cynical about commercial media and perceive it as an extension of capitalistic hegemony.

Be that as it may however, the time has come again, Mugisha argues, "to go back to the none business model, social media has taken over and there is no need to financialize the media, I think we should allow the rise and fall of the commercial media so that we create new formations and relationships that are not necessarily money based because money based relationships have been overpriced. We don't need financial sustainability now; we need other relationships that are sustainable."

This position aligns with the argument by Amabhungane that they do not believe access to information, especially of the type that is necessary for 'fertilising democracy' should be limited to those with ability to pay for that information. It is this ideological position that informs their idea of free content that they share with publishers who have publication agreements with them and on their own internet-based platforms.

According to Valetine, philanthro-journalism appears set to emerge as a model of funding some aspects of journalism, whereas it may not, in her view, be the most ideal model. To her, readers and communities should, ordinarily, be the ones supporting journalism.

However, she notes, "We've seen that journalism is quite fragile and yet it is an important institution in a democratic society so people are increasingly becoming aware of the importance of journalism as a sort of public good and that it needs to be supported, many more people are coming to support journalism and it's really important that they understand the value of respecting the independence of journalism," adding, "So, it's not an ideal model, it would be better if journalism could be supported directly by its readers because then the people who consume their information support it and that means that media is accountable to the reader."

The meeting point between AmaBhungane and Valentine's central argument is that whereas this model is slowly but surely emerging as one that will, in the foreseeable future support journalism, there must be efforts to get the readers to play a role in funding of reporting. If that is what sustainability means, then that is their vision of sustainability, not, as Mugisha earlier stated, 'financial sustainability'. The common thread in this outlook of what sustainability should look like is the idea that commercialization of content (selling it to readers/viewers) and advertisers, as the case was/is with the commercial model, is not one of the options for AmaBhungane and those who share their worldview of the role of the media in society.

These points above are buttressed by Ferrucci and Nelson (2019) who argue that , "collaborative efforts between journalism funders and media organisations could lead to an even more skewed power dynamic than existed within the previous funding model, one where journalists cede their agency to elite foundations, situated outside the boundaries of journalism."

To the extent, however, that philanthro-journalism remains a model in flux and these interviewees' vision of what sustainability should look like is yet to be tested by time and above all, the context of each society comes into play, the media is still as vulnerable as it is or was with the commercial model.

(b) **Philanthro-journalism should only serve as a stopgap measure to help struggling media houses get breathing space, after which they should fix their own sustainability and viability as businesses.**

Interviewees who hold this view contended that philanthropy has its own limitations and its success is context specific in the sense that what works in South Africa may not work in countries where the media systems are still weak, and government is likely to be stricter on donors funding investigative reporting. There is a marked difference here with the commercial model which, for all its weaknesses, could almost work anywhere in the world. Even the most repressive regimes in Africa or Asia still had newspapers and commercial broadcast media, especially to the extent that those media houses found a way around negotiating their existence as a business. I point out this difference because unlike the commercial model, the philanthro-journalism model may not necessarily have this luxury since states can get jittery about foreign donors especially if they are funding the type of journalism that holds power to account.

Even then, proponents of this school of thought aver, philanthropy monies cannot serve everyone. The old market driven model attempted to do so by rewarding those who successfully ran their media businesses. Not everyone will catch the donor's eye and donors have way too many priorities for anyone to assume they can save the entire world. Those priorities are also flexible and change with circumstances. For that matter journalists and media entrepreneurs must still consider sustainability beyond the possibility of relying on donations, the proponents argue.

Different interviewees observed that we can't rely on any one model and that philanthro-journalism should only be one of the many approaches to ensuring media survival. Sustainability, therefore, is a question that cannot be resolved squarely but what is for certain is that the responsibility of sustaining journalism squarely rests at the journalists' table not funders.

The *New Vision's* Buwembo who coordinates the donor funded investigative journalism project at the newspaper does acknowledge that donor funding is not reliable in terms of sustainability.

Buwembo opined, "It (donor funding) doesn't create capacity, in this case it creates investigative capacity and developing the platforms to work together but when the program ends there will be a need to finance more of these activities. I don't see any sustainability because there is no funding capacity being created."

The creation of that 'funding capacity' for the investigations desk is something that *New Vision's* CEO, Kabushenga, strongly believes cannot be sustained through philanthropy. In his view, philanthropy can come and go. The rich philanthropy foundation today could file for insolvency next week, it may even pick a fight with the grantee and opt to freeze funding, or it may land in trouble with the state. The foundation dedicated to human rights today may tomorrow shift focus to climate change and source for a media house specializing in that area. This uncertain future leaves the media houses at the mercy of the donor. It is against this background that the thinking at the *New Vision*, unlike at AmaBhungane, is that philanthropy must only serve the purpose of intervention to give the media house impetus to soldier on and once it finds its bearing, it can wean itself off reliance on philanthropy.

This difference in worldviews on the place of philanthropy and other forms of donor funding in sustaining investigative reporting deserves more scrutiny at this juncture. The media managers in commercial outfits (like *New Vision*) that get funding for some of their investigative journalism projects consider sustenance of their journalism processes beyond such funding. On the other hand, there is a marked difference in outlook by the purely nonprofit investigative journalism centers such as Amabhungane which are persuaded that philanthropy (supported by noncommercial interventions like crowdfunding) can in and of itself, be a sustainable mechanism for supporting investigative journalism in Africa.

This is partly attributable to the fact that for commercial media organizations, the emergence of philanthro-journalism must, as one interviewee, Daniel Kalinaki argued, "be looked at through the political economy of the crisis the media finds itself in today". In so doing, we must examine what exactly it is that the donor is coming to save and why they are coming in. They are coming in, commercial media managers like Kalinaki observe, "because there is a collapse of the commercial model, advertising revenues have fallen, readership of newspapers is dwindling fast and media houses are less profitable. So costly reporting cannot be sustained yet it cannot be allowed to die."

Once there is clarity on what the issues exactly are, we then return to the drawing board and the media executive must ask herself, 'how do I make good use of the money from the donor to solve my original problem?'

That means the donor's support is only a ladder one must use to address their challenges. In Kalinaki's view, we must ask questions such as; how do we re-imagine journalism to better serve audiences and make sense to the world today, how do we present content in ways that keep the young population interested in traditional media, what would a Ugandan lose if the *New Vision* or *Monitor* folded today?

In the case of the *New Vision*, Kabushenga is confident that philanthro-journalism is here to stay for as long as foundational funders, with their advocacy objectives, exist and need the media to advance their agenda. For commercial entities like his however, the idea then is to explore other

means of sustaining the business to ensure profitability without living under the illusion that philanthropy will be the magic bullet to attainment of that ideal. In that case then, philanthro-journalism becomes a means to the greater end, not the end.

There is a risk, however, of complacence setting in, Plate worries. He noted, “I get frustrated when I see that so many courses are offered at journalism conferences in which people are not being taught how to write beautifully and how to present a topic in such a narrative that the readers can follow the 2,500 words but rather classes in which they are being taught how to fill in an application so that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation or the Open Society Foundation will accept the research support request.” In his view, it is always good if there are philanthropists who are prepared to help media houses that get into a temporary crisis but there is a development on the African continent, he notes, “where too many journalists and too many editors are leaning back lazily and they think the donor money is going to come. Journalists who are not interested in figures today are lost causes. One has to be interested in figures and one doesn't have to be a mathematician or a genius for that but one has to take into account that the media house that (s)he works for has to sell itself in order to pay their salary.”

The idea emerging out of Plate’s assertion is that, in typical media economics outlook to journalism as a business, the aspect of sustaining newsroom operations must be the business of everyone, including the journalist.

Philanthro-journalism, which journalists in Botswana, Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa, Kenya have embraced, offers opportunity for filling the commercial constraints afflicting the media today but not the magic bullet. The agreement, across the board, is that there is no one size fits all solution, what works in one context may not apply to the other.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8.0 CONCLUSION

A conclusion of a study of this nature is not an easy one to make. There are a lot of grey areas, astounding contradictions and so many uncertainties for which only time can be the best judge. Even more, everyone, from the donors, academics to the grantees, is learning on the job because philanthro-investigative journalism is a new phenomenon in Africa. Therefore, there are no easy answers and it would be imprudent to make absolutist assumptions because there is still a lot that we do not know-yet about this funding model.

Be that as it may however, my research can safely conclude that philanthro-investigative journalism in South Africa and Uganda is slowly but surely being embraced as a funding model for supporting investigative journalism by both actors in the media industry and the donor or philanthropy community. Discussions and debate on how philanthropy and/or donor organisations can support investigative reporting are happening both in the commercial newsroom space, among the nonprofit investigative journalism centers in Africa and across the media industry in general. What is not happening however, is debate on the implicit implications of this model for the independence of the media, how it affects the sociology of news production, the question of donor agendas or interests and the sustainability conundrum that media houses have to contend with. The donors, as the interviews show, are not really bothered about issues such as sustainability. The media houses, whereas they are concerned about these issues, do not seem to have a meeting of minds with their funders on these issues. To some funders, seed funding is enough and what happens after that is the business of the media house. To others, they can only fund grantees for a limited time. To the media houses, there is no clarity of purpose and destination or even a bare minimum agreement across the industry on the future of this model, its viability, and its implications for the media in Africa in terms of the questions that this project sought to answer.

For instance, there are real and perceived threats to editorial independence and credibility of the media houses receiving donor funding. The other area of uncertainty is the impact that the idea of being funded by a donor has on journalists' perceptions of their role, and on audience perceptions of journalistic independence. Some journalists, editors and media scholars don't see a problem with this model while others are skeptical about its long-term implications for journalists' perceptions of their role in society, the execution of the investigative reporting function as well as the public's perception of grantees' editorial independence.

Similarly, whereas there is evidence to show that donors' interests and agendas are reproduced in the thematic areas that the grantees choose to focus on, there is no evidence that this translates into actual interference with journalistic independence and roles. This arises from the donors directing their funding to their areas of interest, but we cannot rely on this as the basis to claim direct interference with editorial independence or even the sociology of news production. It follows therefore, that thematic scope is not the equivalent of editorial interference and does not necessarily work against editorial independence.

The study also concludes that the power relationship between donors and grantees is often a space of contestation. There are tradeoffs made from either side but as to whether those compromises amount to donor interference with editorial independence or even journalistic roles is an unsettled matter and also beyond the scope of this research project since it would have to be backed by hard evidence and require different research methods.

However, the study finds that in the case of South Africa's Amabhungane, the center has put in place enough safeguards to protect their professional role as journalists from redefinition by the donors, to insulate their journalism from editorial interference and to keep reasonable donor-grantee distance by ensuring that funding is not tied to specific areas of their investigative reporting or to a single donor.

Uganda's *New Vision* stands in sharp contrast in conclusion. The newspaper does not have clear safeguards in place to insulate itself from the associated risks of philanthro-investigative journalism. The newspaper therefore is, unlike Amabhungane, vulnerable to donor influences. This perceived vulnerability, however, is not evidence of what is happening at the company. The newspaper is resolute on its independence as demonstrated by its ability to remain independent despite government being the majority shareholder and the donor (DGF) respects that independence. However, as the case of Amabhungane's departure from Mail and Guardian and its independence from the newspaper as a nonprofit investigative journalism unit there demonstrates, the normative idea of a pure, independent journalism outfit is a myth.

It follows therefore, that whereas there is mutual high regard for the newspaper's editorial independence, the journalists and editors do not enjoy as much legroom as their counterparts at Amabhungane to the extent that their work can only fall in the scope defined by those funding the investigative journalism processes.

And yet, as demonstrated in the discussion of findings, this is a serious concern across the continent considering that nonprofit newsrooms are happy to go with whichever donor presents funding opportunities. This leaves critical reporting on the continent exposed to potential influences from those funding it. Amabhungane's approach, a function of its ability to raise resources from multiple donors and raise money through other alternatives like crowdfunding, is a commendable starting point for the industry to reflect on what can and should be done to protect journalistic professional roles, independence and credibility from the dangers associated with this model.

The study also concludes that sustainability is a context specific issue in the sense that there is no agreement even on the basic issue as to whether this model can be embraced as one that can sustain investigative reporting on the continent. Different media houses, alive to their socio-political and economic context, are adopting different innovative solutions to sustain their journalism. Whereas crowdfunding may work for Amabhungane in South Africa, in Uganda it may not succeed so the *New Vision* is focusing on what more business they can do as a media house to stay afloat while embracing this model to fund investigative journalism in the meantime. If there is a point that cannot be over emphasized, it is the fact that the media and donors both see this model as an important starting point on how investigative journalism in Africa can be funded amidst the crisis facing commercial media houses.

What is not settled however, across the interviews and published material I interacted with during this research project, is whether this model addresses the structural nature of the fundamental challenges troubling the media today. It appears to me that this model is a case of focusing on the branches of the tree and not the roots, it is treating symptoms of a disease and not its causes and there is a danger of getting carried away with the quick-fix-quick-returns approach of the philanthro-investigative journalism model and projecting it as the magic bullet to a mass media commercial model whose foundation has been decimated by technological advancements and the assumption that somehow, the wheel can be re-invented.

As one of the leading media economics scholars, Robert Picard, who was widely quoted in this study pointed out, from ancient times, news has not exactly been a commodity that the public is happy to pay for yet entities like the *New Vision* still believe that they can rely on donor funding to revamp the public's interest in their investigative journalism, get them to buy the newspaper or pay for content online and retain advertising revenue. It is flogging a dead horse. On the other hand, Amabhungane believes its investigative journalism that focuses on 'digging dung and fertilising democracy' can be appreciated by a critical mass of society and donors who can fund them without them (Amabhungane) worrying about advertising revenue or some income generating projects but the viability and sustainability of this in the long term remains to be seen. Even more, the jury is and will always be out there to judge the media on how it navigates its way around concerns of this model being hijacked by interest groups whose agendas may not necessarily be in sync with the normative outlooks to journalism such as independence, balance and holding those with power to account.

It is time to innovate, diversify and explore different avenues of raising funds for critical reporting but it is a journey decorated with a lot of gray areas. Tough times, hard choices!

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for media organisations/practitioners

Title of project: Tough Times, Hard Choices: An examination of the implications of the rise of philanthro-investigative journalism in South Africa and Uganda

(i) When and why did your organization think of a donor funded model to finance investigative journalism?

(ii) What factors informed this decision?

(iii) Which donor organisations or philanthropic foundations have you received funding from, how much and since when?

(iv) Why did you approach these organizations in particular?

(v) What difference has the funding made so far?

(vi) What would have happened if there was no such funding?

(vii) What is your sustainability outlook to this funding? Can you rely on it forever? If not, what do you propose as a safety net just in case the donor taps dry up?

(viii) Why investigative journalism and not other genres such as sports, business, environment?

(ix) What is the donor's interest in this arrangement? What exactly do they want out of this?

(x) How do you safeguard editorial independence?

(xi) Can you say no to a donor whose interests may be trampled upon by the investigative journalism?

(xii) What does the contract with the donor say about these conflicts of interest as and when they arise?

(xiii) Does the donor's agenda, if stated by them, in any way influence what is published?

(xiv) Do you report back to the donor? How often? What format does that reporting take?

Appendix two

Questionnaire for donors

1. Which media organization does your organization support and what kind of support have you rendered so far? May you please share detail of how much (in grants) you have committed so far to the organization?

2. How did you arrive at the decision to fund this organization? Were you approached for instance or did you make the first call?

3. What informs which organization you choose to work with? Is there a laid-out criteria or each case is handled on its facts and merits?

4. Has there been a rise in media organisations approaching you for funding? What exactly do the journalists, editors or media entrepreneurs say when they seek your support? What is it that they want you to address?

5. How long does it take for you to decide on whom you fund?

6. What is the nature of relationship that obtains between you as the donor and the beneficiary organization? What are the rights and responsibilities? Is it a contractual one? How easily can you pull out?

7. How often are the media houses required to apply for funding or renew their status? If it is annually, what is the practical implication of this to either side?

8. What exactly do you expect to gain from this relationship? What is your agenda? How do you balance the interests of the media house and your own?

9. What is your response to criticism that this model comes with ‘passive editorial interference’ from the donor who controls the purse?

10. What is your reflection on the sustainability of this model? How is sustainability of the journalism addressed just in case you pull out?

11. What safeguards do you have to ensure editorial independence of the beneficiary organization is not sacrificed?

12. What are the weaknesses, strengths, threats and opportunities from your viewpoint, of this model?

Appendix 3

AMABHUNGANE CENTRE FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM NPC FUNDING POLICY – ADOPTED BY BOARD JULY 31 2019

1. We shall not accept funding for specific stories or story areas, or that has conditions regarding our editorial decisions such as which stories we do and what they say.
2. We shall not accept funding where there is a material risk that its provenance will conflict us, or reasonably be seen by the public to conflict us, with regard to a story or stories that we might want to do in the foreseeable future. Unless aggravating circumstances apply, we shall consider risk to be immaterial where the aggregate from a funder within our financial year is R10 000 or less.

3. We shall not accept funding unless we may and do publicly disclose the identity of the funder and the amount where the aggregate within our financial year is material, i.e. exceeds the amount in paragraph above.

4. Where funding reaches us before we can determine if it is acceptable under this policy, we shall return any amount that is not acceptable. Where we are unable to return funding despite our reasonable efforts, we shall transfer it to a charitable cause of our choosing.

5. We consider the provenance of funding/the identity of a funder to be the juristic or natural person who made the decision to fund us, and not any funder they had in turn who did not contribute to that decision.

6. Where ostensibly distinct funders are within our knowledge materially connected, we shall count them as one for the purpose of all limits in this policy.

7. The risk that government or corporate funding will compromise us is high given our enduring journalistic interest in government and corporate malfeasance; and the serious consequences should a perception arise that our editorial decisions are influenced by state or corporate actors. To this end:

i. We shall not solicit government or corporate funding.

ii. We shall not accept government or corporate funding

8. Grant funding risks include the real or perceived links that may exist between grant funders and governments or corporates; the conditions that may attach to grant funding; the possibility that grant funders may want to influence editorial decisions; and the materiality of some grants when measured against the size of grantee budgets. To this end:

a. We may accept grant funding only from reputable grant-making organisations with a credible track record of funding media or social justice causes and that are clearly not government or corporate funders or their proxies;

b. We shall perform a due diligence on any new grant funder to satisfy ourselves that accepting grants from it will not contravene this policy; in particular its provisions in the subparagraph immediately above and on conflicts with regard to a story or stories that we might want to do in the foreseeable future;

c. We shall consider any new grant agreement diligently to satisfy ourselves that it does not contravene this policy and in particular does not contain conditions regarding our editorial decisions; and

d. We shall limit our exposure to any particular grant funder to 20% of our budget, although our board may waive this limit in exceptional circumstances subject to conditions regarding the extent and duration of the breach.

9. Donations come without material conditions and tend to be in smaller amounts, which mitigates their risk. However, there may be real risks relating to who donors are and what other interests they have, which may give rise to real or perceived conflicts regarding our stories. To this end:

a. We may accept donations from a natural person, or a juristic person that is a simple holding structure for the assets of a natural person, to a maximum aggregate within our financial year of R100 000;

b. We may accept donations from a juristic person that is a bona fide charity/non-profit to a maximum aggregate within our financial year of R250 000, except that where the funder is little more than an extension of a natural person, the limit in respect of natural persons applies;

c. We shall perform a due diligence on any donor when their aggregate within our financial year becomes material, i.e. exceeds the amount in paragraph 10 above, to satisfy ourselves that accepting donations from them will not contravene this policy; in particular its provisions in the two paragraphs immediately above and on conflicts with regard to a story or stories that we might want to do in the foreseeable future (AmaBhungane, 2019: 1-4).