

Abstract

This is a theoretical conceptual post-modern¹ study which aims to elucidate the ANC's democratic project through the prism of its relationship to the media. In turn, it aims to scrutinize events that have already occurred post-liberation in order to explore whether the free space of the media is steadily being impinged upon, and eroded and explore further, what 'turns' journalists made when under pressure from political forces. Whilst recognising that interlocking imperatives inform freedom and independence of the press, this study's main focus is a political one. However, the issue of ownership is intrinsic to research on media 'freedom', particularly the concentration of ownership of the media and so, how commercial imperatives impact² will be examined. Several theorists have been referred to in order to begin putting together a conceptual theoretical framework with which to clarify and account for the emergent pattern of discourse by the ANC on the media. The conceptual framework adumbrated here and employed in the analysis of the relationship of the ANC with the media draws heavily from Zizek, Mouffe and Butler, in particular. The concept of 'resignifications' comes from Butler, those of 'Master signifier' and 'social fantasy' from Zizek, and the conception of radical democracy from Mouffe. Use is made of these theoretical tools in order to account for the compulsion that characterizes certain discursive interventions on the media, which are always in some respect 'inappropriate' or in 'excess' of expectations.

¹ Post-modern thinking has been influenced by Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Francois Lyotard and is characterised by fluidity, undecidability, openness, irony, parody as well a recognition of the world as a field of infinite interplay (McGrath, A: 1993: p456-60)

² John Keane (1991) in *The Media and Democracy* is particularly useful in questioning how the concept of freedom of the press originated, but also how deregulation and commercial imperatives impact on the notions of democracy and freedom. Anton Harber wrote in a newspaper piece, *Two fat ladies make a meal of it* (2003: *Business Day*) that concentration of ownership - following the global trend - presents a danger to democracy, 'leading to a homogenized and tepid media'.