MEDIA DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS: A CASE STUDY OF THE MEDIA INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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THESIS TITLE: MEDIA DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS: A CASE STUDY OF THE MEDIA INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Acronyms

AGM	Annual General Meetings
BBC	British Broadcasting Company
BBC MA	British Broadcast Corporation Media Action
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CIJ	Centre for Independent Journalism
CIMA	Centre for International Media Assistance
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CSO	Civil society organisation
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DC	District of Columbia, i.e., Washington DC
EU	European Union
GFMD	Global Forum for Media Development
ICJ	International Centre for Journalists
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFEX	International Freedom of Expression Exchange
IFPIM	International Fund for Public Interest Media
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMS	International Media Support
IPDC	International Programme for the Development of Communication
IREX	International Research & Exchanges Board
IRN	Independent Radio Network
KII	Key Informant Interview
MAZ	Media Alliance of Zimbabwe
MDI	Media Development Indicators
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
OSF	Open Society Foundations
OSI	Open Society Initiative
PACT	Private Agencies Collaborating Together
RNW	Radio Netherlands Worldwide
RQ	Research question

SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAMDEF	Southern African Media Development Fund
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SEE	Southeast Europe
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollars
USG	United States Government
VMC	Voluntary Media Council

Abstract

For nearly 30 years now, media development (or media assistance as it is also called) has been a cornerstone of foreign aid designed to support transitions to (Western) democracy and governance. The impact and the legacy of all the support that has gone to supporting democratic media transitions is an understudied and often misunderstood area of scholarship. There are several important questions that call for exploration, chief among them, has foreign aid aimed at supporting media development lived up to expectations, and have the seeds that were planted to support a free and independent media system started to bear fruit?

The purpose of this research project is to contribute to the academic and practitioner understanding of how donors impact the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries.

The study reflects on the evolution of donor strategies in media development over the past 30 years since 1989, highlighting several key trends. Notably, the historical influence of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) has had a significant impact on media development, shaping programs and values that continue to influence current donor guidelines and strategies. Despite criticism, NWICO's principles have been foundational for media assistance. In addition, donor strategies initially focused on funding institutions and core needs; over time, this shifted towards more activity-based and program-based approaches, causing frustration among recipients. Moreover, based on opinions shared by respondents, there is an evolving sense of what it means to channel support to independent media as part of efforts to support democracy. Early optimism about democratic transitions has waned, with media development now seen as a rescue operation. A clear definition of 'democracy' has become blurred, with autocrats co-opting the term, leading to growing scepticism about its true meaning. The cynicism about democracy is joined by a sense of naïve expectations in that donors once believed that funding free and independent media would automatically strengthen other democratic institutions. This assumption

has been challenged as reality proved more complex. When it came to specific feedback on donor strategies, respondents shared that donor funding initially supported traditional media infrastructure. With the rise of the internet and digital media, strategies shifted to support the digital transformation of journalism. Respondents also note that donor strategies have often shifted with geopolitical interests, leaving media development in regions like Eastern Europe and Southern Africa in flux. Wars and political changes have diverted funds and attention, impacting the sustainability of media projects. There is criticism that donors lack a coherent long-term strategy or clear goals for media development related investments. Many rely on Western NGOs to devise strategies, leading to concerns about the effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts. Overall, the research undertaken underscores the need for more stable, well-defined, and strategically coherent donor approaches to support independent media development effectively. Finally, the study relayed concerns from local stakeholders that they feel there is a pressing need to localise practices and prioritize localisation to enhance long-term impact and sustainability.

This dissertation focuses on the post-1989 context, which was significant for the spread of democracy following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the end of apartheid in Africa. This period, often called the third wave of democratisation, was marked by a belief in the inevitable spread of democracy and liberal democratic order.

My research connects media development theories with practical applications in specific contexts examining how donor strategies affect journalism and press freedom, informed by scholarship on liberal democracy. The qualitative research, based on interpretivism/constructivism, probes donor impact on media space and evaluates program success, contributing to a theory of change in media development. The comparative research and grounded theory approach led to the development of a case study about the Media Institute of Southern Africa.

Findings and analysis are drawn from the perspectives from donors, program beneficiaries, implementers, academics, and experts. The research interprets the legacy of donor-supported media development in the context of democratisation efforts by Western government aid agencies and foundations.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, Susan Abbott, hereby declare that this thesis is my original piece of scholarship and has never been published or used elsewhere. I undertook this study from January 2017 to June 2024 and I have, to the best of my knowledge, cited all the sources used in the research.

S Abbott

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1: Introduction

Even though media development is fast becoming a field with its own history, methods, and theoretical frameworks, it has remained on the margins of scholarship. This dissertation takes media development and theoretical frameworks seriously to help extricate it from these 'unofficial' margins of scholarship. The research for this dissertation brings media development to mainstream research by interconnecting it with other academic conversations. It does so by raising key research questions about media development and by tapping into media development debates in specific contexts using relevant evidence. This chapter provides the background context and justifies why media development is an urgent and imperative area of study of democratisation. It also provides an outline of the dissertation.

1.2: Background and Context

According to the Center for International Media Assistance, the term media development generally refers to efforts by organisations, people, and sometimes governments to develop the capacity and quality of the media sector within a specific country or region. Many organisations are making effort to help develop free and independent media in countries around the world. These efforts can take many forms, from funding the establishment of an entirely new media outlet to assisting an existing outlet in improving its professional capacity (CIMA website no date).

As Scott notes in his book *Media & Development*, such definitions of media development have an overt interventionalist quality to them (Scott M.,2014). Common efforts at independent media development include journalist training and education; improving the legal environment for media;

efforts to improve the sustainability of existing outlets; media literacy training; digital media training and integration; infrastructure development; and evaluation efforts.

My research considers how the goals and strategies of international donors affect the results of developing a democratically consolidated media sector or a thriving, democratic information ecosystem.

Media assistance constitutes one foreign aid sector marked for democratisation and civil society building. My research considers the question of how donors impacted the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries from the perspective of a post-1989 context or a post-Cold War context as it is sometimes referred to. The year 1989 is significant because it marked a major opening often referred to as a 'window of opportunity', and an important moment for Western democracies and their efforts to support the spread of democracy around the world. Often thought about in terms of the third wave of democratisation, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, coupled with the dismantling of the apartheid system in Africa, marked a major moment in history. Social science was rife during this period with ideas that democracy would spread, and liberal democratic order would prevail (Fukuyama, 1992). Fukuyama's 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* puts forward what he considers 'the culmination of history', asserting that the end of the Cold War marked the triumph of Western liberal democracy as the ultimate form of governance, resurrects Hegel's much criticised teleological theory to explain this progression, offering what he thought to be a novel interpretation of world historical events. Optimism about political transitions and the inevitability of democracy is hard to overstate in retrospect, especially from the perspective of reflecting on donor rhetoric during this time.

Overly rosy views of democratisation notwithstanding, the post-1989 moment, as I will refer to it throughout this dissertation, set the stage for the history of ideas and efforts to support and develop independent media in developing and transitioning countries. The year 1989 and the Fall of Berlin Wall are synonymous for some as a moment that reshaped the modern world[1] and the year that changed the world[2]. I have analysed, compared, and evaluated how donors have influenced bringing about a more democratic, free, and independent media post-1989. In doing so, I draw on my own work experience in media development over the past 25 years and in particular the work I was involved in in Eastern Europe and Africa. My research was guided by a grounded-theory approach, and through the course of several years by many field interviews and insights from several different media development programme evaluations I undertook on behalf of donors. I also bring experience and knowledge from media development summer schools that I co-directed, especially focusing on research, advocacy, and strategy. I was able to gain a perspective and understanding about the importance of thinking about media donor strategies and how and why they matter to media development. My deep knowledge and experience in the media development sector contributed to the ideas and insights that helped me do research and write about the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), a civil society organisation based in Sub-Saharan Africa that seeks to champion freedom of expression and access to information as key areas for good governance and development. As such, my research probes, broadly speaking, both for a wide range of insights, perspectives, and opinions from a broad sample of stakeholders on how donors have impacted the development of media systems. I put forward MISA as one fascinating example of a donor-funded organisation demonstrating media development, particularly in terms of why it matters, as well as getting at the nuances from a historical trajectory

[1] Fall of Berlin Wall: How 1989 reshaped the modern world (bbc.com)
[2] 1989: The Year That Changed the World - TIME's Annual Journey: 1989 - TIME

of the past 30 years of media development. MISA, founded amid the post-1989 moment, is a by-product of the New World Information and Communication Order, an ambitious initiative of UNESCO in the 1970s and 1980s that sought to address power imbalances around issues of global communication as well as being a direct outcome of a gathering of journalists and human rights defenders in Windhoek, Namibia. The coming together of African (and 'Western') journalists, civil society actors, media donors and other experts not only led to the creation of MISA, but also quite importantly, led to the Windhoek Declaration in 1991. The Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent, and Pluralistic Press was formulated by African newspaper journalists in 1991. It emerged from a UNESCO seminar titled 'Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press', which took place from April 29 to May 3, 1991 in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. This landmark declaration laid out essential principles to safeguard press freedom, independence, and pluralism. Looking back to this time, the momentous changes that were happening in the world and the historical significance of UNESCO's efforts that led to the Windhoek Declaration and the creation of MISA provides an important backdrop through which we can understand and investigate the significance and relevance of donor efforts to support independent media development as part of a broader range of democracy promotion efforts. Other critics describe these interventions as politically motivated, to strengthen influence of Western initiatives in Africa ahead of China, Russia, and other anti-Western countries.

While the MISA case study is a core part of my dissertation, I also looked more broadly at how the media development sector views the question of how donors impact the development of media systems in other countries, and in doing so, drew on fieldwork that I undertook over the course of my research in Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. As will be discussed in my methodology chapter, the study considers a variety of interviews with media development practitioners, scholars,

and donors from the four countries. The significance of choosing these countries stems from drawing on auto-ethnographic methods and being guided by the principles of grounded theory, as will be discussed in the methodology chapter. I felt they were demonstrative of the legacy and impact of donor assistance, and each, in their way, offered an important set of stories, that help to convey contextualised stories of media development.

1.3: Problem Statement

The main problem this dissertation seeks to address is how donors impact the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries; there is little research or scholarship on donor impact in these areas. What role do philanthropy and international assistance (foreign aid) play in developing a country's media system? Can Western models of so-called independent media be exported and sustained through external financial assistance? What is the long-term impact of donor-funded media? These questions form the basis for much of my research and overall interest in considering how media, journalism, press freedom, and access to information bear upon a country's economic and political development.

Several studies have noted relatively little scholarship related to donor-supported media development and its long-term impacts on media systems (Mosher, 2009; Nelson and Susman-Peña, 2012; Noske-Turner, 2017; Abbott, 2019). Accordingly, my dissertation seeks to probe the role of philanthropy and international assistance in developing a country's media system. In looking at the role of donor-funded media assistance and its impact, I will also consider the issue of whether 'Western' models of what is often described as 'independent media' can be exported and sustained through external financial assistance (LeMay, 2007). The lingering questions have been on the long-term impact of donor-funded media in specific contexts. These unanswered

questions about media development form the basis for much of my research and overall interest in considering how media, journalism, press freedom, and access to information bear upon a country's economic and political development.

1.4: Objectives of the Study

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate how international donors have contributed to the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries. As part of my overall objective, my research explores ways in which media assistance programmes factor into the democratisation process and so-called transitioning societies. I assess how donors perceive their roles and obligations in the re-building of media space in terms of the strategies they have employed as part of broader initiatives designed for the democratic consolidation process. In doing so, I consider the opinions and perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders – donors, international media development NGOs (program implementers), journalists, civil society, and academics. I chose these countries and contexts for a variety of reasons – they were places that I have worked in and I have a deeper understanding of the media landscape and also the history of donor investments; they each have been on the receiving end of donor funding directed at supporting free and independent media for a 30-year-plus time horizon, with a span that covers that which has been directed toward the development of three prominent and longstanding media civil society organisations – the Centre for Independent Journalism based in Budapest, the Independent Radio Network in Sierra Leone, and the Media Institute of Southern Africa based in Harare, Zimbabwe. By focusing on media civil society organisations, as part of the wider aims of media assistance strategies, I assess the differences and similarities of the international donors and players who have worked to re-develop the media space in the selected countries. The choice of civil society-led media development also allows for other points of departure in the overall

examination of democratisation assistance, such as rule of law reform, institution building, NGO capacity building, and public policy advocacy – all from the perspective of emerging democracies and in the context of civil society development. Based on an initial set of 27 key informant interviews and drawing on work trips that I made to each country while writing my dissertation, I gathered enough information and insight to formulate responses to five key research questions described below. The three countries and broader set of interviews also helped me to identify what would eventually become my case study about the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which I have come to liken as 'the story of media development'. By taking a qualitative approach to my data collection and conducting so many different interviews, I was able to probe and contemplate the challenges and opportunities that international media development makes possible more deeply.

Additionally, my focus on the role that donors play in shaping the agenda for media development addresses a gap in the literature, as presently donors are seldom the focus of most media development studies and research. There is a gap in the literature on how donor strategies, funding models, priorities and interests impact the sustainability and resilience of the media systems they are trying to develop. By focusing on international donor strategies, my dissertation offers a better perspective on the normative objectives of funding agencies and whether this has any impact on the overall process of media development. Differences in goals and strategies may influence how donors choose which media to support and what kinds of assistance are most helpful to the process of supporting a democratically consolidated media space. A key consideration of my research is to look at whether effective and well-developed donor strategies have yielded positive outcomes while bad or untenable strategies may lead to lacklustre or even disastrous outcomes. Furthermore, as my research sometimes revealed, and as many respondents shared with

me, in their opinion, donors lack clear strategy. In the absence of a 'media donor toolkit', much is depending on who you ask, which as I argued in this study is either a good strategy unto itself or an indication of donor ineffectiveness.

1.5: Research Questions

There are many questions relevant to the topic. The urgent and compelling consideration is whether or not a country's media system or media development, as currently administered by international development agencies such as the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (previously DFID), the European Union (EU), Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as human rights and democracy promotion philanthropies such as the Open Society Foundation, Gates Foundation, and Ford Foundation, support media development. If so, how, and why? What role does philanthropy and international assistance have in making a difference to the quality and orientation (political, social, and cultural) of a specific media system? Can 'Western' models of 'independent' and public interest media be exported and sustained through external financial assistance? How do we know when this support has been effective, impactful, and has made a difference? What are donor motivations for supporting media development and do they match the needs and realities on the ground?

How media assistance or media development factors into the overall process of democracy building or transition assistance is an important area of scholarship that merits further exploration, especially considering realities that include democratic backsliding, curtailments of free of expression, media clampdowns and general crackdowns on free and independent media.

Whether media development is a necessary and desirable aspect of what donors deem as democracy and governance assistance is ripe for examination, especially considering that independent media development in its current form has some 30-plus years of history and data to examine. To answer these questions, I used a semi-structured interview guide to explore some assumptions or shortcomings in developing a new media environment. The key research questions that informed this study are as follows:

RQ1: What is the purpose of media development?

RQ 2: What role have donors played in the development of media systems?

RQ3: How do donor funding models influence the development of media systems?

RQ4: How does media development contribute to democratisation? and

RQ5: What are the primary lessons learned from 30 years of media development?

1.6: Research Methodology

Drawing on a research design influenced by grounded theory, I explore and draw connections to how the ideas, theories and legacies of the key thinkers and architects of media development play out in practice. In this regard, I draw heavily on the legacy of *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert et al., 1956) – authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet Communist theories – and the ensuing debates that have played out around normative theories of the press. Overlaying my interest in the relationship between the media system and those that own the system is understanding how donors and media development programs effect any changes – positive or negative – in shaping the types of journalism and levels of press freedom experienced. As donor supported media development takes place against the backdrop of efforts to promote democracy,

my research is also informed by scholarship and thinking about liberal democracy and how and why these matter for media development.

My research design is rooted in an understanding of interpretivism / constructivism that holds the view that there is no single truth or reality, and that any reality or truth depends on subjective and socially constructed interpretations. This research probes how donors have impacted the development of media space, and whether there are useful models of donor support that are replicable, scalable, or transferable between media development programs. In terms of looking at and assessing donor support, part of my research will also take into consideration program evaluation, i.e., how is success measured and defined? In this regard, my research contributes to developing a theory of change that can help scholars and practitioners better understand the correlation between media, development, and democratisation. In doing, so, the research will offer a historical analysis, and critical review of how, when, and why media assistance was offered, and toward what ends the assistance mattered.

My research also looks at the debates and critical reflections many scholars have written about the theories and ideas related to media development and will apply them to specific contexts and environments where media assistance has been carried out.

My research offers a lens on understanding how donors have impacted the development of a free and independent media sector. Moreover, this research will help yield new insight on what types of media reforms have emerged as the most sustainable and successful in terms of the types of programs and activities that donors have funded. I will also look at whether donor support has made a difference to democracy and development, and how and why this was the case. Finally, this research will provide an assessment of whether there is a significant difference between the quality and impact of donor backed media versus media that has received no donor aid.

1.7: Significance of the Study

More than 30 years have passed since the initial '1989 moment' inspired a generation of would-be democracy builders. Initial euphoria and optimism about the opening of airwaves and the liberalisation of media has given way to the harsh reality that idealized notions about press freedom and democratic media may exist in a perpetual state of allusivity – something that we can imagine, actively advocate for, and in the contexts of our own cultures and political realities attempt to mould, legislate, and curate norms and practices around. But, if we've learned anything from 30 plus years of independent media development, independent democratic media may not be an end goal that we will realize and reach. Instead, independent media development is an ongoing process that requires constant vigilance and a multitude of interworking dynamic efforts coming from below and on high – grassroots, civil society and business, government level actions. Perhaps most importantly, without government and elite level buy-in, i.e., political will, combined with a healthy, well-supported civil society, progress around media development, and the norms and institutions that underpin press freedom and liberal democratic media are either doomed to fail, will remain stagnant, and subject to state, regulatory, and media capture, and thus prone to corruption, censorship, and co-option. Thus, donor support for independent media, as initially envisaged in the aftermath of post-communist political transitions may require a fundamental re-thinking, moving from something donors support as projects and activities that can be completed in one to five year increments to something more akin to addressing independent media development as a 'wicked problem' – a social or cultural problem that's difficult or impossible to solve because of its complex and interconnected nature (Rittel, H. and Webber, M., 1973).

Media development supports efforts at improving or jump-starting democracy and good governance in developing and transitioning countries. It has been a mainstay of development efforts of primarily western government aid agencies and foundations for nearly 30 years. In the context of the transitions of post-communist Europe and post-Apartheid Africa, media development programs were designed to contribute to the development of more democratic and pluralistic media spaces by helping to launch private sector, commercial media outlets; transition from state-run media into public service media; establish independent regulatory agencies; train journalists and editors; and a wide array of other initiatives designed to aid in the development of free and independent media. The impetus for supporting media is largely rooted in the belief that media support democratic reforms by serving as a foundation or building block for improving civil society, educating the masses, and serving as a filter through which the institutions of the state and society can be vetted and scrutinized to stamp out corruption and check against the abuses of power. Furthermore, media have been described as the connective tissue of democracy; the rationale being that without freedom of expression and access to information, economic, social, and political development is hard to achieve.[3]

My research provides an overview and critical reflection of various theories (drawing from communication, political science, and development studies) and practices (drawing from donor and NGO strategy documents, funding proposals, and program evaluations) that have informed media development assistance in political and economic transitions in post-communist Europe in the 1990s to the present day. My research takes the debates and reflections many scholars have written about the theories and ideas related to media development and applies them to specific

[3] See: Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan, eds., Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

contexts and environments where media assistance has been carried out in a post-Cold War context. Comparing post-communist Europe with transitional settings in Africa offers a set of ideal comparative case studies for many reasons. Both have the benefit from i) prolonged, sustained support to the 'independent media sector'; ii) they both are heavily influenced by the legacy of their Soviet or colonial pasts and the inevitable influence this has had on understandings of journalism, the relationship between the media, the state and society, and the business models that have ensued during this transition period; and iii) both have experienced significant calls for social change and spirited periods of social and economic upheaval– during which time there was not only an outpouring of media assistance to support free and independent media, but a significant moment in history wherein efforts were made to change social and cultural expectations about the media. That said, all these countries have also experienced a drying up of media development funding and have a shared experience of the ebbs and flows of donor funding.

1.8: Key Findings: Towards a New Media Development Model

This study's key findings examine media development through its support for free and independent media, which are essential for a healthy democracy. The enduring relevance of the Fourth Estate highlights the media's vital role in promoting democratic values and serving as a watchdog. While significant progress has been made, ongoing challenges remain, including maintaining independence from state and oligarchic influence, as well as confronting newer issues like digital colonialism and the complex challenges emerging from digitalization.

1. Purpose of Media Development:

The primary aim of media development is to support free and independent media, crucial for a functioning democracy.

The concept of the Fourth Estate remains relevant, emphasizing media's role in advocating for democracy and acting as a watchdog. Despite progress, challenges persist, such as independence from state and oligarch control, and newer challenges such as digital colonialism and emerging concerns and challenges associated with digitalisation.

2. Donor Roles in Media Development: Donors were perceived as playing several pivotal roles:

a) Financial Support: Crucial for sustaining media organisations, especially where local funding is scarce.

b) Capacity Building: Enhancing journalists' skills and organisational capacities.

c) Promoting Democratic Values: Supporting media that advocate for democracy, human rights, and good governance.

d) Supporting Marginalized Voices: Ensuring diverse and inclusive media representation.

e) Advocacy and Ideological Influence: Promoting liberal ideals and media reforms aligned with Western models.

f) Crisis Support: Helping media survive in politically or economically unstable regions.

3. Influence of Donor Funding Models:

Donor funding models have had both positive and negative impacts: On the positive side, respondents shared that they felt donors contributed to their financial stability, capacity building, and promotion of democratic values. On the negative side, respondents shared there were problems related to dependency on donor funding, administrative burdens, and potential misalignment with local needs. Critics argue that the commercial advertising model, essential for media sustainability, is broken, leading to increased reliance on donor support.

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the study is the need to prioritize localisation in media development. . Historically, donor strategies have often been criticized for imposing Western models and values (capitalist or market driven models from the West) on recipient countries, which may not align with local contexts and needs. This has resulted in a dependency that undermines local initiative and innovation. To address these issues, there is a growing call for improved localisation efforts, which could take the form of shifting away from the top-down approach of imposing foreign models and values, and instead supporting media development that respects and integrates local cultures, values, and systems. In addition, respondents felt that improved localisation of support could be improved by a shift to directly funding local media organisations and civil society entities to build their capacity and reduce reliance on international NGOs. This approach not only fosters local ownership and sustainability but also ensures that media development initiatives are more relevant and impactful.

4. Contribution to Democratisation:

Media development contributes to democratisation by supporting independent media and by ensuring a diversity of voices and holding governments accountable. An additional way that media development supports democratisation is by enhancing public discourse by promoting transparency and informed voting through reliable information.

5. Lessons from 30 Years of Media Development:

Over the past three decades, donor strategies have evolved from focusing on professionalizing media systems to supporting technology and innovation. Some of the main challenges have included donor dependency, media capture, and the ineffectiveness of media development in weak democratic institutions. Key lessons learned include the fluidity and every changing focus of the

media development space. Early efforts aimed at print and television, transitioning to digital media with the rise of Big Tech – 'Big Tech' as a group of companies that own or control important digital platforms; notable examples include Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Apple, Meta (née Facebook), and Microsoft (Birch & Bronson, 2022). The adaptation to technology has been a core focus of media development in recent years and the digital disruption unleashed by the rise of the internet and social media required a shift in strategies to support journalism's survival. In addition, respondents noted that there needs to be improved assessment frameworks for media development strategies and programming, with a related need for better data-based assessments of media environments and financial needs. Finally, respondents highlighted the need for the media development sector to take on the issue of localisation more seriously by recognizing the importance of tailoring media development initiatives to local contexts and reducing dependency on Western models and funding.

Respondents had several critiques of donor strategies, including citing the need for a renewed and inclusive discussion on what the appropriate donor strategies for media development should be in light of the lessons learned over the past 30 years. In addition, there was criticism of funding models, namely in the distribution of funds and the shift from funding big ideas to smaller projects. Moreover, sustainability issues were also highlighted, with respondents noting that local media development actors struggle to sustain operations without core funding for essential costs. Finally, there was a consistent refrain in all three environments I looked at that future donor strategies need to do more to emphasize the need to support local media ecosystems through direct funding and capacity building. With regards to the latter, it was clear based on respondent feedback that issues of an imbalance of power between donors, implementing partners and local stakeholders is a sensitive issue.

1.9: Scope and Limitations

This dissertation interprets findings from a study on how donors impact the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries. I offer a qualitative study that makes use of an interpretive understanding of the legacy of donor-supported media development in development and transitioning societies, in which American, European, British donors – both government and private foundations – have attempted to support and sustain democracy writ largely through support to journalists, media outlets and institutions that engender and advocate for free and independent media.

Core limitations related to the research included respondent bias, i.e. where people do not answer questions truthfully for some reason. This was mitigated by interviewing a wide range of different stakeholder types and selecting respondents from different regions and countries. Additional limitations of the research included challenges in narrowing the focus of the core research areas, gaining access to important historical records (donor strategies and key documents), and challenges in situating media development theory and practice in the canon of communications scholarship and research. Media development is about many different aspects of communications all at once, which makes it both a challenge and an exciting field to research.

1.10: Structure of the Thesis

The dissertation is presented in eight chapters. Chapter one is the introduction and outlines the overarching nature of the research and sets up the following other seven chapters: chapter two offers a literature review; chapter three, a conceptual and theoretical framework; chapter four a

fieldwork report and an explanation of the methodology used; chapter five offers findings and results from the whole study; chapter six a case study on the Media Institute of Southern Africa; chapter seven presents a discussion on the key implications of the research; and chapter eight provides a conclusion using key observations that outline how to take this research forward and what the next steps could be.

1.11: Conclusion

The study underscores the complex and multifaceted role of donor strategies in media development. While donor support is crucial for sustaining independent media and promoting democratic values, there is a pressing need to prioritize localisation in media development practices. By doing so, donor strategies can enhance the long-term impact and sustainability of media development initiatives, ensuring they are more attuned to the needs and contexts of the countries they aim to support. The study explores the role and impact of international donors in fostering a more democratic, free, and independent media sector. Media development encompasses efforts by organisations, individuals, and sometimes governments to enhance the capacity and quality of the media sector within a specific country or region. These efforts vary widely, including funding new media outlets, improving existing ones, journalist training, legal reform for media, sustainability efforts, media literacy, digital integration, infrastructure development, and evaluation. The research examines how the goals and strategies of international donors influence the development of a democratically consolidated media sector or a thriving democratic information ecosystem. Media assistance is a key foreign aid component for democratisation and civil society building. This dissertation draws on comparative research and includes in-depth interviews with donors, academics, and media development practitioners. It focuses on the post-1989 context, which was significant for the spread of democracy following the fall of the Berlin

Wall, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the end of apartheid in Africa. This period, often called the third wave of democratisation, was marked by a belief in the inevitable spread of democracy and liberal democratic order.

Using a grounded theory approach, the research connects media development theories with practical applications in specific contexts. It examines how donor strategies affect journalism and press freedom, informed by scholarship on liberal democracy. The qualitative research, based on interpretivism/constructivism, probes donor impact on media space and evaluates program success, contributing to a theory of change in media development. Findings and analysis are drawn from the perspectives from donors, program beneficiaries, implementers, academics, and experts. The research interprets the legacy of donor-supported media development in the context of democratisation efforts by Western government aid agencies and foundations.

Chapter 2: Democratisation, Aid, and Independent Media: An Overview

2.1: Introduction

For nearly 30 years, media development (or media assistance as it is also called) has been a cornerstone of foreign aid designed to support transitions to democracy and governance. The impact and legacy of all the foreign aid that has gone to supporting democratic media transitions is an understudied and often misunderstood area of scholarship (Price, M., Abbott, S., Morgan, 2011). Several important questions call for exploration. Chief among them is whether the foreign aid aimed at supporting media development lived up to expectations and whether the seeds planted to support a free and independent media system started to bear fruit.

As noted in a 2023 report from an international that focused on the state of play related to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donors, and academics who focus on media development, the research team found that while media matters to democracy and development, we continue to lack evidence about the impact of media development funding (Berretta et al, 2023). Moreover, some scholars believe that efforts to support media transitions have been an outright failure, i.e. 'it is generally agreed by scholars and media practitioners that media development in post-communist Europe was a failure' (Higgins, 2013, pg. 6).

The importance of better understanding the impacts of media development efforts is clear as noted in this Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA) report on the monitoring of and evaluation in the media development sector:

> …despite the relentless rise in the significance of the media and communications sector in economic and cultural terms, the media development field lacks a clear evidence base that illustrates the impact and significance of its activities, training programs, and advocacy work … That media matter is not such a hard case to support, but exactly how it matters and what it actually

> does, in the context of development, whether by contributing to the health of the economy, polity, or society, has been the focus of considerable debate (Mosher, 2009, pg. 7).

The need for a more robust evidence base to determine whether there have been any impacts of media development interventions has also been the conclusion of several researchers and scholars who seek to understand and improve critical thinking, theory, and research design in media development (For example: Scott, M. 2014; Noske-Turner, 2017; Kumar, 2004). Thus, this literature review considers the influential insights and gaps in the development of media development to uncover new questions that can help guide the field. The literature follows media development through three sections:

> 2.2: Historical understandings and normative theories of the press and why they matter for media development
>
> 2.3: The 1989 moment and its significance for media development
>
> 2.4: Evaluative understandings of the impact of media development

Taken together, this overview of the media development literature helps us understand the context in which we can assess how donors have come to assess impact the development of media systems.

2.2: Historical Understandings and Normative Theories of the Press and Why They Matter for Media Development

The works of modernisation scholars like Wilbur Schramm and Daniel Lerner are considered foundational to the origins of media development (Siebert et al., 1956; Lerner, 1958). Their scholarship dates back to the 1950s and 1960s and inspired a generation of thinking on the idea that TV, radio, and print media are essential aspects of 'modernising a society', state building, and democratisation, a core argument that has deeply influenced donor thinking. One of the best

examples of this is from the aforementioned USAID 'blueprint' for media development as part of democracy and governance programs (Hudock, 1999).

While modernisation theory has been criticized for being culturally relative and too US-biased (Christians, et al., 2009), its influence on media development has deeply suffused the core thinking and paradigms for 'why develop the media' and donor ideas on how and why media contributes to democracy and good governance. A prime example of this is the foundational 1956 publication *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Soviet Communication Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (Siebert, et al., 1956). The authors of this classic book offer four major theories for how the press functions – Authoritarian Theory, Libertarian Theory, Social Responsibility, and Soviet-Totalitarian.

Figure 1: **Overview of the Four Theories of the Press**

Overview of the Four Theories of the Press		
Theory	**Chief Purpose**	**Essential differences from other theories**
Authoritarian	To support and advance the policies of the government in power; and to service the state	Instrument for effecting government policy, though not necessarily government owned.
Libertarian	To inform, entertain, sell—but chiefly to help discover the truth, and to check on government	Instrument for checking on government and meeting other needs of society.
Social Responsibility	To inform, entertain, sell—but chiefly to raise conflict to the plane of discussion	Media must assume obligation of social media; and if they do not, someone must see that they do.
Soviet Totalitarian	To contribute to the success and continuance of the Soviet socialist system, and especially to the dictatorship of the party.	State-owned and closely controlled media existing solely as arm of the state.

Source: Siebert, F.S., Peterson, T., and Schramm, W., 1956. Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Four Theories of the Press has justifiably been subject to intense criticism over the years for its modernisation roots, but its core message that political regimes and media systems are inextricably linked is hard to deny. As the authors wrote more than 60 years ago, the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates (Siebert et al., 1956). This rings true in my fieldwork and more than 20 years of experience in

media development as the core reason why many media development projects do not succeed. It is a common observation among donors and media development organisations that media development projects were not as successful as they could have been due a lack of political will to support a free press. While *Four Theories of the Press* is based on limited empirical analysis and a small range of cases, its applicability to systems other than the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union has been tested and proven repeatedly. It was heavily influenced by the dichotomous thinking of the Cold War and its focus on the contrast between the Soviet system and our own (Siebert et al., 1956). While this binary logic has been heavily criticized in the academic community, it still endures and holds up.

Siebert, et al. observe that 'Press systems are linked to different political systems and philosophies' and 'The Press always takes on the form and the coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates' (Siebert et al., 1956). Christians poses a central critique that concerns us even today: Why do the mass media appear in widely different forms and serve different purposes in different countries? (Christians et al., 2009). He argues that the modernisation framework is not sufficiently open and favours the industrial and Westernised world (Christians et al., 2009). There have been several efforts to improve upon *Four Theories of the Press* in the more than 60 years since it was published (for example: Manyozo, 2012; Servaes, 1999; and Christians et al., 2009).

Building on the *Four Theories* tradition, one of the key works that extends on the interlinkage of press and political systems is the seminal work published in 2004 by political scientists Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini—*Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Hallin, D.C. and Mancini, P., 2004)—which draws largely on the experience of mostly Western, developed societies in the tradition of modernisation theory to put forth an updated account of

media typologies and classifications (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). The study compares eighteen Western democracies, five Southern European countries, and four Atlantic countries. It has influenced the field of comparative media research because it offers a conceptual framework for analysing the differences and similarities of the relationships between media and politics, which includes four dimensions: structure of media markets, political parallelism, professionalisation of journalism, and the role of the state regarding media systems. The framework also includes five other dimensions: the role of the state, type of democracy (consensus vs. majoritarian), type of pluralism (individual vs. organised), degree of rational-legal authority, and degree of pluralism (moderate vs. polarised). Hallin and Mancini's work inspired a range of media development scholars (for example: Jones and Hadland, 2024; Rodny-Gumede, 2015; and Price and Stremlau, 2017), underscoring again the central role of the political contexts of the media systems and to understanding media development. The contribution of *Comparing Media Systems*, as it was with *Four Theories*, is analytical tools for comparative research on the links between political context and the state of the media.

Beyond the normative theories of the press and typologies of understanding media systems, the post-Cold War period gave rise to some significant debates centred around the role of media and development more broadly. These efforts sought to shape policy debates and had an important impact on trajectories of media and communications development.

In a break from modernisation theory, heated debates over the role of the media led to the conceptualization of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) as part of a broader effort to tackle global economic inequality that was viewed as a legacy of imperialist control over the Global South. NWICO was a centrepiece of the 1980 UNESCO's MacBride Commission's highly influential report called 'Many Voices, One World.' NWICO declared that

information is a key resource and the right to inform and be informed is critical to all societies (MacBride, 1980).

Notably, the MacBride report found that concentration of the media, commercialization of the media, and unequal access to information and communication were critical obstacles to media development. It attributed the significant imbalances in global communication flows to the dominance of Western countries and transnational corporations in media production and distribution. Leading to cultural imperialism and a one-way flow of information that undermines local cultures and identities in developing nations. The report called for a balanced and fair flow of information to respect cultural diversity and enhance production and dissemination capacities and for democratisation of communication systems and strengthening of national media to avoid dependence on external sources, among others. In sum, the MacBride Commission advocated for democratisation of communication and strengthening of national media to avoid dependence on external sources (MacBride, 1980)

The report also emphasized the crucial role of media in national development, advocating for media use as tools for education, social cohesion, and empowerment. It stressed the need to democratise communication, encouraging policies that ensure broad stakeholder participation and support community media. Developing comprehensive national communication policies and strengthening communication infrastructures in the Global South were deemed essential for robust and independent media systems. The report also underscored the importance of ethical journalism standards and social responsibility, advocating for accurate and fair reporting while protecting journalists' rights. Lastly, it called for increased international cooperation, with UNESCO playing a central role in fostering dialogue and collaboration among nations for a more equitable global information order.

The political posturing of the US and some other Western allies, however, impeded the international community's ability to push for the international, collaborative, and concerted efforts called for by the MacBride Report. This opposition delayed any significant impact the report could have had after its publication. The report was positively received by the and media scholars for advocating a balanced global communication system, supporting cultural diversity, and promoting democratisation of media. Western governments and major media corporations countered that NWICO could justify state control over media and restrict press freedom. Concerns were also raised about the practicality and enforcement of its recommendations.

The legacy of the NWICO is not just a footnote in the history of media development. It has had lasting importance to current debates and discussions about the media development agenda, the role of donors, the significance of foreign policy, and concerns related to imperialism. The influence of the NWICO has taken on many forms, including in the process that led to the development of the 1991 the Windhoek Declaration (UNESCO, 1991). Academically, it remains a foundational text in communication and media studies, influencing discussions on media ethics, cultural imperialism, and the role of media in development. It also impacted media policy, encouraging the development of diverse and pluralistic media environments, especially in the Global South. Additionally, the report's emphasis on supporting local media and ethical journalism has inspired international aid programs and contributed to developing journalistic standards promoting fairness and accountability. Despite initial criticisms, the MacBride Report's influence endures in shaping global media policy and communication ethics.

2.3: The 1989 Moment and the Importance of Political Transitions (and Regime Change)

The 1990s wave of post-communist transitions in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union ushered in a new era of scholarship and research around media development, democratisation, and the role of media in development objectives. In this regard, economists and political scientists like Amartya Sen, Frances Fukuyama, Thomas Carothers, Pippa Norris and a few others could be counted on as citations, footnotes or references in nearly every policy paper, chapter or conference paper related to media development. From 2000 to at least 2010, Sen's observation in *Development as Freedom* that famines don't occur in democracies and his arguments in favour of a free press became *de facto* justifications for why media development matters (Sen, 1999). Sen contended that no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press (Sen, 1999). Core to this argument is that a free press is valuable for democracy, good governance, and human development. Pippa Norris noted in reference to Sen's work, independent media enhanced the voice of poor people and improves their ability to make choices (Norris, 2012).

Sen's insights have inspired development practitioners, economists, and policymakers alike to investigate further the importance of investing in social and political reforms for sustainable and successful development. Its main arguments have been used to bolster the importance of media, information, and open lines of communication as an essential and useful part of a broader development strategy.

Development As Freedom came out roughly at the same time as the similarly highly influential book *The End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama 1992), which aligned with modernisation theory by arguing that democracy is inevitable and, further, that mankind's ideological evolution

and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy is the final form of human government in the natural order of progression in light of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It was during this time in the early 2000s to around 2015 that optimism about democratisation efforts led many media development scholars to make a case for and unpack relationships between levels of press freedom, democracy, and development. Key media development indices and industry research became highly influential, chiefly the Freedom House Freedom of the Press Index, Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index, and the IREX Media Sustainability Index. (see for instance Abbott and Taylor, 2011 and Burgess, 2010). These indices are used by policymakers, NGOs, donors, and researchers in a variety of ways – as advocacy tools, measures of the progress of media development programs, and identifying correlations between media, democracy, and development factors like levels of poverty, types of governance, and overall levels of development.

Researchers have mined this data looking for patterns and linkages with media freedom (See, for example, L. Schneider, 2014; Becker, Vlad, Nusser, 2007). This type of scholarship was highly influential in improving research and understanding of the overall impact of media development. Still, after more than a decade of efforts to mine the same data sets and look for trends and patterns in the data, the media development sector looked beyond the measures-of-the-press-freedom approach as the primary means to evaluate media development progress, citing a difficulty of attributing causation to specific media development programs and interventions. Many concluded that, at best, press freedom measures only function as macro-level indicators or proxy measures of media development assistance overall.

Concurrent to the attempts at creating meaningful measures of media development, in the aftermath of 1989, scholars writing about the momentous political, economic, and social changes underway sought to make sense out of the transitions. This gave way to the study of transitology,

in political science and international and comparative law and economics, the study of the process of change from one political regime to another, mainly from authoritarian ones rooted in conflicting varieties of economic liberalism (Schmitter, 2014). Transitology tried to explain the process of democratisation in a variety of contexts, from bureaucratic authoritarianism and other forms of dictatorship in Latin America, southern Europe and northern Africa to post-communist developments in Eastern Europe (Schmitter, 2014).

The discourse around political transitions and the ideas of 'transitology' were quite influential to the media development discourse, at least for a time. The influence of the post-communist political transitions underscored much of the thinking from scholars and donors from the 1990s to the 2010s. The media transition story is not unlike other aspects of post-communist transition, there are economic, political, and social dimensions to it, which, depending on the time and circumstance, can hinder or support overall reform efforts. Slovenian media scholar Slavko Splichal discusses this tension in his analysis of the pressures that deregulation and privatisation place on the media sector (Splichal, 1995). Such tension results when liberal free market reforms are launched at the same time as political reforms designed to bring about democracy. While the two are seemingly mutually re-enforcing, the demands of one can sometimes be counterproductive and act as a setback for the other. Those involved in the process of developing media must take this dual or even multi-level transition reality into account, often making the process of development seem very much like a 'one step forward, two steps back' endeavour.

Like the writings of Sen and Fukuyama, transitology was influential in the post-1989 period, but in hindsight the ideas of the 'stages of transition' model have not played out so neatly and democracy is seen as less inevitable. Its most important contribution is the idea that political transitions create a window of opportunity to democratise the governing political, economic, and

social institutions and those in media and journalism. The prevailing threats of illiberal democracy in Poland and Hungary and the protracted and never-ending transitions in the Western Balkans illustrate that efforts to move these countries in a democratic direction have not succeeded in the short term. Perhaps nothing has signalled the challenge to the transition paradigm more than the West's own struggle with democracy in recent years, underscoring that democracy itself is in a perpetual state of transition that must be defended, protected, and cultivated for democratic institutions to endure. This was markedly made clear when Viktor Orban made his stunning grip on power a mainstay of not only Central and East European politics—a region for which the transition paradigm was emblematic in the first place—but also a clarion call for illiberal democracy and would-be autocrats worldwide.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, media development became a mainstay in Western-led donor efforts to support democracy, civil society, and good governance (LaMay, 2007; Hume, 2004; Kaplan, 2008). Though often cited as integral to promoting the freedoms, democratisation and liberalisation of a society (Sen, 1999), the role of media as part of international development hasn't always been easily understood (Nelson and Susman-Peña, 2012; Myers, 2012; Kumar, 2006; Abbott, 2019). Even less understood is the role that international donors play (see Higgins, 2014) in supporting media development. Foreign aid, philanthropy and investment from democratically minded governments, foundations, and private companies has been a near constant part of Western efforts to support democracy promotion since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Much of this philanthropy and foreign aid is premised on the assumption that free and independent media is good for democracy, that it helps to jumpstart and consolidate democratisation and, at the most fundamental level, that media is something that can be developed, shaped, and transformed (Scott, 2014;

Voltmer, 2013). While donors supported media development before 1989,[4] the momentous social, political, and economic changes that followed the end of the Cold War opened up new pathways for thinking about media, development and democratisation. The '1989 moment' inspired academics, journalists, activists, donors, philanthropists, and governments to pursue ideas about liberalisation, transition, and democratisation of media and the role of journalism and information in society (Price, Rozumilowicz, and Verhust, 2001). For those seeking to support sporadic waves of democratic transitions, some of their support was tied to supporting free and independent media.

Some of the best scholarship on donor-funded media was written nearly 20 years ago (Hume, 2008 and LaMay, 2007). The enduring messages and observations of these works suggest that the models of media development as part of grander efforts towards democratisation have largely remained unchanged over the past 30 years. They also document an evergreen nature to the challenges and obstacles that Western donors face as they attempt to support free and independent media – this is a key topic that my research will probe and look for answers to.

2.4: Evaluating Media Development Assistance

Following the initial wave of post-communist-transition media development programs, donors have sought better data and research on models of media development, and the quest for evidence of how media contributes to democratisation and development became part of both academic and practitioner discourse (Price, Abbott, Morgan, 2011; Burgess, 2010, and Abbott, 2006).

[4] Michael Tracey's excellent summarization documents American-led efforts following the Second World War to support media development in post-war Western Germany and Japan (Tracey, Michael, The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting (Oxford, 1998; online edn, Oxford Academic, 3 Oct. 2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198159254.001.0001, accessed 25 May 2024.).

Donors, like the World Bank, USAID, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation pushed for more robust monitoring and evaluation and sought value for money through evidence of impact (Price, Abbott, and Morgan, 2011).

Media development organisations as a whole have struggled to generate studies, evidence, and data correlating media development programs to democratic, better governed countries, and demonstrate that media development contributes to gender equality, poverty reduction, and positive social development goals (Nelson and Susman-Peña, 2012). That said, there are indeed numerous studies that have convincingly problematised when media are major contributing factors to development problems, conflict, destabilisation, and other societal challenges (For example: Annan, 2007; Thompson, 1999; Kumar, 2006).

During the breakup of Yugoslavia starting in 1991, for example, domestic media were often referred to as the 'mouthpiece of Milsoevic', as shorthand for the bias, hate speech and propaganda put out through media channels to support the ethnic-nationalism and authoritarian policies favoured by Slobodan Milsoevic, Serbian president and convicted war criminal. A considerable amount of scholarship researches the role of media in inciting violence in the Balkans and the role that it continues to play in terms of provoking instability, violence, and intolerance in the region (Taylor and Kent, 2000).

More recently, social media in the Arab Spring (2010-2012) has been cited (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). as both an instigator of civil unrest and as a potential hope for restoring peace and order. YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, in particular, continue to be essential to the political changes seen in recent years in Tunisia and Egypt. Following the initial events of the Arab Spring, a number of publications and research projects have investigated the role that social media actually played

in the revolutions, shedding light on violent extremism and how media can be manipulated and used as a tool of propaganda and terrorism (Wolfsfeld, et al., 2013; Tudoroiu, 2014).

Many of the assumptions media evaluators make—that free media are important for political stability and democratic reforms, that media play a pivotal role in alleviating poverty and enabling economic development, and that media serve as a springboard for many of the other human rights and freedoms that are associated with democratic ideals, to name a few —have proven difficult to verify empirically (Price, Abbott and Morgan, 2011). As a result, academics, donors, and media development organisations have sought out better frameworks and tools to monitor and evaluate media development programs (Abbott, 2011).

In an era marked by repeated calls to show 'value for money' and 'evidence-based' approaches to development, media development organisations are under serious pressure to substantiate their programs and put forward a compelling case for how donor money gets used and what impact it has had (Abbott, 2019).

The problem is and has been for the better part of the past three decades that media development is hard to evaluate. Funding for and inclusion of plans for program evaluation is rarely adequate, although this gap is starting to be closed, or at least addressed, as monitoring and evaluation becomes something of a cause du jour in international development circles.

As referenced above, there's a need to think about what is being measured, who is doing the measurement, and toward what end. NGOs or implementers are limited in time and resources to take on the programmatic evaluations, so asking them to take on the further task of assessing the overall landscape and measuring the impact that media has is a daunting task – specifically the impact of media development programs vis-à-vis democratic reforms and economic development.

The indicators that have been developed to benchmark the progress of media development programs, are very much rooted in the overall programmatic goals and rationalizations for media assistance as its traditionally thought of in terms of capacity building, training of journalists, and assisting with legal and regulatory aspects of free and independent media (Abbott, 2019).

An important Indicator and intervening variable in evaluating media development strategies that emerges repeatedly is civil society. Many donors conceptualize goals and strategies on the premise that they are contributing to strengthening civil society. The rationale behind civil society assistance stems from the belief that a bottom-up approach to democratisation will help reforms to take root, is cost effective (this form of economic aid is much cheaper than other kinds of assistance) and is an essential component of democracy (Carothers, 1999; Carothers and Ottoway, 2000). Civil society forms the backbone of democracy and, thus, is inextricably tied to democratisation efforts.[5] It is undergirded by civic rights that insure everyone can participate in public life, including but going beyond elections to hold political power accountable.

Current conceptions of civil society date back to the 1980s, when political scientists began to speak of a 'crisis of representation' (Gellner, 1994). Civil society is the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from 'society' in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, preferences, and ideas. It allows citizens to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to

[5] Defining civil society, like defining media development, is problematic -- For a useful review of contemporary academic research and debates, see Anheier (2014) and Jensen (2006), and the insightful first chapters of Kohler-Koch et al. (2013). For efforts to define and then measure civil society, see Heinrich (2005) and Malena & Volkhart (2007).

make demands on the state, to improve the structure and functioning on the state, and to hold state officials accountable (Diamond, 1999).

As media scholar Peter Gross pointed out,

> Edmund Burke and James Madison laid the groundwork for defining democratic society as civil society, a partnership between citizens from whom all authority is derived and a collection of different groups, interests, and classes whose very number precludes any perils to the individual or minority groups and interests (Gross, 2002, p. 11).

Gradually, citizens across the world have shifted from political parties and trade unions as ways to organize and exert democratic power to 'newer' modes: social movements, informal citizen groups and non-governmental organisations to hold political representatives accountable, publicise infringements of civil liberties and address failures to achieve a reasonable standard of life. Both the media and civil society require freedom of expression (Coudray, 2015). As UNESCO notes: freedom of expression is central to dialogue, democracy, and development worldwide. Without it, an informed, engaged, and responsible citizenry is impossible; corruption and crime cannot be exposed; and societies cannot hope to implement the social and economic programmes that will enable their future prosperity (Coudray, 2015). Civil society's functional contribution to good governance is notable on several levels:

- As a watchdog — against violation of human rights and governing deficiencies.
- As an advocate — of the weaker sections' point of view.
- As an Agitator — on behalf of aggrieved citizens.
- As an educator — of citizens on their rights, entitlements and responsibilities and the government about the pulse of the people.
- As a service provider — to areas and people not reached by official efforts or as government's agent (Insights in India, 2024).

The necessary role of civil society to act for transition and democracy has made it essential to evaluating the impact and strength of the media. As Linz and Stepan write in their article 'Toward Consolidated Democracies':

> A robust civil society, with the capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor government and state, can help start transitions, help resist reversals, help push transitions to their completion, and help consolidate and deepen democracy. At all stages of the democratisation process, therefore, a lively and independent civil society is invaluable (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 18).

This point is also raised by Larry Diamond:

> Civil society advances democracy in two generic ways: by helping to generate a transition from authoritarian rule to (at least) electoral democracy and by deepening and consolidating democracy once it is established (Diamond, 1999, 233).

Scholars like Larry Diamond stress the importance of a healthy civil society and independent mass media in terms of the success or failure of democratic reforms (Diamond, 1999). As Gross comments in his review of civil society and the media, independent media is both a component and facilitator of civil society. In fact, if civil society can be viewed as both the cause and the effect of freedom to inform and to inform oneself, then truly independent media (whose definition itself is still contested) are civil society (Gross, 2002).

2.5: Conclusion

The literature review has covered historical understandings of the press, the significance of the 1989 political transitions and evaluating media development. It has highlighted the centrality of modernisation theory in the literature and how the 1989 transitions inspired significant scholarship that breaks with this tradition but holds onto the claims for media's central role in democracy, while also elevating its connections to development and civil society.

For nearly 30 years, media development has been crucial in supporting democratic transitions through foreign aid. However, its impact remains understudied, with questions about whether such aid has resulted in free and independent media systems. While the importance of media for democracy is acknowledged, evidence of its impact is lacking. Some scholars even criticize media development efforts as failures, particularly in post-communist Europe.

The last three decades have seen a significant amount of donor funding that has supported media transitions, with mixed success. The sector struggles to provide empirical evidence of media development's impact on democracy and economic development, highlighting the need for better evaluation frameworks. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are crucial in media development, acting as watchdogs and advocates. However, they often face challenges from state interference and funding issues. Understanding these dynamics is essential for assessing media development's role in advancing democracy.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1: Introduction

In building my theoretical framework, I seek to define the key concepts of media development, suggest relationships between them, and discuss relevant theories that should inform this work. This framework undergirds my findings and helps to interpret, explain, and show where it might be possible to generalize my research on media development.

The first section, A Conceptual Roadmap to Media Development, defines and explores key concepts in media development from its intellectual origins through its linkages with modernisation theory and the enduring claims by both Western and non-Western scholars and development practitioners about the centrality of media to democracy and development. This section also offers a conceptual roadmap for thinking about media development, including key concepts, definition, and indicators used by donors, scholars, and practitioners to measure the impact of media development. It is through this overview of concepts and terms that one can see how practitioners have borrowed the ideas and theories from the academic community**.**

The second section, A Theoretical Framework for Media Development Research, explores what we know of other media development theoretical frameworks to construct the relevant theory and insights that inform my research, drawing on the disconnect between theory and practice and donors' challenges in trying to support democratic media transitions.

3.2: A Conceptual Roadmap to Media Development

Some have argued that media development lacks a common set of definitions and an agreed-upon theoretical framework for understanding what it means and how it works (Scott M., 2014; Berger, 2010). As Kathy Lines noted in 2009,

> Defining media [development] … impacts on how it is dealt with at all levels – from policy level to programmatic support … Without a generally accepted definition, it is hard to monitor precisely what is being done in the field, and thereby to easily measure progress in terms of spend, programs, or research … And without such a definition, there may continue to be a gap between what is said and what is done (Lines, 2009, 6).

The blanket criticism of a lack of accepted definitions is not necessarily true. As my literature review showed we have some well-established ideas about media development. The Centre for International Media Development explains:

> Media development refers to evolution and change in news media and communications. Such change relates to a range of institutions, practices, and behaviours, including the rule of law, freedoms of expression and press, education systems for journalists, business environments, capacities of journalists and managers, and support for a diversity of views in society (CIMA 2024).[6]

> Media development is rooted in the key discourses of communication studies, political democratisation, and economic development. In all these discourses, a strong, robust and powerful civil society is an implied, though not elaborated upon, essential element of media development (Rothman, 2015).

What makes media development hard to define, however, is that it comprises an inter-related set of ideals. As Martin Scott says, 'defining media development is like nailing jelly to the wall' (Scott, M. 2014). Despite this tongue-in-cheek comment, he notes: 'At the heart of all understandings of media development is a concern for media freedom' (Scott, M., 2014). He notes seven key factors of media development:

- Independence,
- Plurality,
- Professionalism,
- Capacity,
- An Enabling Environment,
- Economic Sustainability, and

- Media literacy (Scott M., 2014).

Taken together, these concepts are the essential core components of a liberal democratic media, what Perry Keller describes as the the foundations of the relationship between the media and the liberal democratic state (Keller, 2011).

These seven 'liberal' factors are different than illiberal, authoritarian approaches to media development. The normative basis for illiberal factors could be elaborated to include concepts like media capture, strategic use of legal frameworks, re-workings of constitutions to conform to an autocratic agenda, use of strategic narratives promulgated by the media to vilify the 'other' and overt use of propaganda to demonise and weaponise perspectives, opinions, and identities that do not conform to party or leader agendas and beliefs, and increasingly use of disinformation, misinformation, trolls and bots to shape the information landscape. Autocratic leaders today– Hungary, Poland, El Salvador for example—employ a captured or 'illiberal' approach to the press as a core component of their efforts to capture power (Surowiec and Štětka, 2019). Dragomir explains this phenomenon clearly:

'Media freedom in Central and Eastern Europe is arguably at its lowest level since the region's dictatorships were toppled in the early 1990s. With local oligarchs buying up outlets and foreign media operators fleeing the region, it is likely to deteriorate further' (Dragomir, 2019, para. 4). The concerns over media capture and the problems it poses for democracy are cited by many scholars, including Shiffrin (2021) and Dragomir (2019). In writing for the Media Development Loan Fund, Dragomir notes that governments and businesses across the region are colluding to capture and manipulate media outlets and the flow of information. By silencing criticism, state-oligarch cartels are able to extinguish accountability, ensure their unimpeded access to public resources, and prolong their own existence (Dragomir, 2019).

Media freedom is anathema to non-democratic political organisation but is seen as vital for democracy to function and flourish. Measures of press freedom such as those annually offered by Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, Varieties of Democracy Index (V-Dem), African Media Barometer [7] make the case that where press freedom is under threat, democracy is also threatened. The flip side of these press freedom indices captures the reality that media freedom is not a universally appreciated practiced concept. In all the countries where media is unfree or partly free, citizens and the state have very restricted access to information and media platforms through state censorship, interference, propaganda, and media capture. This inhibits their levels of freedom–political, social, and economic–which matter for development. For media development, the goal of liberal democracy closely aligns then with freedom of expression, access to information, rights to privacy and a general respect for human rights.

As Scott also notes, the core concepts associated with independent media development are often overlooked in research and debates about media development. What's important in his seven factors of media development is that one can measure them to determine to what extent and how media is improving as illustrated in the table below:

Figure 2: Measuring Media Development

Factor	Measure
Independence	Extent to which media is free from government control and corporate control or undue influence.
Plurality	Extent to which media represents a diversity of voices is inclusive and provides information in the public interest.
Professionalism	Extent to which media and journalists adhere to ethical practices
Capacity	Extent to which media and journalists have the skills needed to contribute to a modern, liberal, democratic media environment.

[7] For Freedom House indices, see: https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores (accessed on 6/3/2024), for Reporters Without Borders indices see: https://rsf.org/en/index, for V-Dem see: https://v-dem.net/, and for African Media Barometer see: https://www.unesco.org/en/world-media-trends/african-media-barometer-amb.

Professionalism	Extent to which media and journalists adhere to ethical practices
An Enabling Environment	Are there rights respecting, media systems exhibiting including norms, standards, and laws that shape the enabling environment
Economic Sustainability	Extent to which media is profitable or viable.
Media Literacy	Extent to which citizens can interpret and use information reported in the media.

Source: Martin Scott, Media Development (2014)

Western, liberal media development is a *de facto* force for advocating that media systems, legal norms and practices, and qualities of press and media are based on human rights and liberal democratic traditions, a liberal approach to the function of media in a democracy (Scott M., 2014). The most notable work in this regard from a practitioner's perspective is Krug and Price's Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media (Krug and Price, 2001).

At the outset, I contend that Western donor-funded media development is premised on these seven factors. These factors also form the basis for evaluating media development programs, the core components of nearly all media development indices that assess levels of press freedom and democracy, and the backbone for understanding the motives of donors who seek to shape media development.

For their part, donors have long endeavoured to give shape to the rather unwieldy concept of media development with the same linkages to democratisation. In 1999, USAID premised its support for media development on the following rationale:

> The ability to access and disseminate information is fundamental to the health of a democracy. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media. Ideally, media facilitate the free, open, inclusive, and fully pluralistic exchange of information and opinions among all major societal actors (including citizens, civil society, political parties, businesses, legislatures, judicial system, and executive authorities at all levels of government) (USAID, 1999).

Furthermore, according to USAID's Standardized Program Structure and Definitions, their work with independent media:

> … encompasses interventions that promote or strengthen mediums for citizens to access information on issues of public interest across a variety of sectors, conduct free and open communication, engage with government and civil society, and increase constituency mobilization, and/or oversight of government functions to increase transparency and accountability. (USAID, 2018).

In the chart below, USAID shows 10 dimensions for donors to consider assessing a media landscape and inform media development programs drawn from the 1999 Strategic Assessment Framework (USAID, 1999). These dimensions are largely in alignment with the seven factors that Scott identifies; although they are more specific about elements of media capacity and an enabling environment, they clearly reference democracy and issues of liberal rights.

Figure 3: ASSESSING A MEDIA LANDSCAPE

USAID'S TEN DIMENSIONS TO ASSESS IN A MEDIA LANDSCAPE:

1. Information Ecosystem Mapping: Mapping the major sources of news and information from both traditional media–TV, radio, print and digital media–and citizen-led media, including social media influencers, other forms of citizen-generated content, and any noteworthy and important platforms, players, or institutions that stand out in terms of providing content, news, information, and journalism.

2. Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media: The extent to which the operating environment for journalists enables them to report the news, and how well is it protecting and facilitating the exercise of freedom of expression and the performance of journalist and media activities.

3. Cross-Cutting Issues: Gender, Youth, Disabled, and LGBTQ+: The extent to which marginalized voices—women, youth, minorities, and LGBTQ+—are included in media content and represented within the media sector.

4. Newsroom Professionalization: The extent to which journalists and other media professionals uphold national and international standards around fair and ethical reporting.

5. Business, Sustainability and Market-based Capacity: The extent to which the media are financially resilient and editorially independent of influence by political and financial elites.

6. Media, Community, and Social Influence: The extent to which media play important roles in the community and respected members of civil society.

7. Media and Information Literacy: The extent to which audiences are data- and information-literate, understand the watchdog role of a free press in a healthy democracy, and possess the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication.

8. Practices Around and Access to Training on Journalism Safety/ Security: The extent to which media sector workers and citizen journalists are safe to do their jobs.

9. Education, Universities, and Professional Development Training: The extent to which formal and informal education opportunities are present and have the capacity to support professionalism across the different sub-sections of the media.

10. Donor & Peer Analysis: The extent to which other donors and media leaders are working together on programming and sharing information on media development.

UNESCO's Media Development Indicators Handbook[8] highlights five key areas that media development should focus on that also echo Scott's seven factors: 1) convivial legal environment,

[8] According to Toby Mendel, writing for UNESCO, on how to think about and use the MDIs: The MDIs represent an elaboration of UNESCO's understanding of its core mandate to foster 'the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth', 'the free exchange of ideas and knowledge' and 'the free flow of ideas by word and image', as prescribed by UNESCO's Constitution. This mandate includes the promotion of the right to freedom of expression, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. An early elaboration of these standards was the 1991 Windhoek Declaration, which was subsequently endorsed by UNESCO

2) plural ownership, 3) democratic performance, 4) capacity issues (skills and supporting organisations), and 5) public access to media (UNESCO, 2008).

These donor tools essentially provide us with a blueprint for how donors and the media development community define liberal democratic media.[9] What defines the framework for liberal democratic media development is independence, pluralism, an enabling environment for human rights and democratic values, and an emphasis on critical thinking through media literacy and related competencies of data, digital, and information literacy. In addition, I believe media development programming's most important supporting feature is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international standards, norms, and best practices related to the protection and promotion of freedom of expression, access to information, rights to privacy, gender equality and empowerment. Implicit is a social contract between civil society, the government, and the media about what the media should look like, what form it takes, and what values it embodies.

Considering the values and outcomes that media development seeks to shape in this short survey, we conceptualize the following definitions to guide this inquiry.

> **Media development** refers to the process of improving and promoting various forms of media, including print, broadcast, digital, and social media, to foster a free, diverse, and responsible media environment. It encompasses efforts to enhance media professionalism,

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and acknowledged by the UN General Assembly. The Windhoek Declaration referred to the right to freedom of expression as encompassing a media that was free, pluralistic and independent. The MDIs build upon these foundations and principles, and represent an interpretation of international human rights standards, which countries are required to respect, because of their status as part of international law. See: guidelines_mdi_final_en_0.pdf (unesco.org)

[9] Additionally, there are a number of media development indices, barometers and key trends reports that shape the field: the Pew Research Center Global Attitudes and Trends: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/, Asian Barometer: http://www.asianbarometer.org, African Media Barometer: https://fesmedia-africa.fes.de/media-and-publications/african-media-barometer-publications, Reporters Sans Frontiers: https://rsf.org/en, Freedom House, Deutsche Welle: https://www.dw.com/en/media-center/s-100824, IREX MSI and VIBE: https://www.irex.org/project/vibrant-information-barometer-vibe, UNESCO, and V-Dem: https://www.v-dem.net/en/.

independence, access, and ensure that media outlets can effectively fulfil their role in providing information, facilitating public discourse, and holding those in power accountable. Media development often involves initiatives related to media literacy, press freedom, media sustainability, and the capacity-building of media organisations and professionals.

Independent media refers to media outlets that operate without significant government or corporate control and aim to provide unbiased news coverage. The key to understanding independent media is the value placed on editorial independence, which means the autonomy of media organisations in determining their content and editorial decisions. Independence can lead to media pluralism or the idea that the existence of a diverse and competitive media landscape with multiple voices and perspectives is fruitful for democracy to flourish.

The role of donors, i.e., USAID, the EU, FCDO, Sida and private foundations. Most people associate media development with donor assistance, meaning the financial and technical support provided by governments, international organisations, and NGOs to promote democracy and development through media support. While donor funding plays a substantial role, media development can be analysed purely in terms of how the media sector develops by looking at a broad range of political, social, and economic factors that contribute to the overall state of media. For this dissertation, I am only concerned with donor supported media development.

The next sections review some of these key concepts in media development.

3.2.1: Inherent Power Dynamics

Ultimately, liberal democratic donor-funded media and media development NGOS seek to shape the normative practices that govern media and information spaces and are, therefore, an exercise in power. Media development has an interventionalist quality to it, i.e., media development is something that gets implemented, imposed, or imported (Scott M., 2014). This is a particularly salient point for my research on how donors impact media development, cutting across salient debates in recent years on localising media and development work.

I suspect localisation will take on even more prominence as the sector matures and our understanding grows beyond its modernisation roots to embrace locally driven, context-

appropriate, independent media. In this regard, power dynamics (between the West and the Global South and between international and local organisations) become a key area of focus for media development scholarship. An analysis of media and power must consider:

1) Decoupling media development from external power agendas
2) Empowering a localisation agenda, that values local leadership and objectives, and
3) Enhancing our understanding of donor models – need much more attention to help move the media development sector forward.

Berger's 2010 article points to the difficulty of discussing media development without addressing donors' power dynamics and motivations as he stresses the *soft power* that is wielded by media organisations. Berger also comments that when it comes to donor funding, the motives and consequences of donor funding matter. He writes that private foundations may differ inasmuch as their involvement forms part of 'more philanthropic goals'. Notably, he draws on Monroe Price's work on Media and Sovereignty and comments that international media mobilisation is not neutral but instead amounts to what has been dubbed a 'foreign policy of media space' – a concern to shape the structure and content of media in another state for one reason or another (Price, 2001). Reinforcing this idea for Berger is Kasoma's notion of 'donor driven theory of the press' (Kasoma, 1999).

Missing from these seven factors is, perhaps, a healthy civil society, although this might be factored into the enabling environment. Given the centrality of the need for a strong civil society, it merits a distinction of its own. Note, in this sense, I am using the term civil society to mean: The constellation of institutions, organisations and individuals located between the family, the state, and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests (Anheire, 2001).

3.2.2: Essentialism vs. Perennialism

Media development literature articulates an essentialism vs. perennialism problem in clarifying conceptual and theoretical frameworks for media development and tying down focus areas. In essentialism there are often competing, overlapping or complementary visions about the common core of concepts and characteristics that need to be applied in a systematic, disciplined way; as compared to perennialism which implies that there are a set number of issues or core areas of focus that are of primary importance. As Berger noted in 2010, the concept of media development is marred a conflation of means and ends that need to be clarified if media development interventions are to impact journalism, democracy, and development (Berger, 2010).

A *de facto* set of core features and qualities of international media development are present in the evolution of the ideas that surround liberal, democratic media (as we have seen, democratisation, economic development, civil society, etc.). As Berger said, media development is about many different focal areas 'each with its own pathway and set of variables and best practices', and often having inherent contradictions (Berger, 2010). Moreover, whether studying each component of media development or the sum of all its parts, at best these components can only provide an indication of the overall health of a media sector.

However, Scott's seven key factors of media development–independence, plurality, professionalism, capacity, an enabling environment, economic sustainability and media literacy–go a long way in helping provide clear criteria to assess whether a media environment is more or less democratic. Note, these seven factors are very much enshrined in the conception of liberal democratic media development, in contrast to authoritarian or autocratic models, which are explained further below in sections about normative theories of the press.

And as Berger notes, the legal enabling environment, which includes the laws, policies, norms, and institutions needed for a free and independent media sector, is both the subject and the object of media development assistance, upon which so much of the media democratisation stories hinge. A notable work in this regard from a practitioner's perspective is Price and Krug's Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media, which contends that the legal framework is a critical element of media and democracy:

> Shaping an effective democratic society requires many steps. The formation of media law and media institutions is one of the most important. Too often, this process of building a media that advances democracy is undertaken without a sufficient understanding of the many factors involved. This analysis is designed to improve such understanding, provide guidance for those who participate in the process of constructing such a media, and indicate areas for further study (Krug and Price, 2000, pg. 2).

If the object of study or research is to assess to what extent donor funded interventions have made a difference to democracy or democratisation, viewing media development as freedom—as Scott rightly suggests—then a media system or information environment being free is indeed the most important factor in studying media development. In this way, the case study discussed in Chapter 6 as it relates to the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) will demonstrate the centrality of the legal enabling environment but also show its limitations and the 'chicken and egg' problem that Berger highlighted in his own problematisation of the media development's conceptual framework (Berger, 2010).

Donor-funded media development seeks media sustainability or the ability of media organisations to maintain their operations over the long term. This is often related to financial viability. The business practices of media, as well as the means by which media outlets are able to remain financially viable, is considered a core outcome of media development, which should lead to media viability. Donor funded support, financial assistance provided by governments,

international organisations, and foundations, financial viability has become a core focus of concern due to challenges faced by media outlets to garner enough commercial funding through advertising or other means.

3.2.3: A Free and Independent Media

International democratisation assistance for media development primarily seeks to promote and enable sustainable, independent, and free media. Media development has been a part of democracy and state building since the end of World War II, with the re-building of Germany and Japan (Tracey, 1998) In terms of unpacking what is necessary for a free and independent media, a 2002 report entitled Mapping Media Assistance, is closely aligned to the seven factors for media development (emphasis added):

> Media assistance primarily takes the form of journalism training, direct support to news organisations, efforts to aid media law reform, support for professional journalism, and broadcast associations, support for developing financial sustainability of media outlets, and initiatives designed to transcend national, religious, or ethnic barriers in the media (Price et al., 2002).

As is apparent above, the range and type of media assistance can vary and encompass a wide range of activities that all fall under the general rubric of mass media. Mapping Media Assistance also lists 14 areas in which media assistance takes its form and substance.[10]

[10] Amongst the types of assistance are: Journalism training and education; training in marketing; business management, and efforts to ensure financial independence; training that focuses on transforming state broadcasters into genuine public service networks; training in professional media ethics, accountability and professionalism; material assistance (primarily for infrastructure and technical capacity); assistance in developing networks of independent media; assistance and advice in building democratic legal and regulatory frameworks for media; trade association development; legal defence; conflict prevention initiatives; security training; support for legal advocacy (support for 'media monitoring' and watchdog groups to protect the media); social and cultural development; and new communications assistance (i.e. information technology). (Price, et al., 2-4, 2002).

The impetus for supporting free and independent media is primarily rooted in the belief that media supports democratic reforms by serving as a foundation or building block for improving civil society, educating the masses, and serving as a filter through which the institutions of the state and society can be vetted and scrutinized to stamp out corruption and check against the abuses of power. The emphasis on 'free' and 'independent' stems from Western democratic ideals and models of journalism and media that historically were considered essential to developing democratic, liberal states – the key feature being that media are free and independent from the state. 'Free and independent' is one of the most central ideas in media development (as practiced/supported by Western donors and NGOs). Outside of major press freedom indices like the Freedom House studies, there is often not enough focus on how, in a media development context, freedom and independence from the state are best achieved. Civil society support then becomes very important. Donors and NGOs put a lot of emphasis on self-regulation as a means of supporting free and independent media, but this aspect of media development is very understudied.

3.2.4: Civil Society

The importance of civil society, as both a mitigating force demanding greater freedom and the beneficiary of the news and information it provides, is perhaps missing from Scott's seven factors, although it is inferred in the necessity for an enabling environment. Given the empirical emphasis of donors on building strong civil societies, this factor merits distinction.

Notably, there is a serious gap in the literature related to the role of civil society as part of media development. The reason why civil society is so key is that so much media development gets channelled through civil society organisations (CSOs)--professional NGOs, non-profit or community media, and pass throughs for funding media, etc. It is not always clear where civil society ends and media development begins. In some contexts, CSOs may be the media—in places

that are highly restrictive or where there is no means for local independent media, civil society fills the void. Also, in today's digitally saturated world in which both traditional media and civil society use the same communications tools, CSOs are often fulfilling the role of media organisations by providing the information, or entertainment, that the community listens to or reads, etc. A notable example in this is found in the examples of civil society-led media reform from the campaigns led by SOS: Support Public Broadcasting in South Africa and the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe, two leading media activist organisations in Southern Africa. Mano and Milton document the importance for active civil society involvement, notably SOS in South Africa, to enhance reform and accountability in public service broadcasting across Southern Africa (Mano and Milton, 2020).

In addition, while media development has long imbued the need to think about audiences and the public at large, the media development sector has increasingly turned to the question of media literacy -- the extent to which media development programs contribute to the ability of citizens to be critical consumers of news and information, including their overall levels of confidence and trust of the media.

Aid to civil society and democracy development programs increased at the beginning of the 1990s.[11] This paved the way for funding media development-related initiatives that were essential to the overall democratisation process. As Thomas Carothers pointed out in *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, the 1990s ushered in a new way of thinking about international development and the role of support for democratisation efforts as part of overall assistance and outreach programs

[11] Civil society is the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from 'society' in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, preferences, and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on the state, to improve the structure and functioning on the state, and to hold state officials accountable (Diamond, 1999).

(Carothers, 1999). This stemmed in part from a shift in political thinking about international relations and foreign policy that occurred after the 1989 fall of Communism. The end of the Cold War sparked a new era of foreign assistance for democratisation. Media assistance is part of a catalogue of democracy support that includes support for reforming elections and the political process, aid to assist the rule of law development, programs to strengthen democratic governance, and general civil society assistance. Such assistance can take on a variety of forms and institutional arrangements, including assistance for local NGOs.

Civil society organisations with a primary focus on media reform and democratisation contribute directly to media development, and many contribute indirectly by supporting democracy through civic engagement, the participation of citizens in democratic processes and public discourse. In this way, civil society and media development often go hand-in-hand, although there is far less written about the role of civil society in promoting independent media than on the overall state of media as noted in the Freedom House studies or the Index on Censorship analyses.

3.2.5: Democratisation and Democracy Promotion

Understanding democratisation and democracy promotion involves familiarity with the process by which a society transitions toward becoming a democracy, often involving changes in political systems, institutions, and values. Democracy, at its core, is a system of government where citizens have the power to participate in decision-making through free and fair elections and enjoy civil liberties and political freedoms. In contrast, authoritarianism is a form of government characterized by limited political freedoms, lack of competitive elections, and centralized control. One core concept in democratisation studies is that of regime change, which is the replacement of one government or political system with another, often involving a shift towards democracy. In

scholarship related to democratisation, regime change often comes up in the context of political transitions or during a transition period, i.e., a stage in the democratisation process where a country shifts from an authoritarian regime to a democratic system.

3.2.6: Transitology and its Relevance to Understanding the Media Development Paradigm

In the aftermath of 1989, social scientists writing about the momentous changes underway politically, economically, and socially sought to make sense out of the transitions underway. This gave way to the study of transitology, the process of change from one political regime to another, mainly from authoritarian regimes to democratic ones rooted in conflicting and consensual varieties of economic liberalism.[12]

Transitology is directly relevant to democratisation theories as the 'state of becoming' a democracy. The optimism associated with post-1989 political transitions for media development is rooted in the idea that transitions offer a moment to break with the past and a unique historical time to make big or sudden changes—the transition moment—and the importance of timing to seize windows of opportunity has been written about by many political scientists, law, and communications scholars (Voltmer, 2013). Practitioners, notably donors and think tanks, embraced the ideas of transition.[13] Media was to have been gradually 'developed' and 'transitioned' into democratic institutions.

Media development transitology had economic, political, and social dimensions, depending on the time and context, to help understand how to hinder or support overall reform efforts. For example, Slovenian media scholar Slavko Splichal discusses this tension in his analysis of the

[12] Philippe C. Schmitter, 'Reflections on "transitology" : before and after', pp. 71-86, in Daniel M. BRINKS, Marcelo LEIRAS and Scott MAINWARING (eds), Reflections on uneven democracies: the legacy of Guillermo O'Donnell. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

[13] See, for example, Freedom House's Nations in Transit–the Freedom House annual report, the Soros-funded magazine Transitions all reflected in the rhetoric used to describe media development and democracy promotion taking place in 'developing' and 'transitioning' countries.

pressures that deregulation and privatisation place on the media sector (Splichal, 1995). Such tension results when liberal free market reforms are launched coinciding with political reforms designed to bring about democracy. While the two are seemingly mutually re-enforcing, the demands of one can sometimes be counterproductive and act as a setback for the other. Those involved in the process of developing media must take this dual or even multi-level transition reality into account, often making the process of development seem very much like a 'one step forward, two steps back' endeavour

The democratic consolidation of the media from the perspective of media reform is a progressive, staged process. Several scholars have theorized about how this process is impacted by democratic transition and consolidation (Rozumilowicz, 2001 and Sparks, 2007). Media scholar Rozumilowicz creates a conceptual tool for understanding the phases that media undergo in transition from communism or an authoritarian environment to democracy. He suggests that media development follows a path that leads to a consolidated media sector within a newly democratic society (Rozumilowicz, 2001).

What is most interesting about Rozumilowicz's theory is how it classifies the process of media transition. 'Stages of transition' are not always easy to differentiate; their boundaries seem blurred, and each stage seems to go on simultaneously. In the everyday practice of reforming the media, it may very well be the case that one has to confront Rozumilowicz's stage one, two and three all at the same time, limiting the utility of transitology in a media development framework.

3.3: A Theoretical Framework for Media Development Research

The authoritarian, libertarian/free press, social responsibility, and communist models from *Four Theories of the Press* serve as the primary framework for my qualitative, comparative

analysis and case study. A central intention of media development donors is to move the post-communist/post-Soviet media societies towards a libertarian free speech model and, thus, needs to be analysed through a democratisation lens. That said, as media development has matured over time, the updated vision of the normative theories of the press as put forward by Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, and White (*Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies,* 2009) offers a more convincing, and current, vision of media development, retaining the emphasis on democracy but adding in equitable development and concern for local context and culture, that is necessary to research impact of media development programs.

Four Theories of the Press made an indelible imprint on modern communication studies and provides a useful classification system for understanding how the socio-political structures that surround the media affect its expected roles, freedoms, and accountabilities. This theory explains how media systems behave under different kinds of government in four different theories.[14] Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's theories have been criticized by some scholars as outdated, too Western, and too limited in their approach (Nerone, 1995). So, one aspect of my research is to look beyond these models to ascertain what other more contemporary theories can help understand the context and implications of efforts of media development.

My core argument is that when we look at the past 30 years of media development and assess the models, toolkits, indices, frameworks, etc., the influence of liberal democratic principles that are seen as moving towards democratisation continue to have explanatory power. Moreover, trends in democratic backsliding and closing civil space point to the continued relevance of the authoritarian and communist—or extreme state control—models nearly 70 years after they were

[14]See: https://www.businesstopia.net/mass-communication/normative-theories-press

conceived as a foundational theoretical framework upon which much of media development builds on. We can see this continuing relevance in Irion and Jusić's regional study of media development programs in the Balkans through in-depth case studies and contextual analyses of key trends, concerns, and potential areas of impact (Irion and Jusić, 2014). And as Davor Marko observed in his regional research project aimed at understanding media development's impact in the Balkans, the challenges of media in the transition from a former Communist state continue to be significant. Marko's research showed that media assistance programs played a significant role in the development of media systems in Serbia during last 20 years. While in 1990s media assistance efforts focused on ensuring the survival of independent media outlets under the authoritarian rule of the Milošević regime, the scope of the assistance expanded after the regime collapsed in 2000, to address a range of issues, such as legal reforms, the establishment of regulatory bodies, the transformation of the state TV into a public service broadcaster, professionalization of journalism, and management of media outlets. However, in many ways the reforms still depend on continuous external support (Marko, 2014).

Marko's analysis holds up in all the countries I considered for my research. In Central and Eastern Europe, as in Africa, countries received media development support, technical assistance, training, equipment, and all forms of consultations designed to overhaul previous bloated, outdated, and 'Soviet era' media into modern, professional, independent, and sustainable media organisations. Despite more than two to three decades of assistance, however, the countries that I looked at are still at the crossroads, threatened by oligarchs with a lack of political will to support free and independent media, weak—but growing—advertising markets, and public impatience with the democratisation process. In these countries, concerns about the spread of illiberal democracy, as exhibited by the recent developments in Hungary and Poland, loom large. The threat

includes some very real concerns about what any further erosion of democratic reforms could mean for the future of independent media development.

This framework enables an interpretivist understanding of the legacy of donor-supported media development in developing and transitioning societies in which American, European, and British donors have attempted to facilitate democratisation by supporting the development of free and independent media. It is influenced by grounded theory to explore and draw connections on how the ideas, theories and legacies of the key thinkers and architects of media development play out in practice. As donor-supported media development takes place against the backdrop of efforts to promote democracy, my research is also informed by the scholarship and thinking about liberal democracy and how and why this matters for media development.

Media is the connective tissue of democracy; without freedom of expression and access to information, economic, social, and political development is hard to achieve. As Mughan and Gunther noted, democracy and media are the principle means through which citizens and their elected representatives communicate in their reciprocal efforts to inform and influence (Mughan and Gunther, 2012).

This research probes how donors have impacted the development of media space and whether there are valuable models of donor support that are replicable, scalable, or transferable between media development programs. In terms of looking at and assessing donor support, part of my research will also consider program evaluation. In this regard, my research will contribute to developing a theory of change that can help scholars and practitioners to better understand the correlation between media, development, and democratisation. In doing so, the research will offer a historical analysis and critical review of how, when, and why media assistance was offered and toward what ends the assistance mattered.

My research looks at the debates and observations of media development scholars and will apply them to specific contexts and environments where media assistance has been carried out to understand how donors have impacted the development of a free and independent media sector.

I argue that practitioner reliance on 20th century, modernist inspired, thinking about the relationship between media and democracy remains at this 'ideal type level' and thus theories of change and shortcomings of media development projects stem from being stuck in a Cold War mindset that infuses both academic and practitioner thinking about media, development, and democratisation. I base this on an implicit assumption in the media development theory of change that a free and independent media is necessary to bring about and support democratic societies. Thus, if donors help to support a well-functioning media system, it will contribute to a well-informed citizenry, support accountability of the government and the protection of individual freedoms and human rights, which are all essential to a democratic system. The premise of media development and democratisation is based on several variables that I developed, drawing on my own experiences and understanding of the sector, including:

1) **Information access** – Increased media availability provides citizens with diverse information, fostering a more informed electorate and contributing to democratic governance.
2) **A pluralistic and rights-respecting public sphere** – Media platforms serve as a public space for discussion and debate allowing citizens to engage in civic discourse, share opinions, and hold those in power accountable.
3) **Political socialization**– Media plays a crucial role in shaping political attitudes and values, contributing to the development of an engaged and politically aware citizenry essential for a functioning democratic society.

4) **Catalyst for social movements**– Media can mobilize people by disseminating information about social issues, helping to organize movements, and creating a platform for marginalized voices, thereby contributing to democratisation.
5) **Transparency and accountability**– An independent and free media can expose corruption and malfeasance, fostering transparency and holding leaders accountable, which is vital for democratic governance.
6) **Education and literacy**– Media, especially in the form of news and educational programs, can enhance literacy and political awareness, contributing to a more participatory and empowered citizenry.

My secondary argument is that the involvement of external donors in media development can significantly impact the media landscape of a country in a way that helps to support democratic values, norms, and a legal enabling environment that leads to a free and independent media. This donor influence premise encompasses several key ideas, namely that donors seek to support:

1) **Media sustainability** – Donor funding can play a crucial role in sustaining media outlets, especially in regions where independent journalism may struggle financially. However, dependence on external funding may also raise concerns about editorial independence.
2) **Agenda setting** – Donors may influence media content by shaping the priorities and narratives covered in news and programming. This influence could align with the donors' values, potentially shaping public opinion and discourse.
3) **Media pluralism** – Donor support might contribute to the diversification of media outlets, fostering a more pluralistic media environment. However, if a few major donors dominate, it could lead to a concentration of influence.

4) **Professionalisation and training** – Donors often invest in media training programs, promoting journalistic standards and professionalism. This can enhance the quality of reporting but may also introduce certain biases or perspectives associated with the donors.
5) **Technology and infrastructure** – Donors may support the development of media infrastructure and technology, improving access to information. However, the choice of technology and its implications for media freedom and privacy are critical considerations.
6) **Policy influence** – Donors may advocate for specific media policies that align with their values, potentially influencing the regulatory framework and legal environment for media in that country.

It is noteworthy that while donor involvement can bring positive contributions, it can also cause 'blowback' from accusations about their undue influence, potential bias, and the lack of long-term sustainability for the media they support. Balancing external support with explicit principles of editorial independence and local media ownership is, thus, crucial to minimise this blowback.

These two strands of study help unpack how media development is linked to democratisation. It is my contention that these are embodiments of liberal, democratic views about how the media and the press ought to function. They are ways to operationalise the libertarian and social responsibility theories and form the crux of many media development programs. It's the second category of study – the donor influence premise – that I am concentrating on specifically, looking to see whether donors did significantly contribute to democratic changes, to media systems, and what their impact has been. I am particularly interested in the policy influence of donors' and whether their funding has led to more democratic media enabling environments.

3.3.1: How Do These Theories Relate to the Literature on Media Development Scholarship?

As media development has matured over time, some scholars have questioned whether the classic models of normative theories of the press approach need a 'new beginning' (Benson, 2011). Many scholars have attempted to update, revise, and improve upon *Four Theories of the Press*, but for the most part the 1956 delineation between democratic and non-democratic theories has stood the test of time. Notably, Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, and White offered an updated vision for normative theories of the press entitled *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies (2009)* that could be used to inform approaches to evaluation and measure the impact of media development programs. Using Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's classic work (*Four Theories of the Press*) as a basis for their exploration of the philosophy and ideas behind normative theories of the press, the authors consider what the role of journalism ought to be in a democratic society. The book considers different philosophical underpinnings and political realities of journalism and outlines four distinct yet overlapping roles for the media: 'monitorial', 'facilitative', 'radical', and 'collaborative'. Christians, et al, and White make the case for how these different paradigms can affect the laws, policies, and public attitudes of a liberal society as a basis for their exploration of the philosophy and ideas behind normative theories of the press, the authors consider what the role of journalism ought to be in a democratic society.

But as Benson summarizes Christians et al:

> Normative Theories offers four 'normative traditions of public communication corporatist, libertarian, social responsibility, and citizen participation), four models of democracy (administrative, pluralist, civic, and direct), and four roles of media (monitorial, facilitative, radical, and collaborative). In principle, these typologies usefully distinguish three levels of consideration prematurely compressed in Four Theories (Bensen, 2009, pg. 19).

So, while there is fresh thinking, efforts to influence and update thinking about normative theories of the press has not moved far from the debates of the 1950s and 1960s even though it has

been an ongoing effort throughout much of the 20th and into the 21st century. As summarized by Bensen wherein he notes:

> Such broad theories are, to a certain extent, artificial constructs, because no one, from politicians to ordinary citizens, is entirely consistent in adhering to only one of them. Journalistic practice likewise does not always accord with normative theories of journalism, but these theories remain an important component of professional training (education). Institutions and the state draw upon theories of journalism, implicitly or explicitly, when shaping media policies that carry real incentives or penalties for deviant behaviour. (Bensen, 2008)

3.3.2: Methodological Implications

My research is guided by grounded theory and utilizes a qualitative research design, through which I will use an interpretive process to understand the context, significance, and impact of donor-funded media development in developing and transitioning countries. My theoretical framework seeks to get at the complexity in the variables underlying the connection between media development and media democratisation through case study research that can get at the perspectives of the direct stakeholders in media development. My research is also informed by the notion that there is no single path towards democratisation. Through that I seek to highlight those on the periphery that are most likely to be following paths that have been obscured by the history of media development that follows western thinking. I am following comparative experiences in Eastern Europe and Southern Africa.

My research will consider the questions of how and why media assistance is rooted in modernisation theory, its legacy, and practical applications and relevance. In doing so, this research will consider the question of whether media development has one specific theoretical framework or if it is rather an amalgamation of many different theories and ideas. I will question if the need for an expanded theoretical framework inhibits media development from achieving its goals and objectives. My research questions and qualitative design are well-suited to examine the

theoretical and conceptual aspects of normative theories of the press and to assess their legacy and impact upon media development. By looking at 30 years of media development history from a post-Cold War context I can critically examine the ways in which liberal, democratic ideas about normative theories of the press are embedded in practitioner understandings and interventions related to media assistance.

3.4: Conclusion and Justification of Framework Choices

This third chapter covered the theory that guides the research design and explores the relationship between the media development theory and the realities experienced by media development actors. In this chapter, I built an understanding of the existing work in the field of media development and democratisation which will position my findings in the larger body of theory.

The impetus for supporting free and independent media is largely rooted in the belief that media support democratic reforms by serving as a foundation or building block necessary for democratic governance by improving civil society, educating the masses, and serving as a filter through which the institutions of the state and society can be vetted and scrutinized in an effort to stamp out corruption and check against the abuses of power. The emphasis on ‘free’ and ‘independent’ stems from Western democratic ideals and models of journalism and media that historically were considered essential to the development of democratic, liberal states – the key feature being that media are free and independent from the state. The importance of ‘free and independent’ is one of the most central ideas in media development (as practiced/supported by Western donors and NGOs), though outside of major press freedom indices like the Freedom House studies, there is often not enough focus on how, exactly, in a media development context freedom and independence from the state are best achieved. This is where civil society support becomes very

important. Donors and NGOs put a lot of emphasis on self-regulation as a means of supporting free and independent media, but this aspect of media development is also very understudied.

The theoretical framework offered by the normative theories of the press scholars are a relevant and important foundation to assess the contribution of donor strategies related to funding media development.

This third chapter covered the theory that guides the research design and explores the relationship between the media development theory and the realities experienced by media development actors. In this chapter, I built an understanding of the existing work in the field of media development and democratisation which will position my findings in the larger body of theory.

Chapter 4: Methodology - Fieldwork Report

4.1: Introduction

This study seeks to examine the role donors in fostering sustainable, resilient, and democratic media systems. Specifically, my research aims were to identify how donor strategies and motivations shape media development outcomes, examining both short- and long-term impacts on the media ecosystems of developing countries. As part of this inquiry, I investigated the motivations behind donor funding, the strategies they employ, and their long-term vision for media development.

In order to offer a comprehensive perspective on donor influence, my research uses comparative analysis across different contexts, drawing on media development initiatives in Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe – all selected because of ongoing processes media reform linked to democratisation. These three case studies represent diverse geographical regions, political histories, and media environments, which offer valuable insights into the impact of donor funding on media development.

By drawing on historical records, project data, donor evaluations, and key informant interviews (KIIs), I have built a robust framework for understanding how donor strategies translate into media outcomes. Additionally, my research incorporates observational research and document reviews to contextualize the findings. This qualitative multi-method approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between donor interests and the media environments they seek to influence. As is pointed by Hutter and Bailely, (2011) qualitative research allows me as, the researcher, room to identify issues from my perspective. In other words, as a qualitative researcher, I deployed techniques “which are not statistically based, but are especially suited to small-scale analysis” (Finch, 1986: 5). Based on formative research and initial key informant

interviews, I developed a clearer understanding of how to approach the study of media assistance and its impact. As a result, I formulated a set of criteria for developing a case study to explore the theories and ideas emerging from both the literature and the interviews conducted. These criteria helped me to identify case studies that would best illustrate the complexities and nuances of donor influence on media development.

One core challenge of studying media development lies in demonstrating causal relationships between specific donor interventions and broader development goals. For example, it is difficult to isolate the impact of a single media development project on democratic outcomes in a given country. Media systems are influenced by a wide array of factors, including political, economic, and cultural dynamics, all of which interact with donor interventions in complex ways. As such, my research focuses on understanding how donor strategies matter to media development, rather than attempting to draw direct causal links between individual projects and outcomes.

As stated above, the qualitative approach used in this study is rooted in an interpretivist framework. This perspective allows for a more holistic understanding of the impact of donor-funded independent media development. The interpretivist approach emphasizes the subjective experiences of participants and the meanings they attach to their interactions with donor agencies. By focusing on these subjective interpretations, my research provides a rich, context-specific analysis of how donor strategies are experienced and understood by media professionals, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to comparative media development research, with a particular focus on Eastern Europe and Southern Africa. The case study of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) serves as the central focus of my analysis, providing a

detailed exploration of how donor strategies have influenced media development in Southern Africa over the past three decades.

This research is unique in its focus on a relatively underexplored area: the relationship between donor motivations and strategies and media development theories. By examining how donor strategies align with different normative theories of the press, my research provides a fresh perspective on the role of donors in media development. Specifically, I explore how Western donors have historically supported a combination of the liberal model of democratic media and the social responsibility theory of the press, as outlined in *Four Theories of the Press* (Schramm, Siebert, Peterson, 1956).

Reflecting on 30 years of international media development efforts, my research challenges the continued relevance of these theoretical frameworks. Inspired by Barbie Zelizer's critique in her article *"On the Shelf Life of Democracy in Journalism Scholarship"* (Zelizer, 2012), my study examines whether the traditional association between journalism and democracy remains a potent guiding framework for media development in today's complex and evolving media landscape. Zelizer argues that the persistent link between journalism and democracy has been overemphasized to the point where it has lost its relevance in contemporary media studies. My research probes this argument by questioning whether donor strategies, which are often based on these theoretical models, are still effective in achieving their intended outcomes in the current global media environment.

4.2: Research Questions, Design, and Scope

To answer my research questions, I employed a combination of desk-based research, key informant interviews (KIIs), and grounded theory methodology. My research design was carefully structured to ensure that I could explore the key issues surrounding donor influence on media development, while also allowing for flexibility and adaptation as new insights emerged from the data.

4.2.1: Research Questions

The research questions guiding my study include:

1. Research Question 1: What is the purpose of media development?
2. Research Question 2: What role have donors played in the development of media systems?
3. Research Question 3: How do donor funding models influence the development of media systems?
4. Research Question 4: How does media development contribute to democratisation? and
5. Research Question 5: What are the primary lessons learned from 30 years of media development?

4.2.2: Research Design

To address these questions, I used a mixed-methods case study approach that combined qualitative data from KIIs with a thorough review of relevant literature and project documentation. The desk-based research involved a comprehensive review of both academic and grey literature, including donor policies, media development documents, academic studies, and relevant commentary. This provided a solid foundation for understanding historical and contemporary trends in media development, as well as the broader theoretical frameworks that underpin these efforts.

I examined academic literature spanning from the 1950s to the present, focusing particularly on donor literature and publications from the post-1989 period onward. This time frame was chosen because it represents a key moment in the history of media development, with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the end of apartheid in Southern Africa leading to significant donor interest in supporting

media transitions in these regions. Additionally, I reviewed project records, reports, and documents, with a particular focus on media development activities involving MISA and its regional partners.

After completing the literature review, I conducted field research between 2020 and 2023. This fieldwork included both in-person and digital data collection, with interviews conducted through platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp, as well as site visits to media organizations in Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. The fieldwork was designed to capture a wide range of perspectives from media professionals, civil society actors, donors, and other stakeholders involved in media development.

The research design followed the qualitative principles outlined by Creswell (2007). I developed semi-structured interview guides to ensure consistency in data collection, while also allowing for flexibility in exploring emerging themes. Hennik et al (2011: 105) are right in pointing out that interview evidence enable the researcher to "understand behaviour, beliefs, opinions and emotions from the perspective of the participants; understand and explain people's behaviour and views; understand policies such as how people make decisions" as well as the lived experiences.

The interviews were complemented by some aspects of observational research, in which as much as possible, I documented the physical and social dynamics of media organizations, donor offices, and civil society groups. This provided valuable contextual information that helped to enrich the findings from the KIIs. For example, the fear of my respondents to talk with me in open spaces in Zimbabwe was evidence of lack of freedom of expression. They felt safer when they were sure that no one was watching.

The data collection and analysis process was iterative, meaning that I continuously refined my research approach as new insights emerged. For example, as themes began to develop from the initial interviews, I adapted my interview guides to probe more deeply into specific issues, such as the relationship between donor funding and media sustainability. Throughout the research process, I shared emerging findings with key stakeholders to gather feedback and validate the results.

Inspired by grounded theory, my approach allowed me to understand participant perspectives in a comparative context. This methodological framework was particularly useful in identifying patterns, common themes, and outlier experiences across the different case studies. To some extent I used some aspects of grounded theory, generating insights from emerging evidence, developing theory inductively from the data, rather than relying on preconceived theoretical models. This approach was well-suited to my research, as there is little pre-existing theory related to donor-funded media development in transitioning countries.

4.2.3: Scope

The scope of this dissertation defines the boundaries and focus of my research on how donors impact the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries. The importance of media in democracy is underscored by many scholars. Schudson (2008) reminds us that media provides important resource for democratization. In Africa, Esipisulu and Khaguli, (2009: iv) posit that: "A free, lively and responsible media is a pre-requisite for a functioning democracy, as much as at election times as in between. Good elections and good media are not things apart: they are intertwined". This qualitative study is framed by an interpretivist approach, examining the legacy of donor-supported media development, where American, European, and British donors—both governmental and private foundations—have attempted to foster and sustain democracy by supporting journalists, media outlets, and institutions advocating for free and independent media. The geographic focus is on Central and Eastern Europe and Africa, with a particular emphasis on Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. I draw heavily on grounded theory to explore how the ideas and legacies of key thinkers in media development, such as those posited by Siebert, et al. (1956) *Four Theories* apply in these specific contexts. My study spans from 1989 to the present, examining donor strategies over time, especially in relation to democratic backsliding, media capture, and the influence of decolonization. Using auto-

ethnographic insights from fieldwork conducted in Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe, the research is based on 30 original interviews conducted specifically for this dissertation, involving donors, media outlets, intermediary partners, academics, and civil society organizations. While initially intending to conduct comparative case studies at a country level, I narrowed my focus to a single case study on the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) due to its clear ties to donor funding over a significant period, offering a manageable and insightful lens through which to analyze the long-term effects of donor influence on media development. This focus allows for a detailed, retrospective examination of donor strategies, particularly from Western donors such as USAID, FCDO, SIDA, and the European Union, as well as private foundations like the Open Society Foundations and the Ford Foundation, with an emphasis on how donor support for independent media has contributed to broader democracy promotion efforts.

4.3: Methods Used

4.3.1: Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, a systematic qualitative methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is central to my research approach. This methodology involves collecting and analyzing data in an iterative process, allowing theory to emerge directly from the data. Grounded theory is particularly well-suited to exploratory research in areas where there is little established theory, as is the case with donor influence on media development.

As Creswell (2012) notes, grounded theory is most effective when existing theories are either unavailable or incomplete. In the case of media development, many existing theories do not adequately account for the complexities of donor influence, particularly in the context of developing and transitioning countries. By using grounded theory, I aimed to develop new insights grounded in the lived experiences of media stakeholders, donors, and civil society actors.

In my research, grounded theory was applied to assess how local media organizations interpret donor funding, how they adapt to external financial support, and what constraints or opportunities arise from these relationships. The focus was on the perspectives of key media stakeholders, including journalists, editors, civil society representatives, and donor agencies, as well as the broader impact on media systems in fragile environments.

The iterative nature of grounded theory proved invaluable in shaping my research. For example, early interviews revealed that media organizations in different countries experienced donor influence in distinct ways, depending on factors such as the political environment, the level of donor coordination, and the sustainability of funding. These insights prompted me to refine my interview questions and probe more deeply into specific aspects of donor-media relationships.

As part of the grounded theory approach, I systematically coded interview data to identify recurring themes and patterns. These codes were then grouped into categories, which formed the basis for developing a theoretical framework. This process allowed me to generate new theories about the interaction between donor priorities and independent journalism in transitioning countries, rather than relying on existing models.

4.3.2: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key informant interviews were a primary source of data for this study. KIIs are in-depth, qualitative interviews conducted with individuals who have specialized knowledge about a particular topic. In this case, I interviewed media professionals, CSO representatives, donors, and other stakeholders with direct experience in media development. For this research, I primarily relied on phone and web-based interviews (using Zoom and Google Meets) as well as WhatsApp. These interviews built upon formative research, and in-person interviews I carried out while in

country. For the purpose of the data analysis of this dissertation, I only used the phone and web-based interviews.

The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed for flexibility in exploring a wide range of topics, while still ensuring that key issues were addressed. I conducted 30 original KIIs for this study, both in-person and remotely. The respondents were selected based on their expertise and experience in media development, with a particular focus on those who had firsthand knowledge of donor-funded media projects in the selected case study countries.

I used a purposive sampling approach to select interviewees, ensuring that I captured a diverse range of perspectives. This sampling strategy allowed me to focus on individuals who could provide rich, detailed information about donor influence on media development. Interviews typically lasted around one hour, although some extended beyond this timeframe, depending on the depth of discussion.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, I recorded the interviews using Otter.ai, a transcription service that provided both written and audio records. In cases where respondents preferred not to be recorded, I took detailed notes during the interviews. All interviews were conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines, with participants giving informed consent before the interviews began.

4.3.3: Document Review

In addition to KIIs, I conducted a thorough document review to supplement the interview data. This involved reviewing donor guidelines, media development reports, strategic frameworks, and other relevant documents. The document review provided valuable contextual information about

the historical and contemporary trends in media development, as well as specific insights into donor strategies and motivations.

The document review also focused on materials related to the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), including reports shared by current and former MISA staff. These documents offered a detailed account of MISA's development over the past three decades, as well as the broader context of donor-funded media assistance in Southern Africa.

The review of these documents helped to triangulate the findings from the KIIs, ensuring that the data was corroborated by multiple sources. It also provided a deeper understanding of the broader trends and strategies that have shaped media development in the regions under study.

4.3.4: Observational Research

I also incorporated observational research into my methodology. This involved direct observation of media organizations, civil society groups, and donor offices during my site visits to Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. The observations focused on the physical and social dynamics of these organizations, including their office environments, technology infrastructure, and interactions with other stakeholders.

Observational research provided valuable insights into the day-to-day realities of media development work in these countries. For example, I observed the working conditions of local media outlets, noting the challenges they faced in terms of resources, staff capacity, and external pressures. These observations helped to contextualize the interview data, offering a more complete picture of how donor-funded media development initiatives are implemented on the ground.

4.3.5: My Own Experience

As my research considers views of donors, media development program beneficiaries, media development program implementers (NGOs), academics and technical experts, I relied a lot on my own experience, contacts, and networks related to the subject matter of independent media development and democratization. I have drawn on my own experience working in the international media development sector for the past 24 years. During this time, I've worked at two major media development implementing NGOs—Internews and IREX—as researcher, as program manager for media development programs at two major universities, as an advisor with one of the biggest donor organizations, and as an independent consultant offering services in the areas of research, program evaluation and media landscape assessments. During this time, I led dozens of evaluations and carried out a variety of research and assessments related to donor funded investments related to media development, including in Sierra Leone (in 2020) and in Zimbabwe (2019 and 2020). For my research I also drew on books that I co-edited*: International Media Development: Historical Perspectives and New Frontiers* (Nicholas Benequista, Susan Abbott, Winston Mano and Paul Rothman (eds.), Peter Lang, 2019), and *Evaluating the Evaluators: Measures of Press Freedom and Media Contributions to Development (Monroe Price and Susan Abbott* (eds.), Peter Lang, 2011). These experiences gave me a unique perspective and insight to draw on as well as a very informed understanding of strengths and weaknesses of international media development.

While my professional background in media development informed my research, the interviews and analysis conducted for this dissertation were independent of my consulting work. I have over 24 years of experience in the media development sector, having worked with organizations such as Internews, IREX, and major donor agencies. This experience provided valuable insights into

the broader context of media development, but the research and interviews conducted for this dissertation were autonomous.

I relied on my networks and professional relationships to identify key informants for the KIIs, but I ensured that the research process remained independent. The interviews and data collection were conducted specifically for this dissertation, and the findings were analyzed in a manner that was separate from my professional work. This allowed me to maintain the objectivity and academic integrity of the research.

4.4: Case Study

The central case study in this research focuses on the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). This case study is based on 15 original interviews with individuals involved in MISA's development, as well as a comprehensive review of relevant documents and reports. The aim of the case study is to explore how donor strategies have influenced MISA's trajectory over the past 30 years, and what lessons can be drawn for media development more broadly. The 15 interviews done for the case study were based on a purpose sample following initial interviews done with Zimbabwean media development professionals as well as donors working to support media development in Zimbabwe.

The case study examines the history of donor support for MISA, with a particular focus on the strategies and motivations of key donors. While it was difficult to obtain precise funding data for the entire 30-year period, the interviews and document review provided valuable insights into how donors have shaped MISA's development. The case study also considers the broader implications of these findings for media development in Southern Africa.

4.4.1: Case Study Focus

This case study examines the history of donor aid to MISA and its impact on the organization's development as a civil society leader. The focus is on donor strategies and limitations rather than a detailed analysis of funding levels. While obtaining precise funding figures over MISA's 30-year history proved difficult, former and current MISA executives explained that gathering these data would require extensive work. Instead, this case study probes the broader strategic objectives of donors and their impact on MISA's trajectory.

To understand donor strategies, I asked respondents about their perceptions of media development and donor contributions in the post-1989 era. Using grounded theory and an iterative interview process, I gained a nuanced understanding of how donor funding has shaped MISA's development and media democratization efforts in Southern Africa.

In addition to the specific focus on MISA, my research draws on comparative experiences from Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. By examining different media transitions, I explore how varying donor approaches have influenced media development in these countries. This comparative analysis highlights the politics of media assistance and its impact on broader media development outcomes. Additionally, I consider American and European donor strategies in transitioning former state-run media systems and supporting private, commercial media, offering insights into their distinct approaches.

4.4.2: Merits and Demerits of the Case Study Approach

The purpose of case study research is to investigate a "contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2002, p. 13). Case studies offer a thorough description of the context, processes,

and key issues, followed by a discussion of important elements and "lessons to be learned" (Creswell, 1998, p. 221). They also analyze decisions, strategies, and their outcomes through a process of triangulation, using multiple data points to develop converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2002).

Case studies provide an in-depth understanding of media development from the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. By offering rich, context-specific insights, they help convey how participants experience media development. In my research, the case study approach provided a holistic perspective by examining media development across different country contexts and stakeholder groups.

However, case studies have limitations, including issues with generalizability and subjectivity. They can be resource-intensive and lack the control found in other research methods. Despite these drawbacks, the case study approach enabled me to explore various facets of the MISA case, along with comparative cases from Hungary and Sierra Leone, and to consider how donor strategies influenced media development over time.

4.4.3: Case Study Selection

My case study selection was based on the following criteria:

- The organization must have received donor funding for at least 10–20 years.
- The organization must have received funding from a variety of donors, including both American and European government agencies and private foundations.
- The organization must have a mission focused on democracy promotion.

Based on these criteria, I considered the environments I had recently worked in and had sufficient knowledge of to assess donor-funded media development's impact. After reflection, I selected Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe.

Hungary was an early recipient of media development assistance following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Donors such as USAID and the Open Society Foundations supported media reforms as part of broader democratization efforts in the 1990s. I had interviewed journalists, academics, and policymakers in Hungary for years, and I was familiar with how donor funding had been used to support media and journalism during this period. This history made Hungary's media landscape, particularly the Center for Independent Journalism, an ideal case for studying long-term donor influence.

Similarly, Sierra Leone's Independent Radio Network (IRN) stood out as a case study because of its continuous donor funding for nearly 30 years, starting in the post-civil war period (1991-2002). IRN's role in media development and its partnerships with various donors provided a valuable example of how media assistance evolves over time.

Finally, MISA in Zimbabwe was selected as a critical case study because of its 30-year history of donor support. Through formative research, I realized that MISA's history personified the media development story in Southern Africa, making it an ideal case for understanding donor influence on media systems.

4.4.4: Case Study Methodology

To develop the case studies, I relied heavily on document reviews, key informant interviews, and direct observation. These methods allowed me to explore the conditions and factors surrounding media development and assess whether the interventions in each country were successful. The case

studies also highlighted key lessons learned, particularly in terms of project design and implementation.

4.4.5: Case Study Data Collection

As part of the grounded theory approach, I initially considered several potential case studies across Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. Through reviewing my interview notes and discussions with my advisor and key informants, I realized that my research should focus on organizations that had been significant recipients of donor funding. While I initially planned to conduct country-level case studies, this approach became too broad and unwieldy.

After further interviews with MISA staff and reflecting on my own consulting experience, I concluded that MISA would be an ideal case study. Its development was closely tied to donor strategies, and the wealth of institutional history made it a compelling subject. Although I had intended to write three case studies, MISA's story became the primary focus, and I conducted multiple interviews to gather the necessary material. I also reviewed extensive historical documents to contextualize MISA's evolution.

While I drew on interviews from Hungary and Sierra Leone, the MISA case study provided the foundation for my findings, analysis, and conclusions. These interviews helped shape my broader thinking on media development and donor influence, informing not only the case study but also the larger themes addressed in my dissertation.

4.5: Sampling

For this research, I employed a purposive sampling approach, which involves selecting participants based on their knowledge and experience in the area of media development. This approach allowed me to target individuals who were most likely to provide valuable insights into donor strategies and their impact on media systems.

The sampling criteria included:

1. Civil society groups or media outlets with a long-standing involvement in media development in the selected countries.
2. Organizations or individuals that had received donor funding for at least 10–20 years.
3. Media organizations that had been involved in democratic media initiatives, aligning with the mission of supporting free and independent media.

In addition to purposive sampling, I used snowball sampling to identify additional respondents. This involved asking key informants to recommend other individuals who could provide relevant insights. This approach was particularly useful in identifying external stakeholders, such as journalists and academics, who were not initially part of the sampling frame.

4.6: Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed a systematic, sequential design, which involved analyzing the data as it was collected. I employed an inductive approach to data analysis, which allowed themes and patterns to emerge naturally from the data. The analysis process was iterative, meaning that I continuously revisited the data as new themes developed, refining my research questions and approach based on the emerging findings.

4.7: Ethics

Ethical considerations were central to my research design. All participants gave informed, verbal consent to participate in the study, and interviews were conducted in accordance with the University of Westminster's ethical guidelines. I ensured that data was anonymized and kept confidential, with no known risks to participants. I took particular care to avoid any potential conflicts of interest related to my professional background, maintaining a clear distinction between my consulting work and my dissertation research.

4.8: Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework for my research on donor influence in media development. By employing a combination of desk research, key informant interviews, grounded theory, and case study analysis, I have been able to explore the complexities of donor strategies and their impact on media systems in developing and transitioning countries. The use of grounded theory has allowed me to develop new insights into the role of donors, while the case study of MISA provides a detailed account of media development in Southern Africa. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how donor-funded initiatives shape media resilience and sustainability, offering valuable lessons for future media development efforts.

Chapter 5: Key Findings: How Donors Have Impacted Media Development

5.1: Introduction

As this findings chapter demonstrates, donor support can be effective, but sustained support is required to address the backsliding on government commitments to democratic freedoms. Donors have played an essential role in fostering and sustaining the ideals, normative values, and human talent needed for free, open media to thrive and survive. As a nearly 20-year period of global democratic recession reveals,[15] however, the authoritarian tendency of many societies makes the push for the goals of free and independent media genuinely hard to achieve.

According to CIMA research in 2018, donors directed an average of $454 million per year of their official development assistance (ODA) to the media sector (Myers and Juma, 2018). In 2024, it found this support represents just 0.3 percent of the total ODA on average (Myers and Gilberds, 2024). Out of the more than $200 billion in development aid spent each year, only about $317 million, on average, is committed to supporting media freedom, pluralism, and independence. While this sector is crucial in protecting democracy and development gains, it remains underfunded (Myers and Gilberds, 2024).

What is key to this discussion about how donors prioritize (or not) media development funding is the role of strategy and an understanding of how and why media matters to development – and by extension, democracy assistance. The importance of strategy was backed up by a report from the Global Forum for Media Development that found in a study of its members, 58 percent ranked

[15] Democratic recession is a term used in reference to what researchers refer to as the nearly 20-year trajectory of democratic decline, as measured by indices such as the Varieties of Democracy Index, Freedom House, and Economic Intelligence Unit.

the lack of donor strategies as the leading concern in terms of how they viewed the greatest challenges facing the media development sector (GFMD, 2019). The how and why this money is allocated to support media development is of great interest to academic researchers seeking to understand the political economy of media development or media assistance. The CIMA investigations of what types of approaches donors favour merit further exploration.

These findings are based on interviews with 30 experts representing views of donors, civil society organisations, media development organisations, academia, and program evaluation specialists, together with a case study (found in chapter 6), desk research and autoethnography. This research draws on my 25 years of experience working in the media development sector—as a program officer at a media development NGO, as a researcher and evaluation specialist, and as a contractor at one of the largest donor agencies supporting media development. In addition, it draws on fieldwork carried out in person and virtually as part of my professional work in the three countries studied. In these assignments, I partnered with donors, civil society, media outlets, and local academics to think through priorities for media development as part of donor assistance, as well as concerns about how to support free and independent media in a time of closing civic space.

Findings explore donor impact on media development through the following five research questions:

1) Research Question 1: What is the purpose of media development?
2) Research Question 2: What role have donors played in the development of media systems?
3) Research Question 3: How do donor funding models influence the development of media systems?
4) Research Question 4: How does media development contribute to democratisation? and
5) Research Question 5: What are the primary lessons learned from 30 years of media development?

These questions seek to probe the overarching question of how donors have contributed to media development in a post-Cold War context.

5.2: RQ 1: What is the purpose of media development?

All respondents linked donor-funded media development to core political goals. Most said that donor assistance is tied to promoting democracy and human rights advocacy and is necessary to promote press freedom to correct for forms of market failure and the inability of commercial, capitalist media markets to support the public interest and democratic media. In addition, respondents cited the growing problem of media capture (monopoly control over media markets). Ultimately many stressed the need to 'hold the line' and find a way to maintain some semblance of independent, free media in the wake of more than 17 years of democratic recession and a world that is characterized more by waves of autocratisation (also known as democratic backsliding) than progress in building and strengthening democracies.

Nearly all respondents noted that vital historical events—notably, the fall of the Soviet system and the breakdown of the apartheid system in South Africa—led to an opening in the political climate for Western donors to seize upon and pursue the goal of democratisation of media systems as part of their more significant interests in spreading and supporting liberal democracy. Most respondents noted that these donors have sought to promote democracy by encouraging the spread of liberal models of media and journalism practices:

> The discourse is very much democracy and human rights. I mean, all across the board …. It is still democratisation. The idea, you know, that media is increasingly crucial to the fight against autocracy and the shoring up of democracy. Liberal democracy, ideally, but democracy (KII, female, media development expert, United Kingdom).

For some respondents, the provision of funds and the ideological pressure or push for democracy was viewed as a positive contribution. These funds supported shared, strategic messaging and calling out abridgments of freedom of speech that punish good journalism. Media-allied civil society groups like Freedom House or Reporters Without Borders also played an important role in getting governments to pay attention and take press freedom and media development seriously. Democracy, press freedom, and media sustainability indices all document a worrisome drop in overall global levels of democratic, liberal media that signals the need to step up diplomatic pressure from the largely Western contingent of democracies and the need to acknowledge the centrality of democratic values in media development's core strategy. Due to the current crisis of democratic backsliding, others stressed the need for donors to play a diplomatic role in reinforcing government commitments to press freedoms and promoting public interest in media.

> What donors have done is not only providing the resources that we need, at least the financial resources, but they have also provided an ideological perspective— not that we are implementing media programs that are informed by say, Washington or London— there has been a convergence in terms of, say, acceptable international principles on media, on the role of media. So, if I am talking about media democratisation, to see that it's a language that they do understand. It's a shared understanding of international principles on the role of media. It's also, for a lack of a better word, 'index dropping' support when the situation was untenable (KII, male, media development NGO, Zimbabwe).

The response could also be due to a bias in the interview sample. I interviewed journalists, civil society leaders, and others who are beneficiaries of media development and who willingly took part in the assistance. They are all people working to support a human rights-centered form of media development and are committed to the democratisation premise upon which media development is based. Had I interviewed more 'open critics' of the West and of donor interventions

and support, the responses could have been different. Despite this bias, the finding clearly shows that media development is a critical element in democratisation approaches.

Several respondents, including some donors, felt that donors do not always have a clear strategy in mind on how to achieve or define their higher-level democracy aspirations. They felt that the ideas of 'democracy' and 'democratisation' are increasing without real meaning and that this is problematic for donor-supported media development. One respondent noted:

> How do you define it? You have to give a definition to democracy. I mean, the Hungarian dictator, Orban, really thinks that this is a sort of democracy. There is no consensus on the definition of democracy now, right now is there? There are contested definitions. And we don't have agreement on values, it seems. There's just a kind of clash of what kind of like life we want to have and what matters to people (KII, male, NGO, Hungary).

Media development as a means of supporting democracy or democratisation is not the only reason donors support media assistance. Another reason highlighted in this research is that media development serves as a way of correcting forms of market failure and offers alternatives to state-run, hyper-commercial, or oligarchic media. 'Even' in the West, where free and independent media have long been considered an essential and established part of the overall democratic landscape, media organisations are increasingly under political or financial threat like their counterparts in the Global South. Respondents felt that capitalism and the free market cannot sustain professional, quality journalism and provide the means through which sustainable, public interest media can operate. Donor support, whether through international aid agencies, private foundation philanthropies, media development loan fund mechanisms, or specialised media funds—like the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM)—need to help fill the gap in market income. In the countries I looked at for this study, all three media markets would be markedly different if donor funding were not available. As one respondent noted, 'The rise of the independent media in

many countries is linked to media development. Without media development support, none of these outlets would exist' (KII, male, former donor, and current academic, Spain).

Related to the issue of market failure, respondents said that media development is a necessary response to the problem of media capture. This corresponds to recent studies noting the problem that media capture poses to democracy. That media capture is such a glaring issue is frustrating for many interviewed because media development in the post–1989 era started from a point of total and complete state control of the media— environments in which the only option was state-run TV, radio, and print-only to become dominated by a few media owners or returned to state control.

The 1990s and early 2000s were times of political and economic transitions and the opening up of markets, including advertising markets, and the spread of liberal democratic ideals and normative frameworks to support free and independent media. Some thirty years from their initial starting points, many media markets have experienced a much more diverse, pluralistic media environment. Though far from the ideal of democratic media, each remains a work in progress; they have all had very rich and interesting media development trajectories. Hungary, perhaps, provides a cautionary tale about democratic backsliding and the arduous challenge of developing democratic media in the absence of a democratic state. It is an extreme example of the outright state capture of a promising (although problematic) media system in transition to a liberal, democratic model. Hungarian media has essentially returned to a state-controlled, authoritarian system, albeit within the parameters of a very different political reality than its communist past. There are still pockets of independent media—community radio and online/digital platforms—and Hungary is not completely closed off because its European Union membership opens access to media from around the world. Still, given Hungary's trajectory of media development over the

past 30 years, it now provides a cautionary tale about how illiberal democracies can succeed in severing media development from democratic values and press freedom.

Exporting press freedom as a key contribution to media development is not just viewed in practical terms of giving out donor grants and training journalists; many respondents noted that media development is a form of soft power—the use of a country's cultural and economic influence to persuade other countries to do something, rather than the use of military force—that enables Western donors, NGOs, and other leaders to champion the ideas and ideals of human rights, including the virtues of free and independent media as part of modern democracy.

The soft power function that media development donors, international NGOs, and actors play in promoting democratic ideals of liberal, democratic media has remained remarkably stable for thirty years. While not always considered in the context of public diplomacy, several respondents noted that soft power is one of the most important *de facto* contributions of the sector—beyond the financial support donors give to local media development projects. The soft power function is central to the 'diplomatic turn' (promoting goodwill through global media to support national interest goals) that is a part of recent initiatives like President Biden's 2023 Democracy Summit.[16] Contemporary examples of the use of diplomatic power and statecraft to help promote or advance the commitment by the league of democracies around the world to support certain values and priorities are remarkably consistent with their precursors from the Cold War period.

The idea of the 'diplomatic turn' has always been a tool of statecraft. Many scholars and donors have described media development as critical to expanding soft power. Monroe Price writes about

[16] see https://www.state.gov/summit-for-democracy/

this in his book Media and Sovereignty (Price, 2004). One media development expert who has been part of the sector as a journalist, activist, scholar, and donor emphasized:

> Media development is always part of a soft power agenda in the end. Once media development [is seen as a benefit] of the people in the country [it] is then in the wider global interest. I don't think it should be seen simply as an export of philosophies and models, but rather the kind of value for everybody having a (democratic) media system. (KII, male, former donor and current consultant and academic, South Africa).

Donor priorities and power dynamics inherent in the donor role underscore the tension between donors' development and democratisation objectives for many of the respondents and signal the limitations of 'just providing money' and the need to match donor funding commitments with diplomatic pressure. One respondent exposed some real tensions inherent in the long history of media development, namely calling into question the push and pull between development objectives and the pulpit that media assistance programs provide for advancing the cause of human rights advocacy and promoting a liberal democratic order:

> [Is democracy promotion a] smokescreen for saying, sorry our budgets are going down, but we're doing loads on pressuring governments because that's cheaper? … Is that now media development? … Is it a very, very necessary add-on to get to the policy changes, and at the same time shoring up the actual media in a country? (KII, male, media expert, South Africa).

Over the 30-year span of post-cold war media development support there have been some tremendous shifts in technology, and attitudes and opinions about democracy, leading to changes in the form, shape, and character of media and journalism itself. Respondents in both Africa and Eastern Europe said donors have changed from strengthening media policy and advocacy and professionalising the field to seeking a platform for society to contribute to the ideas and solutions to the many challenges that our societies are facing and finally to address the weakness and threatened nature of media to become more resilient and sustainable. As a respondent in Eastern Europe said,

‘Donors have now moved into sustainability. Media outlets need to become more resilient and sustainable’ (KII, male, former donor, now working as an academic and expert, Spain).

One of the biggest threats to this sustainability is the non-democratic, media policies of governments that undermine any attempts to permit independent voices, as a Southern African respondent said:

> Media development is needed to transform the media ideologically from colonial interests … to empower citizens to engage in political leadership that is imposed in Africa, and more importantly in this day and age, to be a platform for society to contribute to the ideas and solutions to the many challenges that our societies are facing. For me, this is where media development comes in. We are saying that without a deliberate effort to raise the capacities, without a deliberate effort to push back for non-democratic, media policies without a deliberate effort to counter the state dominance in media, we are in trouble. (KII, male, media expert, South Africa)

Echoing the sentiment that media scholar Martin Scott wrote about in his book *Media Development* (2014) some respondents noted that media development has an instrumental quality to it, namely, to help bring about regime change. That said, respondents felt this instrumental quality has shifted over time. In the early days of the post-communist transition, there were overt attempts to support media as a way of bringing about regime change. Over the past 30 years, this has shifted to a more nuanced effort to sustain forms of free and independent media and enable alternatives to oligarchic and state-captured media.

The current trend of supporting independent media as a means of ‘holding the line’ (that is to counter the new authoritarian pressures on journalists and media outlets), and as a response to how autocratic leaders are using media as a political mouthpiece and co-opting the public sphere for their own political ends, casts a somewhat different light on the instrumentalist idea of media development.

To quote Nobel Prize winning American-Filipina journalist and media activist Maria Ressa, 'We are journalists, and we will not be intimidated. We will shine the light. We will hold the line'[17] (Ressa, 2021). This instrumentalist quality or type of media development as tied to regime change is rooted in democratisation from both an academic and practitioner perspective. The idea that democratisation is synonymous with transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy is embedded in much of media development's thinking and indeed characterises the rationale for why donors have supported media development all these years. However, the transitions that were once viewed as inevitable and with a lot of optimism—that we are all on the pathway to democracy as some held in the initial 1989 moment—is now viewed critically and with a kind of existential dread, i.e., The Washington Post's slogan 'democracy dies in darkness'.[18]

Media has been an instrument for donors in both political and development goals as one respondent emphasized:

> I think it was more instrumentalised in that sense, where it was a bit more aimed toward Cold War goals . . . [In] the 1990s we were able to make a better case for development goals. And you know, supporting independent media in and of itself, because it's a worthy goal and people have the right to access independent information (KII, female, donor, United States).

A key takeaway is that civil society is an important intervening variable when it comes to upholding or accomplishing donor goals for media development that is tied to supporting the

[17] "Hold the line is a phrase popularized and associated with the American-Filipina journalist Maria Ressa. Ressa has come under attack in the Philippines, where she is the editor of the online news outlet Rappler. Ressa has faced several attacks against her from the political establishment and various detractors. Her story is one of great concern to the media development community, as it corresponds to what many see as attacks against press freedom and closing civic space. For the full text of Maria Ressa's Nobel Prize speech, go to FULL TEXT: Maria Ressa's speech at Nobel Peace Prize awarding (rappler.com). Accessed on June 6, 2024.

[18] "Democracy Dies in Darkness" is the official slogan of the American newspaper The Washington Post, adopted in 2017.

public interest and democracy. Another point is that over the past 30 years, media development goals around freedom of expression, access to information, and digital rights and protections are a vital part of democracy itself. In this way, media development is now seen less as a niche area of support (Lines, 2009), and more as a fundamental part of what donors should do to support democracy and the public interest. This trend perhaps has come full circle in places like the United States where private foundations have banded together unprecedentedly to support free and independent media. For example, the recent Press Forward effort—a U.S.-based initiative launched by 22 donors—to strengthen democracy by revitalising local news and information.[19] We are seeing similar trends in Germany, with Publix, a new initiative with the vision of securing a diverse and independent media landscape in Germany and Europe, promoting journalistic innovation, strengthening the democratic discourse and counteracting disinformation.[20] Publix is funded by the Schoepflin Foundation, a German Foundation committed to the development of critical thinking, a vibrant democracy, and a diverse society. A recent study showed that $9.9 billion in media grants were made worldwide between 2009 and 2015. Of that, $7.7 billion was awarded to U.S.-based organizations (many of which work on international projects from U.S. headquarters), and $8.8 billion was made by U.S.-based funders (Armour-Jones and Clark, 2019).

[19] See: https://www.pressforward.news/about/ (Accessed on July 9, 2024)
[20] See: https://www.publix.de/en/mission. Publix is connected by our shared goals:
to strengthen journalism and its essential informational and educational role in society. to provide everyone with access to reliable information and enable their participation in the public discourse, to strengthen societal cohesion and counteract digital abuse, to find answers to technological developments that pose a threat to democracy, support media professionals who seek to inform and inspire the public with their work and win over their audience to new perspectives. Accessed on June 9, 2024.

5.2.1: Regarding the purpose of media development, how have donor strategies evolved over the past 30 years?

One of the most interesting findings from this study was how donor strategies have needed to change in the 30 years of media development marked by the post-1989 period. The interviews also revealed several other notable trends regarding the need for strategy change.

Trend 1: NWICO continues to be relevant to donor strategies.

Media development strategies sometimes have a way of going full circle; for instance, the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) movement has had an outsized influence on the shape and evolution of media development. Importantly, many respondents noted that the diplomatic efforts that were part of the NWICO were pivotal in starting several media development programs and serving as a strong foundation for much of the values-based discourse that we continue to debate today. Old battles and debates like the NWICO and key ideological principles that fuelled debates around modernisation theory and that underpin academic discussion related to the enduring legacy of *Four Theories of the Press,* remain relevant and lively today. The debates have not been resolved and the tension between liberalism and authoritarianism is a perennial one—this is where democracy promotion, media development and civil society strengthening have stepped in. In this tug of war between competing ideas about the role of the state, the level and quality of freedoms and rights, the legacy of the NWICO is such that it contributed to the development of MISA and the Windhoek Declaration, which laid the foundation for how media development evolved over time and culminated. Even though it was criticized and ridiculed by the US and other Western powers at the time, NWICO had an outsize effect on media development. Its values and ideas have become institutionalized in much of the agenda of the past 30 years of media assistance. You can see echoes of NWICO in nearly all donor guidelines and strategies and even at the 2021 Windhoek @ 30 celebration (Windhoek+30 Declaration: Information as a Public

Good) that took place to commemorate the anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, the spirit of NWICO lived on.[21]

Trend 2: Donors were perceived to move from core to activity-based funding.

A key frustration, according to respondents, is that donor strategies shifted from the early days of media development from funding institutions, big ideas and core needs of media outlets and civil society to a more activities-based, programs-based approach. In this regard, this quote from a civil society activist sums it up nicely, 'Over the years since this has started, we have seen a very sharp shift from an institutional approach towards interventions towards activity-centred interventions' (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe). Several other respondents also expressed frustration with this shift to supporting activity-based media development.

Trend 3: Democratic optimism has subsided.

The third trend involved the initial euphoria and excitement about democratic transitions and the 'inevitability' of the strategy of 'democratising the media/democratising the state' that fuelled the media development sector. Donor funding and interest in supporting independent media has become something likened to a rescue operation or a project that is on perpetual life support. The feeling of inevitability has given way to uncertainty.

Trend 4: Democracy itself has been co-opted and lost meaning.

The loss of optimism relates to the fourth trend—namely that 'democracy' as the core guiding principle has continued to underpin donor strategies for the past 30 years, but increasingly beneficiaries, scholars, and media development implementing partners are critical of what democracy means in a 2024 reality. There's a frustration that democracy is no longer very well

[21] See UNESCO website on Windhoek+30 Declaration: Information as a Public Good | UNESCO, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/windhoek30-declaration-information-public-good. Accessed on June 9, 2024.

defined, and that autocrats and authoritarian leaders have now co-opted the term, leading to the sense that democracy is without meaning.

Trend 5: Some donors felt that funding free and independent media would spill over to other democratic institutions.

Some donor respondents said that if you fund 'free and independent media', it will have a spillover effect on other institutions, norms and ideas that make democracy and democratic government what it is. The mid- to late- 1990s really saw an uptake in donor funding going for free and independent media and nearly all of it was aimed at supporting democracy, democratic values, and the idea that freedom of expression and free media in general are the lynchpin of democracy—the gateway to enabling other democratic ideals and institutions to prevail.

Trend 6: Donor support has shifted to digital transformation of the media.

The sixth trend concerned initial donor funding. Interestingly, in both Southern Africa and in Eastern Europe donor funding was initially tied to the physicality of the media and the production of newspapers, TV, and radio broadcasts. Funding provisions provided for printing presses, equipment for TV stations, radio stations and studios, and all matter of materials needed for media production in the analogue era of news and media production. As the internet and digital transition started to take off in the early 2000s, donor strategies started to shift to support journalism's digital transformation.

Trend 7: Donor strategies have followed geopolitical interests and foreign policies.

Seventh, donor strategies have tended to shift with geopolitical interests and foreign policy priorities of the day, leaving media development in Eastern Europe and Southern Africa in limbo. Just as projects, ideas and activities start to take shape, get rooted into societies and have some semblance of sustainability or resilience, donor funding has either dried up or dropped off. The Iraq war, the Afghanistan war, the Syrian war, and most recently Russia's invasion into Ukraine,

have all left their mark, both on donor strategies and a competition for funds. For instance, in Hungary, the rise of Orbanism and the turn to an illiberal democracy was accompanied by the rise of oligarch-controlled media, state re-capture of the media, and the pushing out or closing of nearly all independent media (Krastev, 2018). What remains of the independent media is largely digital or community media, and most of it is donor funded. Donors, though, didn't really do much to support Hungary's fledgling media sector in the run-up to what we see in today's Hungary. Respondents noted that it has been hard to attract donor interest in Hungary in part because most donors didn't initially perceive the threat Orban posed. Then there was the feeling that because Hungary was in the European Union, it was 'an EU problem'. Now, as of 2024, some donors are going back into Hungary but treading carefully because the country has strict rules on foreign funding—so donor strategies have had to adapt to closing civic space realities.

Trend 8: Donors' strategies are not clear to everyone.

Several respondents criticised donors for lacking a coherent strategy for models of media development and a clear direction for what was supposed to happen because of the foreign aid. Some respondents said that it was not clear to them that donors actually have a strategy or even a theory of change that they operate on when it comes to media development. It seems to them that donors largely depend on Western NGOs—the cadre of the 'usual suspects' of international media development international intermediaries that comprise the core of what some describe as a relatively small niche development sector to come up with the strategy and to determine what happens with the money. This, they say, is a mistake and now 30 years into post-1989 media development efforts need to change. Respondents were both somewhat understanding and frustrated with the situation, citing that at the end of the day they know that at the donor level there are very few experts or staff who truly focus on the complicated sector of independent media

development and all the peculiarities that it entails. Still, they feel that the mission of media development needs to do more than have an 'if we build it, they will come' mentality. The sharpest criticisms came from respondents who questioned the donor strategy as a core weakness of media development. For instance, one respondent based in Sierra Leone noted:

> To my mind, I am not sure that any of the donors, particularly at the initial stance, actually had a clear plan and pathway towards media development. I see their interventions, particularly at the early stages was to provide some kind of services at a specific point in time – as a mean to an end or as a tool (KII, female, media development academic and former NGO implementer, South Africa).

Other respondents felt that donors are responding to their implementers not to a media development strategy and have, as a result not been well coordinated or informed:

> The thing is that donors rarely have that much of a handle on how to really do media assistance. I think this is because they're so dependent on their implementers. They just want to get the money out the door (KII, female, media development expert, United Kingdom).

> There's been a negative trend, a lot of waste over the last three decades due to a lack of coordination, lack of criteria, and lack of understanding of what is needed in a certain environment. (KII, male, media development expert, South Africa)

Trend 9: Donors are not aware of what it would cost to make a difference.

Finally, in addition to a lack of a coherent, discernible sectoral strategy, several respondents said that one shortcoming from the donor side was a lack of awareness about how much it would really cost to develop the media in a particular country or region. The feedback suggests that donor contributions appear to be somewhat random and not based on market need or an evidence-based approach to estimating the cost of developing the media or to counter authoritarian support.

> There was no framework to assess financial needs. We never actually know how much was needed. If you look back, the local needs were never assessed in advance. We've never had a tool to assess the financial needs – that's the problem. (KII, male, former donor, current academic, Spain)

> It's also important to acknowledge that there's a parallel track of media being supported by oligarchs – at the same time as the donor funded independent media – we need to take a closer look at this. (KII, male, media development expert, United States)

This last point about the need to better understand and track what oligarchs do to support the media is important. An improved political-economic analysis of the overall media space and information ecosystem is needed to support 21st-century media development. There is a perception that within the media development work that there is a battle of oligarchs versus the independent media that is funded by Western donors, which is still guided by the goal of liberal democratisation, and that in order to defeat the trends of illiberal democracy and media capture, we need to understand better what this means in terms of business models, editorial and content lines, legal and regulatory affairs, and audience perception and analysis.

5.2.2: Is there a difference in donor strategies? How does American assistance compare to European donor support? Is government funding different than private foundation funding?

> Of course, there are differences between strategies—it's normal, but you need to study them to really get at what they are. (KII, male, former media development donor and current academic, Spain)

This response really summed up the sentiments shared by respondents to this question. Most respondents felt there were major differences in donor strategies, though they all seemed to a) struggle to articulate the key differences and b) offer very long, winding, and hard-to-follow responses about the differences.

American, European, British and foundation donor strategies were perceived as different, even though all were pegged as being tied to democratisation goals. Americans were most closely associated with supporting commercial, private sector media; Europeans and British donors were perceived as supporting public service media, though in recent years enthusiasm for this has waned. The Scandinavian donors were perceived as having the most flexibility. However, when it

comes to funding media-led or focused civil society efforts, based on the primary case study in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa, all Western donors had funding commitments to support media development. All donors were criticized by local respondents for not having enough support for core funding needs, which resulted in a kind of projectification or activity-driven mode of development, that respondents felt had trade-offs in terms of sectoral needs related to leadership, sustainable strategies, and strategic planning.

Respondents agreed that donor strategies were anchored in supporting international norms around press freedom, access to information are embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Responses also varied by country and respondent experience with different donors. Some key patterns emerged:

First, nearly all donors were perceived as offering funding for capacity building, training, and fellowships. Secondly, the respondents agreed upon the sentiment that media development, at least for a time, took on characteristics of the nations they came from—literally becoming the embodiment of 'exporting the sensibility of press freedom that most closely corresponded to the type of media system that exists in the donor country'. This is consistent with the ideas that media scholar Craig LaMay wrote about in his book *Exporting Press Freedom* (2007).

As noted by a former donor, and now current media development academic, 'It has been evident from early on – donors are influenced by their national media characters' (KII, male, former donor, current academic, Spain). Donor funding that matches the 'personalities', and preferences of the donor government has in some ways given way over time, especially in the aftermath of Big Tech and social media's impact on journalism, business models and their overall negative effect on the entire news industry. Still, when asked, respondents noticed some patterns. American donors and

approaches were mostly associated with supporting commercial, advertising driven models of media development. The British program implementers, donor strategies, and lines of assistance were generally associated with supporting public service broadcasting. European donors were perceived as being more supportive of public service broadcasting, education, and universities. The Dutch and the Scandinavians were viewed as being supportive of community media, education, and offering equipment. Private foundations were perceived differently than the government funding agencies – they were thought to have more flexibility. According to one long-time scholar and democracy and governance practitioner/expert,

> The media, like civil society, was basically the creature of USAID and private foundations, Open Society Foundations being one of them, but not the only one. And you know, in the EU and EU members, it was really limited. Occasionally there is funding from Swedish Sida. You know, you'd see some Dutch, the Dutch were invited for a long time, but now those are also like private foundations… (KII, male, media development expert, United States)

When asked whether other donors beyond the big, government donors or essential, private foundations have made a noticeable contribution to media development funding, the answer was mixed. For example, one respondent from commented,

> In the earlier first instances, it was the UNESCO Regional Office [and] Friedrich Ebert Foundation—they provided the money… (KII, male, program implementer, United Kingdom).

In this regard, the role of UNESCO was quite essential for it to signalled something that was just as powerful as actual cash; it gave the organization and its effort legitimacy and contributed to its ability to carry on with its mission and eventually raise the funding needed to get it off the ground.

Finally, Western donors were not the only forces perceived as active in media development. Russia and China were also called out. One respondent noted,

> When China supports media – its more commercial, entertainment – carries China content, spin, that projects China. Subscription TV, government partnerships, and different models of media

> investments. Russia and China do a lot of training – technical training – and direct investments. It's different from Western media development (KII, male, former donor and now academic, Spain).

5.3: RQ 2: What role do donors play in the development of media systems, and do they view media as a priority for international development?

Donors' primary role is in providing funding and underwriting the media development programs carried out by a wide range of implementing partners who often oversee and manage donor funds and who identify and work with local organisations, media outlets, and civil society organisations that champion media development.

> The role of donors has been multifaceted. One of the most critical roles they have played is to sustain media organisations. Media is supported by a lot of media development agencies. They have played a role in sustaining the media and also in supporting their capacity (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe).

Donors intervene to push for liberal ideas of media – to reinforce their country's foreign policy and ways of life. As noted by one respondent,

> Naturally, donors predominantly are a part of their foreign policy and invest towards putting a particular ideology or thinking or a particular system of governance or way of life that would be in sync with their own and, indeed, perhaps is guided by the Declaration of Rights. (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe)

5.3.1: Keeping the lights on.

'Donors play a critical role to sustain media to be able to operate' (KII, male, journalist, Zimbabwe). By supporting the voices of marginalised communities and offering media that is diverse and inclusive, marginalised communities benefit greatly from media development. Many respondents, especially local beneficiaries, noted that a chief contribution of donor-supported media development was providing a lifeline of support to the marginalised communities. This came up as a key aspect of media development—often much more than democracy-building or democracy promotion. Local beneficiaries, especially, saw media development as a way of funding

media that could be heard in all communities, villages, and information dark areas. This then represented women and minority communities, with the effect of ensuring pluralism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

> …we support those that provide information in marginalized communities where the poor live in where usually there is the highest disinformation and misinformation because of fewer voices that are speaking in those communities to media development to reach, to ensure that it's not only the rich that needs quality, reliable and trusted information, but it is everyone (KII, male, donor, Zimbabwe).

Most respondents stressed that support for building capacity is a critical element of sustaining their organisations:

> Media development is support for capacitating local partners, actors and the private sector. Those that are coming from colonial history we need to set up to support them… (KII, male, media development NGO, Zimbabwe)

> A lot of this support went into developing very capable media personnel, including media advocacy and human rights defenders in Zimbabwe that are still active to date (KII, male, NGO, donor, Zimbabwe).

5.3.3: Democratisation.

Donors also play a key role in advocating for and funding the democratisation or democracy promotion agenda, which respondents noted is very much associated with media development. Government donor support is often tied to country-level foreign policy priorities that are linked to promoting democracy, good governance, and human rights. Donor support is most frequently channelled through implementing partners who assume responsibility and liability for ensuring accountability and transparency of donor resources. Implementing partners are largely comprised of non-profit organisations or non-governmental organisations; in the field of media development the top implementing partners include BBC Media Action, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Fondation Hirondelle, Free Press Unlimited, International Center for Journalists, Internews, IREX, International Media Support, Thomson Foundation, etc.

5.4: RQ 3: How do donor funding models influence the development of media systems?

Donor models follow the opportunities for opening societies and making trustable information available.

> . . . it was often in societies that were opening up. So yeah, we need to have free media, we need to if people are trained in objective journalism, journalists who understand freedom of speech and in and how to be an objective journalist and not tell the party story for whatever party you used to own your outlet…We need to provide information that people can trust and rely on (KII, male, former academic, current media development researcher and practitioner, United States).

When asked whether donor funding models contribute to the development of media systems, a veteran journalist and media development program director laughed and cynically responded: 'I have no clue. I cannot answer this question because we are still trying to understand the media systems now' (KII, male, media development NGO, Zimbabwe). He went on to share that in his opinion,

> I don't think that anybody knew what would happen in terms of how media systems have evolved and how they've become both a tool and a pawn in the authoritarian playbook. (KII, male, media development NGO, Zimbabwe)

Funding models have largely remained the same for thirty years, funding a small cadre of international organisations. This has led to stagnation and a feeling of disempowerment from local media development partners and beneficiaries. It stymies donor efforts that seek to advance localisation and contributes to the perception that donor aid mostly goes to sustaining international NGOs and Western-based organisations that serve as project managers and oversee the financial and administrative sides of managing donor money.

> They were trying to promote certain professional standards, which is very, very good and certain business standards, but at the same time, those business professional standards also significantly eroded all around the world. And practically, certain things which work in America, work in the

> West, don't work here. Nevertheless, we had, we had significant developments that I think on the whole contributed to improvements. (KII, male, civil society organization, Hungary)

In all countries surveyed, there were few examples of where local media, civil society and partners were the direct recipients of funding, instead they relied on international NGOs who specialize in media assistance to serve as intermediaries. These intermediaries have largely remained the same set of actors for the past thirty years and have largely operated in the same way and with the same systems according to respondents interviewed for this study.

The main mode of delivery is for a government aid agency to issue a competitive call for proposals for the award of large sums of money—for amounts ranging from $500,000 USD to more than $50 million, for instance. Such proposals are bid on by mostly Western NGOs, and depending on the contracting mechanism, for-profit companies, who respondents describe as mostly based in the US, the UK or Europe. While the localisation agenda has long been part of international development discourse, especially in recent years as prioritized by USAID's Localization Policy, for the most part respondents noted that to date any prioritization of direct funding to local organisations has largely been minimal and more a matter of optics. Donor funding mechanisms largely fall into three categories: grants, contracts, and loans. In both the model and mechanism behind donor aid for media development—much like other types of democratisation or other types of international development assistance—the issues of procurement, the ability to manage funding, the accountability for donor aid, and the compliance with donor requirements feature highly. While not the most glamourous part of the media development story over the past 30 years, funding models, mechanisms and the core necessities of what it takes to manage and deliver foreign assistance was considered every bit as essential to delivering on media development's promise as well as a key factor in the success or failure of the ambitions, hopes,

experiences and expectations of the journalists, civil societies, activists and businesspeople pushing for a more free and independent, democratic media. Nonetheless, as one respondent noted, 'We're sick of getting scraps', lamenting that in his more than 20 years working on media development in Southern Africa, donor models have not changed and the mechanism, mode, and delivery of foreign aid inhibited innovation and growth, and has been a major impediment to his organisation's long-term survival.

Some respondents noted, 'we are living on fumes', and that the predominant funding models and donor mechanisms created fierce competition between local civil society and independent media outlets. Even in a situation where a donor might have allocated, $10 million USD for the development of media over a five-year period, it was not unusual for local organisations to only see a fraction of this amount. Their expectation was that the funding would go to a DC or London based international NGO, that this NGO would take 50 percent off the top, and the remaining amount would be split up in a variety of ways. This model of funding was described as common for all government donors—or at the very least the common approach. One respondent noted that it was a 'rinse, recycle, repeat' dynamic, and the idea of living off scraps was more the norm and the expectation. It was enough to get by and to keep things going, but it prevented meaningful development contributing to a class of civil society and independent media that was donor dependent. The cycle was described as hard to break because absent donor funding coming from the West, even after 30 years of independent media development support and advocacy, was still not a culture of philanthropy or government backed aid to support public interest media or the types of goals, objectives, and interests' Western donors sponsor and support.

When looking at the past three decades, respondents noted that there have been noticeable differences between donor expectations and their willingness to support operational costs, core

funding and non-project-based funding. Additionally, respondents noted that there was a major difference between foundation-based funding models and government donor agencies, like USAID or Sida. International NGOs that often act as an intermediary between government donor agencies and local media outlets, civil society organisations, universities, and other localized donor beneficiaries are considered by some as donors themselves, though this role gets criticised or scrutinised in terms of whether it is a suitable model and offers the most effective and efficient mechanism for the delivery of foreign aid, especially when considering the 30 year span of media development in a post 1989 era.

5.4.1: Do different funding models' donors use impact the types of support they can offer, and in turn, have any ramifications?

The different types of funding models and the various rules and regulations each presuppose shape the types of support that are available and influence financial reporting requirements, expectations around program evaluation, the amount of money that is available to award, and the terms and conditions of the award. The need for local media outlets, civil society organisations or other stakeholders to be able to manage, award, and comply with the donor reporting requirements was described as a major factor in aid effectiveness or ineffectiveness, and for many of the organisations interviewed, the driving factor in why donor models have largely remained unchanged in 30 years. This all has negative ramifications on localisation efforts, which many respondents noted was still a shortcoming in current international development.

The funding models also have a negative impact on sustainability. Localised funding to support media development efforts started and sustained by donors is largely non-existent. While donors may have jumpstarted the media transitions, there are still few examples of where donor funded media is able to go it alone and successfully continue their operations absent continued

contributions from the international development community, private foundations, or other sources.

Funding models are inextricably linked to the types of support offered by donors and impose certain restrictions on the types of support offered as well as on who may be eligible to apply.

5.4.2: How has donor funding for media development changed over the past 20-30 years? Is there a significant difference in terms of the donor dynamic between donors and grantees?

Responses to this question varied by respondent and their familiarity with the history of media development and with their relationship to donors. Journalists, activists, and others who were far more removed from the donor dynamic were not able to answer the question. NGOs that apply for and manage donor funding and donors themselves had quite a few interesting observations about this question:

i. Training and capacity building are often a core focus.

ii. Project-based funding has become the more common focus. Beneficiaries of media assistance were unanimous in their frustration that funding for core institutional support for things like staff salaries, rent, and other human resources was the exception rather than the norm.

iii. A huge shift in terms of donor priorities involves moving away from support for the transition of state media to public service media. Many donors, as a matter of policy, do not fund or support government institutions directly.

iv. Not surprisingly, over the past 30 years there's been a consistent shift in donor support that aligns with the transition from analog to digital media. Is there a notable change in recent years in terms of donor support for locally led development?

Locally led development, defined by USAID as: ‘the process in which local actors – encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organisations, private entities, and governments – set their own agenda, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality’ (from USAID Local Works Fact Sheet, n.d.).

Judging by the responses I received in my interviews, there have been few notable changes in recent years regarding locally led development. As stated earlier, the sentiment ‘we’re sick of getting scraps’ (stet) was a frequent refrain in interviews with local respondents, reflecting their dissatisfaction with what they perceive as consistently inadequate resources from donors.

In the three countries sampled for interviews—local journalists, civil society, media outlets, and researchers lamented the lack of locally-led development or at least their perceived lack of influence or control over where funds should go. Most respondents felt that current donor models relied heavily on Western, usually U.S.-, Europe- or UK-based NGOs. There was the perception that donors would look to the Western NGOs or contracting organisations as the key interlocutors who would then redistribute or grant funding to local organisations. The frustration local respondents shared with me had two main aspects: a) when large grants were awarded by donors, Western NGOs would take a significant portion to cover their overhead and headquarters expenses, diverting substantial funds away from local, locally-led development efforts; and b) this model fosters donor dependency and creates competition among local organizations.

Nearly all local respondents shared a similar story about how donor funding has worked in their countries. The model used 30 years ago remains the model used today—donors come in and do a general study or assessment of a country, get to know some key actors (usually in the capital city), and then through various contracting mechanisms, select an international partner to work with,

who then subgrants or subcontracts with local CSOs, media outlets or other institutions. It is the rare exception when a donor partners directly with a local organisation – at least when it comes to government donors. The foundation donors work quite differently; they tend to directly grant funding to local institutions and organisations although respondents noted that private foundations were more elusive and tended to reach out directly to grantees they wished to support. Many respondents shared that it was hard to get an audience with any donor—some respondents felt that donors had their favourites.

5.4.3: Beyond the traditional funding models, what are some alternatives to typical donor funding?

The need to re-think models of funding and approaches to delivering development aid in support of localised media assistance came up in every one of my interviews, as well as with media development experts who work globally. The MISA case study showcased the challenges of donor funding and its implications for local media development, namely that for all the good the funding can do, at the end of the day it is still tied to donors and international NGOs that are not based in the countries or regions where they work. The power dynamic is always with the donors and their self-interests as well as with the international NGOs and their own procurement and funding models, rules, and regulations, which prioritize their self-interests. This leaves local actors in a precarious situation and completely at the mercy of donor and international media development NGOs. This is what one Sierra Leonean media scholar and media development practitioner conveyed in response to the question of why donors intervene. The respondent was a student in post-conflict Sierra Leone who worked first with RNW Media and then with Fondation Hirondelle. He went on to get his PhD and is now the Chair of the Media Reform Working Group and an advisor to BBC MA and many international groups. The respondent was very critical. He essentially said that all these actors did was instrumentalise media. He felt let down when reflecting

on 30 years of media development in Sierra Leone, stating that the media has not been more developed, it remains in a poor state. But he acknowledges it is a slow process. He is in the process of setting up a national fund, to be administered by the Sierra Leonean government—a kind of national fund for media. It is being modelled after the International Fund for Public Service Media.

The need for alternatives to the donor funding models that have been operational for 30 years was a common theme in the interviews. Respondents were hopeful that the new International Fund for Public Interest Media Model could be a positive alternative, but many also noted scepticism that it could also become just another variant of the same thing—where the donor has all the power and the local media are left with such a modest amount of money that it is difficult to meaningfully do long-term planning and undertake serious development reforms that would benefit the overall enabling environment for free and independent media in a given country. This was a major observation that came out of the interviews—that unless donors focus on the legal and policy dimensions of media development, the overall gains that could have been experienced through training, capacity building and even grants to media outlets will be fleeting. Moreover, if IFPIM doesn't rise beyond the current donor model that respondents nearly universally criticized as the projectification or activity-led model of media, it will not live up to hopes and expectations to get past the post-1989 media development donor model.

5.5: RQ 4: How does media development contribute to democratisation?

Democracy as a frame of understanding the core motivating force for media development has remained the same for thirty years. However, some respondents were critical of the idea of democracy and its meaning. Specific data around correlation and causation between specific media

development projects, activities, etc., remains elusive. Global trends showing how media development contributes to democratisation are not a promising data source either.

Still, there are examples, case studies, that paint a rosier picture. It's through unpacking the case study that we can, perhaps, learn the most. Respondents had many examples of where progress toward democratisation has taken place because of media development efforts. Moreover, most respondents noted that democratisation is not a linear process. The theory of change that we can imagine and write about in an academic sense doesn't necessarily play out so nicely and linearly in real life. Democracy is messy, and tracking the causes and effects of media development is complicated.

5.5.1: What evidence exists that media assistance has contributed significantly toward democratisation goals?

Relatively little work has been done to empirically evaluate media assistance programs. Most of the work that has been done has focused on the impact of the assistance programs on journalists, rather than on the impact of the media assistance programs on the larger media system. And almost no work has been done linking media assistance programs to democratisation. (Becker and Vlad, 2011).

5.5.2: Is democracy the right framework for understanding and assessing the impact of media development assistance?

This question was one of the more interesting questions in my interviews. It was noteworthy how differently each stakeholder answered this question. Some respondents were very matter of fact that media development was tied to democratisation, while others questioned the very idea of democracy and the idea that it had universal meaning.

> I think the lifeblood of any democracy is hinged on a free and independent media. And it is because the media, in essence, are an enabler of rights, including the right to life itself. So when you look

> at the media from an access to information perspective, you then begin to already realize that it is a platform at which an individual group of people or whatever sect can have a platform to share their message to a much wider audience (KII, male, media development NGO, Zimbabwe).

5.6: RQ 5: What are the primary lessons learned from 30 years of media development?

Media development has had a complex relationship with democratisation efforts, encompassing both positive contributions and significant challenges. Some of the positive contributions to democracy include: promoting transparency and accountability as well as enhancing public discourse and educating voters.

Media development efforts often focus on nurturing outlets that operate independently of government and corporate interests. By providing financial and technical support, donors help maintain a diversity of voices in the media landscape, which is crucial for a democratic society. These supported media outlets play a pivotal role in holding governments accountable. Investigative journalism, enabled by donor funding, has exposed corruption, mismanagement, and other abuses of power, thereby promoting transparency.

By supporting diverse media outlets, donors foster a vibrant public sphere where different viewpoints can be expressed and debated. This is fundamental to the democratic process, as it engages the public in discussions on policies and societal issues.

Some of the limitations and challenges included dependency on donor funding, the threats posed by challenges like media capture, and the perceived limitations on the effectiveness of media development in challenging environments. Moreover, media development's effectiveness can only go so far in contexts where there are cultural or political barriers. Finally, media development strategies reinforce sustainability challenges.

Reliance on foreign funding can undermine media outlets' perceived independence, making them vulnerable to criticisms of bias and reducing their credibility among the local population. This dependency can also render media outlets susceptible to shifts in donor priorities, which may not always align with the needs or interests of the local population.

In contexts like Hungary, there has been a significant issue with media capture, where ostensibly media are bought or influenced by pro-government interests. This undermines the media's role in democratisation by limiting its ability to act as a check on power.

In situations where democratic institutions are weak or there is a lack of political will to support democratic governance, media development efforts alone may not be effective. Without robust legal frameworks and protections, media cannot function effectively as a democratic tool.

Media development strategies that do not sufficiently consider local cultural and political contexts may fail to resonate with or impact the local populace. This can limit the effectiveness of media in promoting democratic values and practices.

While media development can significantly contribute to democratisation by supporting independent media, enhancing public discourse, and promoting transparency, its impact is heavily moderated by the extent of local ownership, the alignment of donor goals with local needs, and the broader political and economic environment. For media development to effectively contribute to democratisation, it must be part of a broader, more integrated approach to supporting democratic institutions and practices.

5.7: Summary of Core Findings

Through observational research, key informant interviews, document review, and a case study, several important themes emerged regarding media development:

1) Post-WWII Ideologies and Cold War Influence: The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union established core ideas about the media's relationship with the state. The work *Four Theories of the Press* highlighted these competing visions, influencing donor strategies and media development anchored in these Cold War sensibilities.
2) Role of Civil Society: Civil society's central role in media development was crucial for advancing democratic reforms. Media development focused on civil society significantly contributed to democratisation, freedom of expression, and media independence from state control.
3) Lack of Clear Strategies: While democratising the media is valued, clear strategies for achieving this remain elusive. Many respondents felt that donors lacked long-term strategies beyond the belief that free and independent media are essential for democracy.
4) Localisation Needs: There is a critical need for localised media development. Donors often channel funds through international NGOs, which can perpetuate dependency and development colonisation. Effective localisation strategies remain lacking, with traditional models still in use.

5) Power Influence: Donor-funded media assistance functions as soft power, influencing others to achieve desired outcomes. This influence promotes democratic ideals of media, with liberal models of democratic media being a core impact of donor-funded media development. Respondents considered soft power a significant contribution beyond financial support.

Chapter 6: Donor Engagement with the Media Institute of Southern Africa Case Study

The history of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) provides insight into the historical context of how donors have impacted media development. MISA, an initiative hatched by a small collective of Africa-based journalists and social activists in the late 1980s, resulted from a somewhat magical combination of the right time, right place, the vision and imagination of MISA's founders, the willingness and interest of a broader community of stakeholders, and the support of a small range of donors who were willing to invest in the idea. This case study seeks to unpack and understand MISA's history and story as a way of probing for answers and insight to the question of how donors impact the development of media systems.

6.1: How MISA Developed with Donor Funding

The MISA Education and Production Trust was registered on 12 October 1994 in Windhoek, Namibia's capital, by a group of activist media practitioners. Thus, efforts to establish a civil society organisation focused on the advocacy and protection of freedom of expression and access to information in Africa were formalised.

It grew out of the donor democratisation strategies in the late 1980s, and early 1990s, during the third wave of democratisation, which began in the 1970s (for example, see Huntington, 1991) and in Southern Africa took the form of support for the global struggle against apartheid. It also emerged in the context of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates that reflected ideological shifts and tensions in the donor landscape towards a more contextually sensitive and informed media development approach. The turning point for media

development was the 1991 Windhoek Declaration that raised the importance of free and independent journalism to the development of democracy (see Annex 1).

According to an IMS report: 'It was in this heady atmosphere that journalists from South Africa, soon-to-be-independent Namibia,[22] and the Frontline States of Southern Africa[23] met in Chobe in December 1989, ostensibly to discuss the role of the media in the anti-apartheid struggle' (IMS Report shared with me). The MISA Education and Production Trust was registered on 12 October 1994 in Windhoek, Namibia, by a group of activist media practitioners, thus formalizing efforts to establish a civil society organisation focused on the advocacy and protection of freedom of expression and access to information in Africa. The UNESCO-hosted seminar follow-up seminar in Windhoek in 1991. It is noteworthy that UNESCO, particularly the public information department, was supporting a similar process at the time in Central and Eastern Europe amid the perceived crumbling state of affairs in the Soviet Union, which strongly influenced how it approached this similar opening in Southern Africa.[24] UNESCO collaborated with bilateral donors,

[22] Namibia became independent on 21 Mar 1990 from the former South Africa administered South West Africa.

[23] Frontline States (FLS) was a political alliance among Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe that emerged as a counterbalance to the South African Apartheid state.

[24] According to accounts provided by Guy Berger, who until recently was Director for Freedom of Expression and Access to Information at UNESCO. He served as head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University from 1994-2010, together with Alain Modoux who was leading press freedom initiatives at UNESCO at the time: "The Windhoek seminar was a direct follow-up to the East-West Roundtable that the Director General, Federico Mayor had rapidly set up in February 1990, a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in order to address one of the numerous challenges generated by the end of the Cold War, that is the democratisation of the media landscape in Central and Oriental European countries. Sixty independent journalists from the Soviet Block but also journalists from Europe and North America had participated in the Roundtable. Unlike the Windhoek seminar, the East-West Roundtable hadn't adopted a final text. Its main purpose was to offer a platform for free expression to the participants whose many had just come out from underground. Several representatives of UNESCO Member States also attended the Roundtable as observers, among them some African diplomats who had asked the Director General that a similar conference be held on their continent. The Windhoek seminar was organized in response to their request. Berger, Guy (2017). "Why the World Became concerned with Journalistic Safety", The Assault on Journalism. UNESCO. pp. 33–43. And Modoux, Alain (2018). La diplomatie des mains vides (Partie III, La diplomatie par procuration, l'Afrique en première ligne). Editions universitaires européennes.

including Friederich Ebert Stiftung (Germany) and Sida, who collectively formed the funding framework.

The seminar, 'Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press', brought together about 60 journalists and activists from 29 April to 3 May 1991. It aimed to highlight the role of independent media, particularly in the context of the challenges faced by media professionals operating in African conflict zones. Its timing was deliberate, coinciding with Namibia's liberation and the end of the Cold War. According to interviews done for this dissertation and project records reviewed, Edward Moyo, UNESCO's advisor for free expression in Southern and East Africa based in Windhoek, oversaw UNESCO's initial support to MISA, with Jesper Højberg as his project manager who would go on to be the founder of Danish media development NGO International Media Support.

The significant product of the seminar was the Windhoek Declaration,[25] which is considered a benchmark for ensuring press freedom around the world.[26] As UNESCO notes, 'It all began at a seminar in Windhoek in 1991, but the ideas exchanged by African journalists and media professionals acted as a catalyst to encourage press freedom, independence, and pluralism in Africa and in other parts of the world' (UNESCO, 2021).

The seminar dedicated significant time to discussing shared experiences like self-censorship, harassment, and imprisonment faced by media professionals. Topics included media manager training, press freedom protection, and the financial sustainability of newspapers. These

[25] The Declaration called for 19 specific actions leading to a "pluralistic," "independent" press, with a commitment to end the jailing of journalists and create a more enabling environment. Full text is included as Annex 1.
[26] UNESCO website: https://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/document-5562

discussions were particularly relevant because many African countries were then one-party states and because of a geopolitical shift as some transitioned from Russian support during the Cold War to seek funding from Western nations. Based on feedback from the interviews for this dissertation, Western funding often came with conditions, including adopting democracy and principles of media freedom, aligning with the broader democracy and governance agenda of the early 1990s.

The Windhoek Declaration also emerged in the context of liberalisation policies promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It reflected the changing political and economic landscape in Africa as neoliberalism took root. It is crucial to note that the Windhoek Declaration's influence extended to other regions of the world and subsequent efforts, like the African Charter on Broadcasting (UNESCO, 2001) aimed to address its gaps, particularly in the context of broadcasting and globalization within the communication industry.

According to feedback offered from key informant interviews, the Windhoek Declaration, and subsequently the institutionalization of MISA, built on the NWICO debates and encouraged calls to make communication and press freedom more equitable and to ensure African journalists had the same protections and guarantees as those in the Global North. NWICO's geopolitical influence, which, according to an interview with a key anti-apartheid activist turned journalist, arose from concerns about media representation and information flow disparities between the Global North and the Global South, which ultimately played a key role in shaping the global media development landscape.

It was in response to this context that MISA was founded in 1991 according to David Lush, who was one of the first MISA employees, and instrumental to MISA's development, and later

worked for the Open Society Foundation, before joining the Danish NGO International Media Support:

> MISA's start-up funding came from some of the donors involved in the 1991Windhoek seminar and subsequent meetings - UNESCO, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). This gave MISA the space to start work while longer term funding was sought. By June 1994, MISA had raised adequate funds to appoint a full-time secretariat of three people –Director, Information Coordinator and Administrative Assistant – and to move into its own premises. (IMS Report – on file with author)

The NWICO debates and the Windhoek Declaration shaped MISA's mission and its focus on independent media in developing democratic societies. MISA's work in promoting media-friendly policies and combating censorship can be seen as an attempt to implement the Declaration's ideals. According to a 2003 International Media Support booklet:

> The Windhoek Declaration provided MISA with an ideological framework devised by African journalists and endorsed by the international community and subsequently their own governments.
>
> The Declaration shaped MISA's founding objectives, which were to:
>
> - Promote and defend press freedom, and seek removal of obstacles to the free flow of information;
> - Disseminate information and monitor problems facing media in the region;
> - Establish links with similar organisations, including human rights groups;
> - Bring together journalists and other media workers in the region to share ideas and address problems facing the media;
> - Seek financial and other assistance for MISA and its members;
> - Advise members on issues of media sustainability, and to provide research and evaluation services;

- Compile directories on various aspects of the media within southern Africa;
- Co-ordinate training to meet members' needs;
- Broaden the knowledge of media workers;
- Conduct research into the impediments to the free flow of information and the development of a vibrant independent media in southern Africa (Lush, 2003).

MISA was formed against the backdrop of media violations and harassment of journalists by governments in the region. Its mission focuses on six strategic areas: access to information, media monitoring, media freedom, independence and diversity, media law reform, digital rights, and media and elections (MISA, 2024). In its early days, MISA had a very small staff and operated largely out of the corner of an office of one of MISA's co-founders, Namibian journalist and anti-Apartheid activist Gwen Lister. Since its founding, it has evolved into a network of national chapters across Southern Africa. A timeline of key moments in its development is shown in Figure 4, below.

The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of MISA: A Comprehensive Timeline[27]

A. Foundational Years and Early Momentum (1989-1994)
1989: Media practitioners in the region discuss media freedoms, planting the seeds for MISA.
1991: Adoption of the Windhoek Declaration, emphasizing the need for independent and pluralistic media.
1992: Official establishment of MISA in September, tasked with promoting the ideals of the Windhoek Declaration in the Southern African Development Community region.
1994: Registration of MISA Education and Production Trust and joining the International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX).

B. Strategic Expansion and Influence (1995-2001)
1995-1999: Phase of strategic alliances and funding diversification, with significant involvement from donors like USAID.
2001: MISA co-hosts the Windhoek Declaration +10 conference with UNESCO, leading to the adoption of the African Charter on Broadcasting.

C. Advocacy and Recognition (2002-2011)
2002: Adoption of the African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights Declaration on Freedom of Expression.

[2727] https://misa.org/who-we-are/ -- timeline taken from MISA's website and also notes from interviews. Website accessed March 30, 2024

2011: MISA co-hosts the Windhoek Declaration +20 conference, culminating in the African Platform on Access to Information Declaration.

D. Milestones and Challenges (2012-2015)

2012: MISA celebrates 20 years of advocacy for free expression in Southern Africa.

2013: MISA's lobbying efforts lead to the Pan African Parliament's campaign on Press Freedom and Development.

2015: MISA's advocacy contributes to UNESCO's declaration of September 28 as the International Day for Universal Access to Information.

E. Reflection and Renewal (2016 onwards)

2016: MISA commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, reflecting on its journey and reaffirming its commitment to media freedom and plurality.

F. The Period of Re-evaluation and Rebirth (Post-2015)

Post-2015: MISA faces operational and financial challenges, leading to a period of introspection and strategic re-evaluation.

Reorganisation: Efforts to decentralize and refocus MISA's operations to better align with contemporary media and freedom of expression challenges.

Figure 1- MISA Timeline

Throughout its history, MISA and its chapters lobbied Southern African governments for legal and policy reforms to protect media freedom, advocated for journalists' safety, and conducted media training and capacity-building programs.[28] It continues to be a significant voice in promoting media freedom and a watchdog for press freedom violations in South Africa.

MISA's focus on developing a more balanced and representative media landscape in Southern Africa reflects the ideals of the Windhoek Declaration and the NWICO debates. The Declaration's spirit of advocating media collaboration and solidarity underlies MISA's approach to fostering regional networks and partnerships among media practitioners, civil society, and governments in Southern Africa.

More than 30 years after its founding, MISA is still standing and the values from which it was born continue to inspire current generations of media activists in Africa and elsewhere around the

world. It has weathered several storms in the form of donor fatigue, donor dependency, leadership crises, political obstacles, challenges posed by the post-colonial reality of being a civil society organisation in the Global South, and notably, a business model that at once creates opportunity and invites its demise.

6.2: Donor Engagement

MISA was established in 1991 in Windhoek with significant contributions, in-kind support and ideas, from journalists and media professionals, and some seed funding from UNESCO (KIIs). Early on in its history, USAID and other donors began supporting as a part of their democracy building efforts for its potential to create a regional network that would support a democratic, human rights-centred approach to media and journalism in Southern Africa.

By 1995, MISA had gained recognition across Southern Africa for its activities to promote media diversity and plurality. However, as it grew, it faced the complex dynamics of juggling donors' expectations and maintaining sufficient funding. Reflecting on this period, Lush noted that MISA moved from getting support for donor-driven agendas to a more internally driven agenda aligned with MISA's objectives with donors like USAID. This evolving donor landscape necessitated a nuanced approach to media development, balancing bureaucratic management and foundational support with strategic flexibility and activism.

> Under donor advice MISA became a chapter organisation, a democratic organisation. It was decided that chapters should be democratically elected with a governing council. But it's important to remember that activists set up MISA. To some extent, it was a club of independent publishers with local chapters, and each was to be democratically elected. It became a huge bureaucracy, and it became very vulnerable; it was tough to run an NGO like that. It morphed into the MISA Regional Meeting Congress in Lusaka in 97-98. For ten years, the founders turned up. But somehow along the way, they lost their course. For example, at one conference the whole time was spent dissecting MISA's 90-page frame. Where's the activism in that? (KII, male, NGO, United Kingdom)

In the late '90s, MISA received training in financial management, highlighting the need for robust financial strategies in media organisations. Luckson Chipare, a key figure in MISA development and journey, joined the organisation at that time and eventually became its regional director in 2000. During this period, MISA focused on training media business personnel and managing media development projects, recognizing the gap in business acumen among journalists starting media outlets.

6.2.1: A Basket Funding Model

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, MISA pioneered a basket funding model—pooling funds from various sources to support organisational priorities—at the behest of its Scandinavian donors and later joined by EU funders, to consolidate funds and streamline their utilization according to strategic plans. However, the model resulted in execution challenges—gaps in funding and overly complex accounting—and the need for comprehensive planning as were discussed in the detailed discussions at the 2001 MISA conference. Basket funding, while innovative, required MISA to align the diverse interests and requirements of multiple donors to its programs. The 2001 MISA conference, commemorating a decade since the Windhoek Declaration, struggled with the need for the intensive planning and justification efforts required to align its regional strategies that could meet the needs of all MISA’s chapters with its basket funding donors.

The basket funding story, set against the backdrop of MISA's evolution and the broader media development landscape, required an intricate interplay between donor funding, organisational management, and the pursuit of media freedom and development. It often required the organisations to make trade-offs and be less responsive to its chapters.

Reflecting on this, Lush emphasized the challenge to raise support for creating spaces for ideation and collaboration rather than the project-based funding that donors often preferred. This resonates with the experience of other media development initiatives like the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) and Rappler, an independent media outlet in the Philippines which seeks to contribute to broader democratic processes, including constitutional reforms and civic rights. This disconnect between media activism efforts and donor funding strategies suggests a need for donors to consider how these broader efforts to strengthen broader network activism goals can contribute to their media development and democratisation strategies.

MISA has held regular Annual General Meetings (AGMs) since its founding that interface with funders to present reports and seek advice. MISA used to host the AGMs in different African countries each year. The AGM spanned a week, with three days dedicated to the AGM itself, where board members were selected, and internal issues were discussed. However, the remaining three days were dedicated to face-to-face meetings with funders. During these sessions, MISA would present reports, and funders actively participated by asking questions and providing advice, sparking valuable debates and discussions.

Through this approach, MISA developed closer relationships with its donors, but the interaction did not always lead to successful results. One notable AGM took place in Zanzibar, Tanzania, during a year when Denmark had recently elected a more conservative government with a focus on poverty reduction. DANIDA, the Danish development agency, as a significant contributor to MISA's funding, strongly insisted on shifting MISA's priorities toward poverty reduction. This decision faced resistance from other funders and MISA members who believed it would divert MISA from its core mission. Nevertheless, under pressure, MISA prepared a concept note on the intersection of poverty reduction and media freedom, ultimately leading to a shift in focus.

As one leading media development professional observed, in another example, donors unintentionally promoted a commercial model of media freedom within MISA, resulting in a more entertainment-driven broadcasting sector. Additionally, some interviews said that reliance on intellectual resources from the Global North, as suggested by donors, sometimes undermined local solutions that addressed African experiences.

Over the years, MISA encountered various shifts in funding priorities, such as gender issues or HIV, influenced by its funders. Despite these shifts, funding from donors played a critical role in the evolution of media in the southern African region. It allowed MISA to initiate campaigns like journalism safety campaigns, free airwaves, and community radio, resulting in a more diverse and pluralistic media landscape in the region.

However, as time passed, MISA faced the challenge of adapting to new media paradigms. For example, it was initially believed that privatizing media would create a more diverse and pluralistic media environment. Yet, after a decade or two, it became evident that media had become more concentrated and commercialized, focusing on entertainment rather than public service. This shift was seen as a missed opportunity to establish a different media model. Additionally, the reliance on global experts during campaign development meant that the intellectual resources often did not reflect the unique African context.

While funders played a pivotal role in transforming the media landscape in the region, MISA also faced challenges with resistance from older generations of journalists who were slow to embrace digital media and social media. These individuals, referred to as the ‘grandfathers’ of MISA, came from a different era and were often resistant to change, hindering the organisation's ability to adapt to the evolving media landscape.

In the early 2000s, MISA focused on enhancing media freedom and capacity building, supported by international donors, including the Nordics. The organisation also faced challenges in maintaining transparent and accountable financial practices. Between 2010 and 2016, despite previous successes, MISA encountered difficulties with donor relations, especially in securing cooperative engagements for media-donor support reports. This period saw MISA deeply involved in donor negotiations and financial assessments, particularly with the Swedish Embassy and Sida.

After leaving MISA in 2006, Luckson returned in 2010 to work on a project funded by Nordic countries, leading to a three-year strategic plan significantly supported by these donors. MISA experienced issues with donor cooperation, particularly in media-donor support reporting, a task Chipare undertook. This highlighted the challenges of allegedly donor relationships and ensuring financial transparency.

By 2011, financial mismanagement issues emerged as a core concern for MISA, culminating in an EU-funded project's audit revealing alleged misappropriation of funds. The discovery of financial mismanagement, particularly regarding EU-funded projects, led to a significant organisational crisis. An EU audit revealed that funds had been allegedly spent inappropriately, prompting a demand for repayment and triggering a major organisational downsizing, and a crisis of leadership. This led to a major organisational restructuring, including downsizing and leadership changes, with Chipare taking a significant role in addressing the financial crisis as Chair of the Trust Fund Board.

The financial crisis stemming from the mismanagement of the EU Basket Funding highlighted the critical need for robust financial oversight and accountability within MISA. This crisis, coupled with the EU's demand for repayment, led to significant organisational restructuring and

downsizing, with Chipare playing a pivotal role in steering the organisation through financial turmoil. This period also underscored the broader challenges of media development funding, emphasizing the need for transparency, accountability, and professional management to maintain donor trust and organisational sustainability.

The experience highlighted the need for robust financial systems, transparent donor relations, and the professionalisation of media development entities. Chipare's involvement with MISA, both in earlier years and through the crisis, underscores the ongoing challenges and importance of both organisational leadership and sustainability of media development initiatives, especially in regions facing political and economic instability. The MISA experience with the EU and its international NGO partners reveals the complexity of managing donor-funded projects within media development organisations. It underscores the need for strong governance, financial accountability, and strategic planning to navigate the challenges posed by external funding dependencies and internal management issues.

6.2.2: The Aftermath of the EU Funding Crisis

The EU funding crisis was considered a major misfortune, as MISA had made a serious effort to develop a strategic plan in the early 2010s to improve financial stability and donor relations. However, the mismanagement of EU funds led to a crisis, with the EU demanding repayment of misused funds. MISA had to sell its building to cover part of the debt, illustrating the severe consequences of financial mismanagement. This derailed MISA’s funding leading to challenging times that forced MISA to re-evaluate its operational and financial strategies, leading to a painful yet necessary downsizing process. Chipare played a critical role in navigating the organisation through this turmoil.

In less than two months, Denmark, a long-term basket funder of MISA, left the region. This left a huge dent in MISA's budget. The EU ultimately left MISA. So yes, there was a need for a huge revamp of MISA. MISA had a decent infrastructure, but some donors were shying away. It had not evolved with the times. At that time, the issue of digital rights had come to the fore. MISA was seen as "old school" and not responsive to the issue of digital rights, not adept at change, and not as progressive in the way it was working. MISA was not as appealing as some other organisations. According to the former MISA representative, 'New start-ups that seemed agile and focused – they were sexy' (KII, female, former MISA staff member, Namibia). While there were new and emerging issues like digital rights, the fundamentals continued to be very important. MISA couldn't change its programming overnight. MISA also had issues of capacity, such as the context of what was happening in Zimbabwe and the ways Zimbabwe had to respond. Its chapters in Malawi and Zambia were strong, but its chapters in Lesotho and Swaziland had vacant secretariats. As shared by one former MISA Executive Director:

> There was a need for a revamp and restructuring… MISA in a different format. …many at the time would have argued that MISA wasn't inclusive. I would challenge this. Academia, the legal community, community radio, big broadcasters really straddled many levels of the media ecosystem. MISA brought many people together. (KII, female, former MISA staff member, South Africa)

The crisis of the EU grant and the loss of funding impacted MISA's reputation and forced it to lose its office/house and primary real estate assets to pay a debt. This created a big reputational crisis for MISA and led to the breakdown of the MISA model and the closing of chapters, resulting in MISA limping along yet carrying on.

Despite the crisis, MISA rebounded. It now has a more modest operation; it moved its secretariat from Namibia to Zimbabwe and rebuilt its leadership structure. Following the 2011 EU

audit and the necessary financial restitution, it reflected on its mission and approach to media development and began a transition toward a more sustainable and professionalized operational model. MISA reorganized and continued to operate because the MISA team was committed to supporting media freedom and development. They worked to rebuild the organisation's reputation and financial stability, leading to a renewed focus on professionalizing media development and ensuring accountable management practices.

The impact of the funding crisis on MISA has continued to play out and has left its mark on the organisation's history and reputation. As one key MISA stakeholder shared:

> Between 2012 and 2015, MISA went through a very difficult time…. It led to less resources, which meant that MISA was less effective, and it also left a huge gap in the democratic structure in the infrastructure of Southern Africa. We still feel the impact of the shrinkage of MISA to this day…. (KII, female, civil society, Namibia)

A former MISA executive director shared,

> In 2012, when I took over, I inherited a huge problem. And that was an EU grant that had gone wrong – not because of misappropriation of funds. MISA and EU were not on the same page. MISA looked at the 2008 grant as budget support. EU had a totally different view of that grant. (KII, female, civil society, Namibia)

Another MISA stakeholder shared, in confidence:

> It was disconcerting. After reaching out to long-term partners IMS, FPU, and so forth, It was strange that they would not come forward with some rescue package – some kind of fund to make sure that MISA would continue. (KII, female, civil society, Namibia)

According to several respondents, the US-based National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA) attempted to set up and support other

networks in Southern Africa and in the view of those interviewed, CIMA's effort to inspire a new network has not succeeded. CIMA funded a regional conference on civil society advocacy around media reform issues in Southern Africa in 2020, and brought together several stakeholders from across the region, including MISA. CIMA commissioned a paper from South African media scholar Dr. Herman Wasserman to document the conference proceedings as well as to reflect on MISA's past and the way forward. Wasserman concluded:

> The 1991 adoption of the Windhoek Declaration in Namibia ushered in a continent-wide commitment to supporting independent media in Africa. Despite initial progress, including the establishment of the regional MISA, independent media in the region continues to suffer. Increasing attacks on independent journalism, the co-option of media outlets by political and economic interests, and the growing problem of disinformation is compromising the viability of independent media in the region. The strong foundation of regional cooperation in Southern Africa that began at Windhoek has also suffered. However, there remains strong enthusiasm among media actors in Southern Africa to reignite a regional network to promote solidarity, address the myriad challenges independent media in the region face, and articulate an African vision and agenda for media development. (Wasserman, 2021, pg. 6)

Wasserman is critical of MISA in the CIMA paper, but despite the critical tone of the CIMA paper, respondent interviews stressed that MISA remains one of the most important civil society organisations in Africa helping to advocate for press freedom and providing a buffer between donors, international media development NGOs, local journalists, and media houses.

The legacy of the crisis left MISA with a reputation problem that it is still suffering to overcome, as evidenced by Wasserman's report. Based on the interviews, respondents noted that it would have made more sense to reform MISA and use the crisis as an opportunity for the donors and international NGOs working with MISA to take time to sort out longstanding issues of leadership, management structures, the need to work with MISA to evolve its membership and chapter structure, and to set up new systems and modalities for communication, financial management, and program delivery. According to one MISA leader, 'I made passionate,

passionate appeals for that. I made distinct and clear answers as to why a new organisation would not work', hinting at the frustration and overall sense of donor fatigue felt by donors and MISA alike (KII, male, former MISA staff member, Namibia).

6.2.3: Lessons learned from the Southern Africa Media Development Fund

In 1995, MISA set up a fund to strengthen the viability of public-interest media that mushroomed in the region following the end of the Cold War. The Southern Africa Media Development Fund, SAMDEF, was created to provide financial assistance to sustainable media enterprises. SAMDEF had a lot of potential and promise and was an example of an alternative model to funding local and regional media development. It had a period of some success, but it was limited and, unfortunately, did not pan out the way people had hoped. There is interest currently to revive this type of fund.

MISA set up the Southern Africa Media Development Fund to provide low-interest loans to media in Southern Africa. According to one former MISA representative,

> We got the usual USAID funding for capacity building. We were fortunate to get a grant from Soros Foundation – Open Society. It was a substantial grant. It was meant to assist media and media houses. (KII, male, former MISA staff member, Namibia)

The concept of revolving funds within media development, as experienced by MISA, reveals the intricate dynamics between funding mechanisms and the operational sustainability of media houses. MISA's approach to creating a self-sustaining financial model hinged on the idea of a revolving fund, where initial capital could be lent to media entities which, in turn, would repay the loan, thereby replenishing the fund for future lending. This model aimed to make media houses self-reliant and attractive to commercial banks for further financial support, with MISA providing loan guarantees. However, the initiative faced challenges due to a lack of buy-in and the self-interest-driven management within MISA, leading to a deviation from the fund's intended purpose.

Significant contributions from donors like the Open Society Initiative (OSI) and the Swedish government through SAMDEF (Southern African Media Development Fund) underscored the potential scale of such funding models. However, the expectation of repayment was a contentious issue, reflecting a broader dilemma in media financing—whether such funds should operate as loans or grants. The media landscape's financial intricacies, including the viability of paywalls and the shift to online advertising, further complicated the revenue generation models necessary to sustain such a fund. This scenario highlights the evolving nature of media funding and the need for innovative yet realistic financial strategies to support the professionalisation and independence of journalism in Africa.

In summary, MISA's history is marked by its interactions with funders and the evolution of its mission to align with changing priorities. Despite challenges, funding played a crucial role in shaping the media landscape in southern Africa, but it also led to debates about the organisation's direction and the impact of these changes. The lessons learned from EU Basket Funding were quite notable for MISA, leaving an indelible mark on the organisation and contributing greatly to its decline and near closure.

6.4: MISA Case Study Findings

One of the most interesting aspects of studying media development and its relationship to political and social transformation is how efforts to support democratic media tell a larger story about international development and the development of democracy norms. The MISA case study clarifies that media development donors played a very hands-on, interventionalist role and were primarily concerned about the promotion of democracy in the region. It also demonstrated that

media development is an organic process, responsive to local demands, and is not just a consequence of international donors and NGOs exporting press freedom.

MISA emerged from the multiplicity of views that impacted both it and its donors to define media development. MISA's three-decade story underscores the challenges of civil society, independent media, governments, and donors in trying to transition media from a place of being less free or closed and restricted to a state of being democratic, open, and independent from influences of government or corporate control.

This section looks at findings from interviews with MISA stakeholders of the impact of donors on MISA's formation and 30-year history. What did they hope to achieve? What were the positive and negative impacts of their involvement? How did their strategies evolve? What were the differences among donors?

The final part of this section considers what respondents had to say about whether donor investments have led to any observed changes in the media system using MISA's work and donor investments into MISA as a proxy. In this analysis, I will share what respondents noted in terms of their views on intended and unintended consequences of donor aid. This last consideration is vital to understanding MISA's history as well as the larger research question of how donors impact the development of media systems.

6.4.1: Perceptions of the Purpose and Evolution of Media Development Amongst MISA Stakeholders

Views of media development in Southern Africa are rooted in the idea that Western media development in Africa is closely tied to the democratisation wave of the 1990s and that the push

for democratisation often included an emphasis on media freedom as a critical component of a democratic society. This theme of democratisation was supported by donors.

All respondents felt that media development in the region is a key contributor to democratisation processes, with media organisations playing a critical role in informing the public, advocating for rights, and influencing policy and legal changes. A former MISA director said:

> The relationship between media and democracy is very clearly stated in the literature. Diverse, pluralistic, independent media is essential to a thriving democracy. You need to nurture the media, and its independence. To make sure it is thriving. (KII, female, former MISA staff member, Namibia)

Similarly, a different former MISA director stressed that MISA's history is intertwined with the '1989 moment' (after the fall of the Berlin Wall) and how this change swept across Africa. She noted:

> We cannot talk about MISA or media development in Africa without talking about the Third Wave of democratisation in the early 1990s – the two are very related. As you look at the role that donors played in the setting up of MISA, you will see that it is very linked to that history of democratisation. (KII, female, former MISA staff member and current academic, South Africa)

Advocating for democratic rights, access to information, and freedom of expression was seen as a core aspect of media development. That it was associated so ubiquitously with these rights, was summed up nicely by a Zimbabwean civil society leader:

> Yes, the lifeblood of any democracy is hinged on a free and independent media. It is because the media, in essence, is an enabler of quite a number of rights, including the right to life itself. When you look at the media from an access to information perspective, you realize that it is the platform in which an individual group of people or whatever can share their message to a wider audience. (KII, male, civil society, Zimbabwe)

Some respondents specifically said media development should support the independence of the Fourth Estate independence so it can hold power to account:

> I feel that the media is a critical component that needs to be supported to enable society to hold power accountable, there is a need for accurate information. (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe)

This view of the interventionalist quality of media development support was shared by most respondents who associated it with efforts to support professionalism, capacity building, democratisation, and advocacy for free and independent media. A key civil society member who leads efforts to advance media outlet representation in public policy advocacy said:

> I would describe media development as an investment into how media is professionally structured. It's a process in which media capacity is built in order to not be an end in itself, but to contribute to broader democracy. Media has a cross-cutting role and touches a wide spectrum of issues like health, climate and others. (KII, male, civil society organization, Zimbabwe)

The tension between Western intervention and local values was addressed by several KIIs, 'Largely, there is a trend of Western perspectives that try to fit into local perspectives, local positions' (KII, male, civil society, Zimbabwe). But it was also closely associated with a transfer of power to the local context or the politics associated with localisation, 'Media development is essential for transforming media from serving colonial or narrow interests to addressing broader public interests' (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe). This view is supported by Ellen Hume's I (2004) and Craig LaMay's *Exporting Press Freedom* (2008). On the one hand, media development support had an interventionalist quality and is perceived as 'something that was imposed' by donors. On the other hand, respondents agreed that this imposition tracked with local processes emerging from the Windhoek Declaration and NWCIO debates.

Respondents also expressed that intervention is necessary to promote broadcasting diversity, ICT development, to break monopolies in the media sector and enhance public access to diverse media channels as well as to support media monitoring and professionalism:

> I would describe media development as an investment into how media is professionally and independently structured. Investment in ensuring the principles of a free media is implemented (KII, male, civil society, Zimbabwe).

A few respondents stressed the importance of building institutional resilience. As numerous MISA interviews indicated, media development funding and technical assistance is important for institutional support that leads to the nurturing of leadership within organisations and as part of efforts to build capacity to sustain operations and the organisational impact over the long term. Leadership was a core theme that emerged from all the interviews done for the case study, with many respondents noting that there are noticeable gaps in lack of donor support and strategy related to ensuring that leadership training, skills, and longevity are paramount to how media development happens.

In summary, MISA stakeholders felt the purpose of media development was to foster a sustainable and resilient media ecosystem that can effectively support democratisation and social change. Respondents noted that media development contributes to media landscapes that promote and nurture access to information, freedom of expression, broadcasting diversity and professional journalism. While democratisation was the most significant demand on media development, the respondents mentioned and emphasized most of Scott's seven factors (Scott, M., 2014) of media development as well.

6.4.2: Perceptions on the role donors played in MISA's development and what they hoped to achieve?

Respondents agreed that donors played a significant role in MISA's development by providing financial resources, ideological perspectives, and support for democratic principles in media that aligned with their objectives: 'Donors do have…to invest or sponsor a certain ideology or to put forward a certain system of governance or ideology' (KII, male, civil society organisation,

Zimbabwe). They also cited donor impacts in working with MISA by providing financial and intellectual resources, advocating for media policies, and supporting emergent sectors.

Overall, most respondents felt that donors shaped the development of MISA often driven by a desire to promote democratic values, freedom of expression, and access to information, but also other objectives, such as poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS mitigation, not directly linked to MISA's core mission. Donor support of MISA, has sought outcomes such as fostering independent journalism, supporting media pluralism, and strengthening civil society's role in holding governments accountable. As noted by one respondent, 'The role of donors has been multifaceted. One of the most critical roles they have played is to sustain media organisations' (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe). Respondents said that media development is a long-term effort and that donors have been important in maintaining sustained support over extended periods. One of MISA's former directors emphasized the importance of long-term donor investment and the convergence of donor objectives with international principles on media and democracy.

Not surprisingly, many stressed the importance of providing resources. Many media organisations in Africa are constrained by resources and need support for training, capacity, and security. As one respondent said, 'Donors play a critical role in sustaining media to be able to operate' (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe). A former MISA staff member and current staff member of an international media development NGO noted that donors have been crucial in providing the financial support necessary for establishing and maintaining media organisations, training programs and other media-related activities.

Some also noted that donor support was essential to sustain media when media freedoms are under threat. They cited safe havens for journalists, security networks, and other forms of

protection for media practitioners operating in repressive environments. Many specified that donors provided an unmet need for media support not provided by their governments: 'Our governments–African–make no contributions to media development' (KII, female, civil society organization, Namibia). In contrast, the respondent noted that some media development organisations in Europe '…are well-supported by their governments. That's not the case in this part of the world' (KII, female, civil society organisation, Namibia).

Donors' guidance and intellectual support was also seen as essential, given the limited expertise available in Africa at critical moments in its development, and organisations like Article 19 played significant roles in these efforts. As MISA matured, it gained independence and began to chart its course in pursuing media freedom. Some respondents noted that donor support contributed to an understanding of international principles regarding media and democracy, including sharing perspectives on the role of media in democratic societies, which helps shape and inform media development efforts in recipient countries. Donors have invested significantly in the professional development of journalists and media advocates. This investment has been crucial in building a cadre of skilled media professionals.

- Several respondents noted that donors have also played a significant role with local governments in helping MISA to advocate for democratic media policies. They advocated regionally and in various countries for these policies and supported efforts to challenge repressive media laws and promote policies that foster a free and independent media environment. Donors help to integrate media development into broader national and international agendas, such as public service delivery, environmental issues, and global challenges like climate change.

- While not a donor, the importance of UNESCO was mentioned by many. It's convening power and ability to mobilize some resources for the initial gatherings of journalists and activists provided the necessary spark to set things in motion.

6.4.3: Perceptions on how donor strategies evolved over time.

From the early days in the 1990s up until the early 2000s, while MISA was on a growth trajectory, respondents said donor strategies were to:

- Provide initial funding for its establishment
- Shape its organisational focus
- Support its campaigns and advocacy
- Provide intellectual resources
- Influence organisational strategy
- Foster regional cooperation among media development organisations and activists
- Promote sustainability: A local journalist in Zimbabwe noted, 'The case is mixed. In some instances, the donors have engaged us, there has been a lack of sustainability as well' (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe).

MISA KIIs critiqued what they perceived as a gradual shift in donor strategies to short-term, activity-based funding: 'My challenge is that, over the years, we have seen a sharp shift from an institutional approach to an activity centred approach' (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe). This critique was shared by another MISA stakeholder:

> [Donors] want more out of you with less support. [They] want one, two, three, four activities to be completed in a space of time. [They] shifted from the broader goal that governance is not an overnight event. Now if you identify the tasks instead of strategy, you burn out faster; the whole issue of building an ecosystem collapses. The successes of MISA [were] achieved from long term

> thinking. Now it's about elections and short-termism. What will happen beyond the elections? (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe)

6.4.4: Are there differences in donor strategies? How does American assistance compare to European donor support? Is government funding different from private foundation funding?

MISA stakeholders noted a perceived difference between various donors in their approach to funding and influencing MISA's development. These differences often stemmed from the respective geopolitical and strategic interests of the donor countries or organisations, i.e., the international NGOs that often manage and receive national donor funding like USAID or Sida funding and then redistribute the aid to local organisations.

Discussions about donor funding models elicited many respondents. Respondents highlighted that some donors used mechanisms like basket funding, pooling resources from multiple donors for broader, more strategic initiatives. Most pointed out that funding models have not really changed in the past 30 years. The perception was that these donors can be too inflexible, as one respondent said, 'the EU is the worst of the lot; they are not flexible. In many instances it has not resulted in sustainable organisations, they have rather led to unsustainable, devastation of local media system' (KII, female, former MISA director, now civil society organisation, Namibia).

Many respondents said that governmental donors such as USAID, Sida and the EU employ a funding model that channels large grants and funding awards to international NGOs that specialize in media development (like Internews, IREX, IMS, Free Press Unlimited) and in turn these NGOs redistribute the funding to local organisations. Local respondents interviewed for this case study did not feel that this pass-through approach was an effective model. According to one respondent, with this type of donor funding, 50 percent of donor funding rarely finds its way back to the country or area of need in the Global South. Moreover, respondents said they felt NGO partners, such as

IMS, Internews, and Fojo hold on to an 'intermediary monopoly' with preferential treatment and important access to media development funders. Several respondents questioned this monopoly:

> There's a kind of competition for getting access to all this funding. the international media development groups have become a business…. When that funding ended, we lost five key people. (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe)

> There's a threat of international media intermediaries…. They justify this on the idea that there is no local capacity. This is a dangerous trend. It's a monopoly structure and it is exploitative. (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe)

> The media aspects of the [USAID-supported program] are so dispersed and ad hoc that they cannot even speak to sustainability in a five-year period. (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe)

Other differences among donors cited by respondents include:

- **Regional priorities and strategies:** According to MISA stakeholders, European donors were noted for focusing on specific geographical regions or issues within media development as opposed to the more general, thematic strategies of USAID.
- **Political and ideological influences:** The political and ideological stances of donor countries or organisations significantly influenced their funding priorities. For instance, shifts in government in donor countries, such as the change to a conservative administration in Denmark, more restrictive funding priorities, impacted organisations like MISA.
- **Approach to media development:** Few donors generally focused on fostering a free and independent press, choosing to emphasize specific areas like poverty reduction or social issues, steering media organisations to align with these priorities. For example:

> The Scandinavians are concerned with issues of professionalism, creating media that is ethical to be accountable to people. The Americans focus on investigative journalism,

> training those who hold power to account [on] issues like corruption and malpractices. (KII, male, journalist, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe)

Respondents cited shorter-term, project-based funding as a strategy of government donors, while private foundations provided longer-term funding. As one respondent said, 'I appreciate that government donors have constraints in providing long-term funding. The opportunity is with foundations' (KII, male, former MISA director and current consultant, Namibia). And another noted, 'If you take embassies or specific donor agencies it depends on their interests. Foundations are broader' (KII, female, former MISA director and current civil society member, Namibia).

- **Expectations and donor requirements:** Some donors, respondents cited as more stringent with reporting and outcomes, emphasizing metrics and efficiencies, whereas others had adopted more flexible or focused on long-term capacity building.
- **Adaptability to changing media landscapes**: Respondents also pointed to differences in how donors adapted (or failed to adapt) to changing media landscapes, such as the rise of digital media. Some donors were quicker to recognize and fund initiatives in new media technologies and platforms, while others remained focused on traditional media formats.

Respondents were hopeful about the entry of donors like the International Fund for Public Interest Media, and the newly developed OECD Principles for effective media development – at the time of the research for this dissertation the principles being developed. With regards to IFPIM, respondents noted that it was too early to tell if it would make a significant difference, and it was unclear if IFPIM would fund efforts like MISA.

6.5: Critical concerns expressed about donors and their influence on MISA and media development overall

There are many questions that are raised by the MISA case study. How do the different funding models that donors use impact the types of support they can offer? How has donor funding changed in the past three decades? Is there a significant difference in the relationship between donors and grantees? Has there been a notable change in recent years in terms of donor support for locally led development? How do local actors feel about donor funding models in terms of current media and democracy goals? These questions form the basis for understanding how donor funding models influence the development of media systems from the perspective of the stakeholders interviewed for MISA. Some concerns that were raised by many respondents were:

- **Donor dependency**: Continuing reliance on donor funding makes activities hard to sustain and forced MISA to adapt to changing donor priorities that sometimes diverged from its core mission and demands of its chapters. Donors significantly influenced MISA's focus areas which meant that shifts in donor priorities sometimes lead to abrupt changes in MISA's strategy, impacting its effectiveness on its long-term goals.
- **Middle-class bias:** A former MISA director noted that, in order to appeal to donors, much of its work, including campaigns and advocacy tended to have a middle-class bias that failed to engage broader segments of society, particularly those in rural areas, limiting the overall impact on democratisation and freedom. This view is countered by some who said that donor funding helped expand access to information for marginalized populations and communities that would not be able to access relevant media otherwise.
- **Challenges in regional integration:** While donors supported regional cooperation, their influence sometimes led to competition among organisations for limited funds. This

competition could hinder collaborative efforts and regional solidarity in media development.

- **Shift from media freedom to other agendas**: There was a concern that donors sometimes pushed for MISA to align with their changing agendas, such as poverty reduction or other socio-political priorities, which might not align with MISA's core focus on media freedom and development.
- **Overemphasis on metrics:** The donor-driven emphasis on efficiency and project outcomes, often measured through tools like the logical framework approach, sometimes overshadowed impact indicators of empowering citizens and fostering a free and independent media landscape.
- **Failure to adapt to new media landscapes:** One respondent noted that MISA did not adequately adapt to and embrace digital and social media early on. She noted the lag in adaptation was partly due to resistance from the older generation within the media development sector and not to donor priorities.
- **Lack of diverse funding models:** A shared opinion from respondents was a need for MISA to explore innovative ways and more diverse sources to support media development, particularly in the private sector, and to reduce its dependence on traditional donor funding.

While donor support has been crucial for MISA and for media development in Southern Africa as a whole, these challenges above, some respondents argued, point to the importance of more sustainable, inclusive, and adaptable strategies for media development. One suggestion was to stimulate grassroots support, 'Donor funding is too top-down…. It would be better if it came from the grassroots, from the people themselves' (KII, male, civil society organisation, Zimbabwe). Another respondent said donors need to provide more core funding, 'Core funding is vital. No

organisation anywhere can survive without this' (KII, male, media outlet, Zimbabwe). Most respondents agreed that shifting media development priorities to be defined by local needs must happen, 'The modernisation paradigm has largely continued' (KII, male, journalist, Zimbabwe) and 'While donors have talked about the new era of partnerships – this has not happened' (KII, male, consultant, Namibia).

6.6: Case Analysis: Lessons Learned Related to Media Development and the Media Institute of Southern Africa

6.6.1: Key Observations

MISA's history is marked by significant advocacy successes and strategic expansions, underpinned by its foundational commitment to the principles of the Windhoek Declaration. The organisation's journey through growth, challenge, and transformation reflects the dynamic nature of media development and freedom of expression advocacy in Southern Africa. MISA's ability to navigate financial, operational, and strategic challenges highlights the importance of adaptability and resilience in the non-profit sector, particularly in the ever-evolving media landscape. The ongoing process of re-evaluation and restructuring suggests a future-focused MISA ready to address contemporary issues while staying true to its core mission of promoting independent and pluralistic media in Africa.

In the end, the MISA story captures the highs and the lows of media development. It explains the limits of the normative theories of the press approach. It shows the limits of donor funding and that in the end donors did not really have a strategy beyond the 'if they build it, they will come' because it is a good thing to do. Little was done to support localisation, to assist long-term strategies, and to make sure that resilience was a key factor for MISA. The MISA story also underscores the tension between local and international development and suggests inherent

weaknesses in the current donor strategy of project-based funding instead of the long-term institutional support organisations like MISA need to endure. MISA's story documents the birth of an important civil society-led movement for press freedom and media strengthening in Southern Africa but it is also a story about the donors, their intentions, and their unintended consequences. While donor support has been much appreciated, MISA's 30-year trajectory shows how the lack of clear donor strategies jeopardized its full potential. While my research has pointed to the importance of donor-funded media development in the spread of liberal democratic media, civil society and media organisations that are reliant on donor funding for their survival remain on precarious ground and continue to be vulnerable.

The distribution of funds hasn't changed. When it came to the allocation of funds, respondents were mostly critical. Respondents are critical of the monopoly of the media development model that has emerged with a set list of key actors like BBC Media Action, DW Akademie, Free Press Unlimited, IREX, Internews, and IMS, for example, always being dominant. One respondent noted, 'In essence, they are the institutions that are controlling how media ecosystems structures will be operated, but without thinking [about] how local institutions themselves will exist' (KII, male, civil society, Zimbabwe).

6.6.2: Looking at the past 30+ years of media development assistance for MISA, what can we say about where it is going and where it should be going?

As respondents noted MISA faces significant challenges in sustaining operations in the future, particularly in terms of funding. Despite its established reputation, it struggles with a business model that relies heavily on donor funding, leading to a constant struggle for financial resources. That said, even with its financial struggles MISA can point to significant impact. Most respondents

noted that it has made meaningful contributions to media development and freedom of expression, even in the face of financial difficulties.

> MISA is still needed; it has its role to play. Some form of regional cooperation is needed... The (civil society and media advocacy) players need to cooperate. Funders need to recognize that there's a lot of fighting amongst organisations for funding. (KII, female, academic, South Africa)

Media freedoms are not given on a platter: they will only come about through the power of lobbying and advocacy and, thus the need for MISA will continue. As one respondent said:

> We learned that media freedoms are not given on a platter. There's a need to always fight for them... The issue of advocacy and lobbying is a continuous process for a long period. (KII, female, former MISA staff member, academic, South Africa)

The leadership of media development activists matters in building better relationships with donors that can address both the funding limitations and the clarity of expectations. MISA has had significant turnovers of senior staff and both past and present MISA leaders interviewed noted that there is a need to weed people out who were just in it for the money. It needs to develop enough of a financial base that it can plan better for succession. It also needs to play a more significant role in setting the funding agendas to strongly align its funding to its program and avoid taking whatever is available. This will help to move away from the financial crises of the past. As a MISA leader said, 'We are dealing with human beings – human beings are selfish. Human beings show themselves who they want to be. NGOs and media, as players who take advantage of donors and funding, use it for the wrong purposes' (KII, male, former MISA staff member and current media development consultant, Namibia).

Its program has been increasingly clear about what it needs and, along with its social capital across the region, respondents expressed a guarded optimism about its potential for growing its strength. As one said, 'In MISA's early life, MISA was guided by the funders in what areas to

focus on. It was later on that MISA became confident in itself to steer the boat in the direction it wanted' (KII, male, civil society, Zimbabwe). These funding relationships in the future will explore a new regime based on this confidence in a local agenda that is fully aligned with the pursuit of democratic rights. But it will need to reach out and develop new relationships and new sources of funding, 'Funders/ donors gave birth to this baby – but sometimes you have to let it go. To fend for itself and find its feet' (KII, male, former MISA staff member, Namibia)

What MISA's story tells us is that the impact of donor support on media systems in restrictive environments like those of Southern Africa 'need to be measured from what you can see on the ground' (KII, male, civil society, Zimbabwe). For example, MISA's chapters have helped the licensing of new television stations and the emergence of community radio stations, marking a significant shift from a previously monopolized media space. Partner organisations like VMC and MAZ have played pivotal roles in fostering self-regulation, contributing to the proliferation of media startups, and thus expanding the diversity of voices across the country. This media capacitation and diversification are largely attributed to donor support, which, despite its challenges, has been instrumental in promoting media plurality. However, the effectiveness of this support is often tempered by its duration; short-term projects yield limited results, highlighting the need for long-term, sustainable donor engagement to achieve more profound and lasting impacts on the media ecosystem.

Chapter 7: Discussion of Gaps in Media Development Thinking

7.1: Overview of the Discussion Chapter

This chapter discusses how the findings from my grounded-theory study of how donor strategies impact the development of media systems relate to my research questions, aims, and objectives, including how findings are positioned against the literature reviewed and the conceptual framework. In doing so, the chapter offers a summary of key findings and an analysis of key themes and trends to position findings in both academic and practitioner literature and review the gaps in the literature. Finally, this chapter discusses the implications of my dissertation's findings for media development scholarship and practice by offering an analysis of lessons learned and how this could inform future trajectories of donor-funded media assistance.

7.2: Summary of Findings

This study's objectives and research questions aimed to understand how donor strategies have impacted the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries. Five key research questions informed this study:

RQ1. What is the purpose of media development?

RQ2. What role have donors played in the development of media systems?

RQ3. How do donor funding models influence the development of media systems?

RQ4. How does media development contribute to democratisation?

RQ5. What are the primary lessons learned from 30 years of media development?

I answered these questions through a combination of observational research, key informant interviews, document review, case study research, and autoethnography. Key themes that emerged from this study include: contentious power dynamics among media development stakeholders, the struggle to localise media development, the need to re-think how to better support localisation of development, a call for improved strategic support for leadership training for individuals leading media development organisations, the positive influence of donor support on influencing liberal models of normative theories of the press, the continued prominence of Cold War era thinking that shapes donor strategies, and the rationales behind justifications for media assistance. Before turning to an analysis of these themes, I will review the summary of core findings relevant to the five broad research questions, which are presented below.

I. What is the purpose of media development?

Based on a review and analysis of the key informant interviews done, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the overarching purpose of media assistance is to support the establishment and maintenance of free and independent media. This core rationale stems from a fundamental belief: a healthy, functioning democracy is impossible without independent media.

Many respondents shared their view that the concept of the Fourth Estate, originating from the French Revolution, remains relevant today. This conceptualization suggests that the press possesses both the explicit capacity for advocacy and the implicit ability to frame political issues, underpinning the reasons why donors consider media support crucial for democracy promotion. This is rooted in the idea of watchdog journalism and the related ideals about media's ability to give a voice to the people and serve as a conduit between the citizenry and the government. Interestingly, respondents were very quick to share that media development served an essential purpose as part of democracy promotion, and many shared their views that because of donor

support the objective of jumpstarting and supporting truly independent media was the core vital function of media development. In this regard, most respondents shared that their view of independent media is shaped by the idea of media in a transitional setting, whether through regime change or in a moment of an opening up of society and that it served an important role in nurturing and supporting the modalities needed to bring about independent media.

In the initial years following the post-Communist transitions and post-Apartheid era media reforms, the focus on independence was very much tied to freedom from the state. However, starting in the 2000s and through to today, the struggle for independence from the state and overt government control has been joined by the need to be free and independent from oligarchs, corrupt business purposes, as well as newer forms of digital colonialism and growing incumbents from Big Tech (The concept of Big Tech generally includes the Big Five tech companies in the United States: Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Apple, Meta, and Microsoft). The rise of Big Tech and its relevance to the current and future trajectory of media development is clearly a priority for future research and will be a major aspect of donor strategies going forward. We are already seeing this in a myriad of ways, from discussions about artificial intelligence and journalism, to considerations of content moderation and how to best regulate the information online, to heated debates about how to address issues of market failure and journalism due to the loss of advertising revenue.

In addition, the influence of historical efforts and ideological shifts in international media development thinking owe much to the legacy of the New World Information and Communication Order. This movement has significantly shaped the evolution of media development, with its diplomatic efforts laying the groundwork for several media development programs and fostering a values-based discourse that continues to influence contemporary debates. Similarly, the work of UNESCO and its convening power, which led to seminars and roundtables that laid the foundation

for the Windhoek Declaration, continue to inspire and shape ideologies, rationales, and rationalisation for media development. Respondents who were interviewed for the MISA case study were particularly still attached to the influence of NWICO and Windhoek, which they all reported as shaping their thinking, motivations, and sensibilities related to the goals and objectives of media assistance.

In a somewhat different vein, the necessity of donor support is also a core finding when it came to how interviewees perceived the purpose of media development. Donor funding is needed to compensate for the deeper issue of a lack of quality, reliable, independent news, and information. This is particularly acute in the Global South, where there is often a scarcity of free and independent media. This scarcity has led to concerns over the spread of news deserts—areas with little to no local media—and media extinction events—when independent media simply die out. The situation is further exacerbated by the phenomenon of media capture, meaning that oligarchs or states simply acquire the media to serve their own purposes, thus effectively dismantling the idea of independence. The lack of access to high-quality, independent media was a concern for respondents, and thus, they noted that media development serves the purpose of ensuring access to truthful and accurate information that is crucial for enabling citizens to make informed decisions, a fundamental principle that drives donor support for media development. As one former donor noted, 'In countries around the world where media development has taken place, the situation for independent media is dire, but the remaining independent media outlets are the ones funded by donors. If the sector didn't exist you wouldn't have these outlets' (KII, male, former donor, South Africa). It is worth noting, however, that the effects of donor funding on the quality of content and how the availability of access to independent sources of news and information effects attitudes; public opinion and decision-making overall is not a very understood or studied

subject. Additional research and scholarship are needed in this vein to understand the consequences of donor funding on public attitudes and opinions and to ascertain any agenda-setting function of donor-funded media and its overarching effect on news and information ecosystems in the countries where media development takes place.

Such research and empirical studies notwithstanding, according to those interviewed, donor support for media development addresses various forms of market failure, providing alternatives to state-run, overly commercialised, or oligarch-controlled media. There is a prevailing sentiment that neither capitalism nor the free market alone can sustain professional, quality journalism or support sustainable, public-interest media. International aid agencies, private foundations, media development loan funds, and specialized media funds fill a crucial gap by supporting media initiatives that might otherwise struggle to survive. While donor-funded media development was most certainly guided by the Four Theories of the Press sensibilities and to a great extent still is, the models put forward by Siebert, et al., do not easily fit into the current reality of most media development operating environments. The commercial advertising model is broken, and since commercialism plays such a big part in in the Libertarian Model, this is a serious flaw in the overall approach and application of the theory. Nonetheless, the normative sensibilities that it implies remain a core focus, and media development donors are still pushing for commercial advertising as a way for media to become viable and sustainable businesses. A case in point is the USAID-funded and Internews implemented Media Viability Accelerator project.[29] Similarly, a group of

[29] According to Internews, The Media Viability Accelerator (MVA) is a web-based platform that will pool anonymous data from media organisations globally, enabling independent newsrooms to discover what works for others and apply those learnings to their own business. Free of charge, participating outlets will learn from a community of peers, access a multilingual tool that visualizes media performance data, and receive actionable daily alerts based on thousands of market and media sources. Users can also access a diverse MVA marketplace of government, nonprofit, and business services to find investors, funders, advertisers, technology solutions and advisors. Available on website accessed June 2, 2024. Building Now: The Media Viability Accelerator - Information Saves Lives | Internews

Western NGOs that includes BBC Media Action, Internews, IREX, CIMA, Fondation Hirondelle, International Media Support and Free Press Unlimited have set up a 'Media Viability Manifesto' that seeks to address the challenge that independent media face due to the collapse of traditional business models. The manifesto seeks to find common ground to support the survival of public interest media a time of rapid technological change (DW Akademie, 2023). These newer initiatives are rooted in the same type of liberalism that is implied in the Four Theories of the Press Models and seem to encourage media development actors.

Another common refrain from respondents was the challenge that democratic backsliding and models of illiberal democracy pose to independent media. Most respondents shared that the current challenges to democracy—including the proliferation of disinformation, eroding trust in government and media, pervasive corruption, disruptive digital technologies, and rising inequality—all underscore the need for robust, independent media. Such media entities serve not only as a check on power but also function as societal historians and record keepers, maintaining a public interest function by representing the voice of the people.

But why does the media need funding support to begin with? What is the case for donor support? In part, for most donors, it stems from addressing the democratic deficit, as referenced above, that has resulted from a lack of quality, reliable, independent news, and information. The case for support is not only about addressing the democratic deficit but also concerns the lack of a sustainable funding model for independent media. This crisis is global, but poorer countries, with their economically and politically disenfranchised populations, are likely to suffer the most. For example, a consultation I conducted for the International Fund for Public Interest Media noted that news media were projected to lose approximately $23.8 billion in annual advertising revenue between 2017 and 2021. It is estimated that more than 10% of these losses, around $3 billion, will

be sustained by local news media, which historically have been the main providers of public interest information for communities around the world.[30] A significant portion of this loss affects local news media, traditionally the primary providers of public interest information. While this crisis is worldwide, poorer countries – with economically and politically disenfranchised populations – will be most affected in this downward trend.

For much of the world, especially in developing countries, there is a scarcity of free and independent media that has resulted in the rise in the number of news deserts (places with little or no access to local media or in some cases any media), and a spread of the phenomenon of media capture (Shiffrin, CIMA). The idea that a functioning democracy relies on access to truthful and factual information in order for citizens to make more informed choices is a central donor motivation for funding media development. If citizens don't have access to information, people cannot exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Understanding democracy as the driving force behind media development reveals both its power and its limitations. While democracy promotion remains a central theme and raison d'ê·tre for why donors fund media development, the practical applications and understandings of what democracy entails vary significantly, as the term is often exploited by leaders who claim democratic ideals only when convenient, i.e., Hungary's Victor Orban, El Salvador's Bukele. This complex landscape makes the role of donor-supported media development more crucial than ever, as it strives to uphold the ideals of a true democratic society.

[30] See: https://gfmd.info/international-fund-for-public-interest-media-next-steps/. The report, Stakeholder Consultation Report Establishing A New International Fund For Public Interest Media, November 2019, is on file with the Global Forum For Media Development.

II. What role have donors played in the development of media systems?

Donors play several pivotal roles in the development of media systems, especially in transitional and developing countries. Here are the main roles highlighted based on the findings from interviews, the case study, and auto-ethnographic research: financial support and sustainability, capacity building, promotion of democratic values, support for marginalized voices, advocacy, and ideological influences on how the media system should operate crisis support, and promotion of liberal media models.

Donors provide crucial financial resources that sustain media organisations, particularly in environments where local funding is insufficient or unavailable. This support is essential for keeping media operations functional and for maintaining independence from governmental or commercial pressures. In addition, donors invest in training and developing media personnel, enhancing journalists' skills, and improving organisational capacities. This is vital for media outlets to produce high-quality, professional journalism and operate effectively within their socio-political contexts. Furthermore, according to respondents, many donors fund media development with the aim of promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance. This involves supporting media outlets that provide a platform for free expression and that serve as watchdogs against corruption and abuse of power. In addition, donors often focus on ensuring that underrepresented and marginalized communities have a voice in the media landscape. By funding media outlets that serve these communities, donors help to foster a more inclusive and diverse media environment. Donors also use media development as a tool to spread liberal ideals and to reinforce their own country’s foreign policy objectives. This can involve pushing for media reforms that align with Western models of press freedom and journalistic practice. In regions experiencing political, economic, or social upheaval, donors provide essential support to help

media outlets continue their operations. This becomes particularly important in contexts where media is at risk of suppression or collapse due to external pressures. Finally, donors encourage the adoption of liberal media models that emphasize objectivity, professionalism, and independence. This role involves a significant amount of cultural and ideological export, particularly from Western donors to other parts of the world.

Overall, donors have a multifaceted and significant impact on media development, intertwining financial support with strategic goals of democratisation and capacity building. However, this involvement is not without criticism, particularly concerning issues of dependency, the appropriateness of imported models, and the sufficiency of direct support to local media entities.

III. How do donor funding models influence the development of media systems?

The influence of donor funding models on the development of media systems is significant and multifaceted. Donor funding contributes to the sustainability and capacity building of local media and civil society organisations that support free and independent media, promote liberal media ideals, and support marginalized communities, it may negatively lead to donor dependency, which can impact local media systems, localisation, and democratisation, and operational and administrative challenges. Donor funding models significantly influence the development of media systems in seven ways:

First, donors provide support for financial stability.

Donors provide essential funding to sustain media organisations, particularly in regions where local financial resources are scarce. This support helps keep media operations running and supports their capacity building. For many media outlets, particularly in places like Africa, donor funding is often the primary, if not the only, source of financial support. This funding enables media

organisations to provide training and development for journalists, which is crucial for maintaining high journalistic standards and supporting media that cannot rely on government funding.

Second, donors often focus on developing the skills of journalists and media personnel that are crucial for maintaining professional standards in journalism.

This includes training in ethical journalism, investigative techniques, and the use of new technologies. Support for capacity building and skill development was highlighted by respondents as a core contribution of what donors provide to the development of media systems.

Third, the role of donors in promoting democratic values was a frequent theme in this research.

Respondents noted that donor funding frequently targets the promotion of democracy, good governance, and human rights. This is achieved by supporting media that act as watchdogs on power and provide platforms for diverse voices in society, including marginalized and underrepresented communities, for example to the poorest and most underrepresented in rural Zimbabwe or for women, LGBTQ+ and other traditionally underserved and underrepresented communities or for Roma in places like Hungary and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. Donors often fund media initiatives that align with their own values, such as the promotion of democracy, good governance, and human rights. This can include pushing for media systems that support freedom of expression and diversity of opinion, which aligns with the donors' foreign policy and cultural values. Donors significantly contribute to media that serves and amplifies the voices of marginalized communities. This support is crucial in regions where these communities are often underrepresented in mainstream media. By funding media development in these areas, donors help ensure a more inclusive media landscape that represents diverse perspectives and experiences.

Fourth, donor-funded media support influences media policies and practices.

Donors can influence media systems by pushing for liberal ideas of media operation that align with their foreign policy interests or cultural values. This can include supporting media practices that are common in the donor's country but may be new or different in the recipient country. Donor support influences the advocacy and policy-making agenda and has ideological influences in the way that Craig LeMay describes in *Exporting Press Freedom* (2009). Donors often use media development as a tool to advocate for specific political or social changes within a country. This can include funding media campaigns that align with the donor's strategic interests. It is noteworthy, however, that no one interviewed for this research was overtly critical of the American or European agenda. This could be due to the sample of respondents who tended to favour liberal, democratic models of the press and whose views were aligned with a human rights-oriented view of media systems in general. In other words, no one was pushing for illiberal models or critiquing the idea of international standards and best practices around freedom of expression and access to information. They were all inclined to take on the same values and views as outlined in the Windhoek Declaration and appreciated Western donor support to maintain the funding needed to continue a media advocacy agenda that is anchored in human rights sensibilities.

Fifth, in environments where media is subject to government control or heavy commercial pressures, donor funding helps support independent media outlets that provide unbiased news and information to the public.

The trend for donor support to offset forms of media capture and to help maintain some semblance of free and independent media is, unfortunately, becoming more of a norm globally. In this regard, media funding helps to address market failures. Donors sometimes step in to support media in places where the market fails to provide sufficient resources for quality journalism. This is particularly important in developing countries where media outlets might struggle financially.

Sixth, donor funding is not without criticism.

Funding models may lead to challenges in locally led media development and create the potential for donor dependency. Despite criticisms of donor dependency as well as critiques of localisation, there is a movement toward more localised funding models that aim to support local media directly rather than through Western intermediaries. This approach is intended to build local capacity and reduce reliance on international NGOs. There was some discussion about the implications of donor funding based on long-term development vs. short-term development goals. Donor funding is sometimes criticized for focusing on short-term achievements rather than long-term media development goals. This can lead to a cycle of dependency without sustainable growth or development. Overall, donor funding models play a complex role in shaping media systems. They provide crucial support that can enhance media freedom and quality, but they also bring challenges, especially regarding the independence and long-term sustainability of media organisations. So far there have been few examples of where donor funding has led to media or civil society organisations focused on media issues that are able to go it alone without donor funding. Moreover, some respondents noted that donor funding may have a structural influence on the media itself. The mechanisms and frameworks used by donors, such as grants, contracts, and loans, shape how media organisations operate. These funding models come with specific requirements and expectations that can influence the editorial and operational independence of media outlets. In this regard, the MISA case study is an interesting example, as due to donor requirements, the media were forced to take on editorial coverage related to HIV/ AIDS or other types of health reporting work. Recipients may also have to adopt an agenda or a focus that aligns with the donor's priorities in order to fit in with the donor's mandates or priorities for the year or period of performance. This can have negative effects on media outlets and civil society and further impede their development. That said, respondents were generally not overtly critical of donors

regarding any form of censorship or stepping over the line in terms of insisting on any changes to content or editorial remits.

While donor funding supports media development, it can also lead to dependencies that might inhibit the long-term sustainability and independence of local media. Funding models that primarily involve Western NGOs as intermediaries can sometimes stifle local initiative and innovation by prioritizing Western methods and standards. This can create a dynamic where local media remain dependent on international funding, lacking the capability or resources to operate independently. There was a somewhat critical discourse around the need for more localised funding models that directly support local media outlets and civil society organisations. Such direct funding could enhance the impact of aid and reduce the overhead costs associated with intermediaries. However, despite discussions on localisation, significant funding still flows through established international NGOs, limiting the direct benefits to local entities.

In addition, respondents noted that donor funding models create an administrative burden associated with managing donor funds that can be significant and detrimental to their operations. Compliance with financial reporting requirements, managing contracts, and adhering to strict program evaluations are often challenging for local organisations, which may lack the capacity to meet these demands efficiently.

In summary, donor funding models have a profound impact on the development of media systems, particularly in developing countries. These models support vital media operations and promote key values like democracy and human rights. However, they also create challenges related to dependency, localisation, and operational efficiency. In moving forward, there is a growing need

to adapt these models to better support local media ecosystems and reduce reliance on Western intermediaries, fostering more sustainable and independent media landscapes.

IV. How does media development contribute to democratisation?

Media development has had a complex relationship with democratisation efforts, with both positive contributions and significant challenges. Media development efforts have often focused on nurturing outlets that can operate independently of government and corporate interests. By providing financial and technical support to these media entities, donors have helped maintain a diversity of voices in the media landscape, which is crucial for a democratic society.

Media outlets supported through development efforts are crucial in holding governments accountable. Investigative journalism, enabled by donor funding, has played a role in exposing corruption, mismanagement, and other abuses of power, thereby promoting transparency.

By supporting media outlets, donors help foster a more vibrant public sphere where different viewpoints can be expressed and debated. This is fundamental to the democratic process, as it involves the public in discussions on policies and societal issues.

The limitations and challenges of donor funding bear some mention. Reliance on foreign funding can undermine media outlets' perceived independence, making them vulnerable to criticisms of bias and reducing their credibility among the local population. In Hungary and similar contexts, there has been a significant issue with media capture, where ostensibly independent media are bought or influenced by pro-government interests. This undermines the media's role in democratisation by limiting its ability to act as a check on power. Donor funding has so far not solved the media capture challenge, according to respondents, nonetheless, it creates a means by which independent media and civil society can try to hold ground and maintain at least some

opening for civic space. Donor funding is vital, but not a panacea. In situations where democratic institutions are weak or where there is a lack of political will to support democratic governance, media development efforts alone may not be effective. Without robust legal frameworks and protections, media cannot function effectively as a democratic tool. Based on a review of the interviews, there is some degree of media development funding ineffectiveness in challenging environments. It becomes hard to document or make the case that media development makes a difference. That said, it is hard to evaluate or research the counterfactual, i.e., comparing the observed results to those you would expect if the intervention had not been implemented.[31] It could be the case that the media situation would be entirely more problematic or worse off if not for donor funding.

Some other limitations that were noted that impede media development's impact on democratisation included the observation that media development strategies that do not sufficiently consider local cultural and political contexts may fail to resonate with or impact the local populace. This can limit the effectiveness of media in promoting democratic values and practices. In addition, donor strategies often focus on short-term projects and outcomes, which may not sustain the long-term health and independence of media institutions leading to a cycle where media outlets are continually dependent on external support, undermining their role in a sustainable democratic process.

In summary, while media development can contribute significantly to democratisation by supporting independent media, enhancing public discourse, and promoting transparency, its

[31] For an overview of what a counterfactual is and why evaluators and researchers think it is important, see Better Evaluation. https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/rainbow-framework/understand-causes/compare-results-counterfactual#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20three%20tasks%20involved%20in%20understanding,that%20it%20is%20essential%20to%20include%20a%20counterfactual. Access o 6/2/2024.

impact is heavily moderated by the extent of local ownership, the alignment of donor goals with local needs, and the broader political and economic environment. For media development to effectively contribute to democratisation, it must be part of a broader, more integrated approach to supporting democratic institutions and practices.

V. What are the primary lessons learned from 30 years of media development?

How has donor funding changed from 1989 to present? Is there a significant difference in terms of the relationship between donors and grantees? If you look at various trends in more detail, there are many changes to what donors are willing to fund and what they prioritize. While their core focus has always been on democracy and supporting democratisation, the activities, programs, and overall strategies about how to support media development and democratisation have seen many shifts. In the early years donors were focused on professionalizing the system. They then moved to content production, then projects aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the field. In this same time, a core focus was on advocacy and policy projects, and efforts to establish and build the media environment—keeping in mind that in the early days in Central and Eastern Europe and most parts of Africa media development was taking place in the context of previously closed societies, and environments where there was little to no independent media development, little to no commercial or advertising sector, and in the wake of post-communist or post-apartheid era constitution making and regulatory reform in progress. In many cases, media development was happening alongside state building and in the context to regime change and transition. Over time, this gave way to a more stable environment. Funding continued along many of those same pathways, but donors also shifted their focus to technology and innovation. The rise of Big Tech-Google, Facebook (Meta), and Twitter (now X) influenced a lot of donor thinking and caused several disruptions to the media environments. A lot of funding became focused on innovation--there was a profound interest to

fund innovation, which was driven by the rise of technology and the internet. The technology-based interruptions had a huge influence on media development--for good and bad. Donors had to really shift their thinking to supporting the mere survival of journalism. Looking back to the past 30 years of media development it is striking how many changes the sector has really been through. In the early days of the 'post-89' moment, funding was focused on supporting print media, getting access to or buying printing presses. The focus then became about television broadcasting and building out news departments with a heavy focus on the support and development of commercial television stations in countries that previously only had a state broadcaster and said state broadcaster became the focus of attention and efforts were aimed at how to transition it into a public service broadcaster. Then the digital disruption happened. Suddenly, a whole new world opened up, and the shift was on digitalization and without much warning, all bets were off in terms of media models and the 'ideal types' for how to develop the media. With the rise of Google and Facebook in particular, the advertising market was gutted. Commercial models of the media were destroyed, and media development grappled with how to take its effort online. An awkward period ensued in which media developed straddled between the analogue and digital realms of the information ecosystems of each operating environment. Each new technology brought promises of new frontiers and new solutions, coupled with fears of destruction and the death of journalism as we knew it. Now we are firmly in the era of artificial intelligence, and somehow media development has settled into a space where there is not a one-size-fits all type of media development, and digitalization has indeed taken hold, but with a recognition that there is still a relevant role for radio, television, newspapers, and other forms of media.

How should media development change in the mix of all this uncertainty about technology? And should democracy still be the ultimate goal? To get at answers to these questions, several

respondents noted that what the sector really needs is a much more solid assessment framework, which would better answer questions related to what is the policy environment? What will be helped? What are the financial needs; what already exists in the country? (This should be data-based) How many media outlets will be funded, for how long and what is the case for need? How does media development support or further the goals of public interest media and what does this look like and how is it paid for?

One of the key observations from my research was that the lack of media policy leads to many problems. What does this mean? It was a consistent theme amongst interviewees that media law and policy have an outsized influence on the direction of media development. So many aspects of media development hinge on the laws and regulations as well as norms and values that underpin media systems. Reflecting on the Windhoek Declaration and its calls for press freedom, and in thinking about the liberal democratic values that media development is associated with, it is no wonder that greater attention on media policy was highlighted as a core need for the donor and implementer community to focus on, but how to get there and what to fund in 2024 is indeed a big question. The donor community needs to look back at the policy and media environment patterns over the past 30 years and then look ahead and do some serious forecasting to see where it should be investing to ensure that the enabling environment side of media development can keep pace with all the technological developments as well as democratic backsliding tendencies of government. Without supporting media law and policy related aspects of media development, the overarching goals and ambitions of media development will not likely work out in the long run. As one former donor put it, there needs to be a parallel track of media development by donors to better keep pace with the strategies and tactics taken by oligarchs. How this gets done is something

that the sector really needs to grapple with, as there are no easy answers or set of tools to guide the sector.

And while democracy may still be the primary goal or focus of media development, serious discussions and debates about how to get there, and what this means for donor strategies, need to be had. While democracy has always been the driving force for media development, based on my research, I think it would actually be a useful exercise to gather scholars and practitioners to look at the different models as outlined in *Four Theories of the Press*, especially the Libertarian theory, which asserts that truth is a natural right of man and the media should be free from any interference or regulation, and the Social Responsibility theory, which argues that the media have an obligation to serve the public interest and uphold democratic values and norms, remain the ultimate guideposts for much of donor thinking as well as for practitioners of media development. The Social Responsibility theory has probably always been the underlying value of most international media development strategies and thinking, though it is doubtful that any donors or practitioners have sat around with *Four Theories* or used the scholarly thinking as their compass, but upon talking with donors and reading their proclamations and strategic guidance, it is clear that media development is somehow a mix of the two theories: libertarian and social responsibility. While many scholars have critiqued the *Four Theories of the Press* for being relativistic, too embedded in a Cold War mentality, overtly American, myopic, and biased, its simplicity and effort to categorize media based on the social and political structures in which it operates still hold significant appeal.

Donor strategies and funding models were critiqued, with respondents noting that there is room for improvement and that they would like to see some changes. When it came to the allocation of funds, respondents were mostly critical. The donor funding model has not changed in 30 years,

especially for Western governmental donors like Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The distribution of funds hasn't changed either. The model that nearly all respondents described is that a new media program will come into formation and one of the mainstream Western media development NGOs will be the one to win it and they will then distribute funds locally, usually with a well-intentioned effort to allocate funding to as many local groups as possible, but respondents were aligned in their view that this was not a smart strategy nor one that contributed to sustainable development. In a typical scenario, if a Western donor has $5 or $10 million allocated for a media development program, local actors will typically see roughly fifty percent of this. The model that has stayed consistent and appears to be the same between different government donors in that the Western NGO takes 50% to cover administrative costs, overhead and funding needed to 'manage the shop' and oversee procurement and donor reporting requirements.

One thing that has changed, which the respondents all agree is not a good change, is that donors have gone from funding big ideas and institutional support to funding smaller activities and projects. Core costs for salaries, rent, insurance, and other basic costs that it takes to run media outlets and civil society organisations are hard to come by, so local media development actors have been forced into the position of having to 'live off fumes' or take on different projects or activities that are often cooked up in Washington, DC, London, Copenhagen, or other Western capitals. Local actors need the funding to keep going, so they take the projects and activities and find ways to make the money stretch and keep their local efforts going.

7.3: Analysis of Findings: An Observation of Trends and Major Themes

Based on key findings, the following major trends and themes emerged from my research bear mentioning.

The New World Information and Communication Order movement had an outsize influence on the shape and evolution of media development.

Importantly, many respondents noted the diplomatic efforts that were part of the New World Information and Communication Order as pivotal in starting several media development programs and serving as a strong foundation for much of the values-based discourse we are still debating. Old battles and debates like the New World Information and Communication Order and key ideological principles that fuelled debates around modernisation theory and that underpin academic discussion related to the enduring legacy of *Four Theories* remain relevant and lively. The debates haven't been resolved and the tension between liberalism and authoritarianism is a perennial one--this is where democracy promotion, media development and civil society strengthening have stepped in. In this tug of war between competing ideas about the role of the state, the level and quality of freedoms and rights.

Media development is a form of soft power.

The soft power function that media development donors, international NGOs, and actors play in promoting democratic ideals of liberal, democratic media has remained remarkably stable for thirty years. While not always thought about in the context of public diplomacy, several interviewees noted that this was in fact one of the most important de facto contributions of the sector beyond the financial support donors give to local media development projects. The soft power function that media development plays is seen in the ‘diplomatic turn’ that in recent years has been part of initiatives like President Biden’s Democracy Summit, etc., and are contemporary

variants of past efforts to use diplomatic power and state craft to help promote or advance the commitment by the league of democracies around the world in their support for certain values and priorities. It's questionable whether this version is any different than precursors from the Cold War period.

Media development serves as a way of correcting for forms of market failure and offers alternatives to state run, hyper commercial, or oligarchic media.

Even in the West, where free and independent media have long been considered an essential and established part of the overall democratic landscape, media organisations are increasingly, like their counterparts in the Global South, under threat politically and financially. Capitalism and the free market are not sustaining professional, quality journalism nor are they providing the means through which sustainable, public interest media can operate. Donor support, whether through international aid agencies, private foundation philanthropies, media development loan fund mechanisms, or specialized media funds--like IFPIM and others --fill an important gap. In all the countries I looked at for this study--Hungary, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe--all three media markets would be markedly different if not for donor funding. All started from a point of total and complete state control of the media-environments in which the only option was state-run TV, radio, and print. Some thirty years on from their initial starting points, they all have a much more diverse, pluralistic media environment. Though far from the ideal of democratic media, each remains a work in progress, they have all had very rich and interesting media development trajectories.

Hungary, perhaps, provides a cautionary tale about democratic backsliding and the herculean challenge of developing democratic media in the absence of a democratic state. It's an extreme example of when lack of political will combined with outright state capture of the media resulted in what was once a problematic, but promising, media system in transition to a liberal, democratic

model that has essentially returned to a state-controlled, authoritarian system, albeit within the parameters of a very different political reality than its communist past. There are still pockets of independent media through community radio and online/ digital platforms. Being a member of the EU, Hungary has access to media from around the world, so it's not completely closed off.

Marginalized communities benefit greatly from media development. Many respondents, mostly local beneficiaries, noted that one of the chief contributions of donor supported media development was providing a lifeline of support to marginalized communities. This came up as a key aspect of media development--often much more than democracy building or democracy promotion. Local beneficiaries, especially, saw media development as a way of funding media that could be heard in all communities, including information dark areas that represented women, and minority communities, and had the effect of ensuring pluralism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The centrality of civil society as the key means through which many wider goals of media development are realized is profound. Ultimately, much support for media development has laid the foundations for local, regional, and even global civil society organisations that are supportive of liberal, democratic, free, and open media. Still, they remain under-funded and often feel frustrated by the lack of direct funding and investment into local and regional civil society led efforts. Media play large roles in the provision of information needed by modern societies--democratic or otherwise. This outsize role of media, especially in the context of the digital societies in which we now live, is hard to ignore.

Media development seeks to find ways through which media, journalism and information can be shaped, curated, and developed to support their social good functions and to work with and through civil society to advocate for a liberal model of media and a democratic public sphere. This

idea of donor support going to aid in the legal enabling environment for free and independent media as a key means through which to bring about independent, free media was noted by many as a priority. The MISA case study is a masterclass in the study of media development. Civil society led approaches to media development are an understudied and underfunded area of media development. So much funding has gone to supporting journalists, media outlets, etc., but civil society, advocacy, and the engine through which democratic institutions are made, shaped, improved, changed, etc., are an essential piece of the puzzle.

Funding models have largely remained the same for thirty years, funding a small cadre of international organisations. This has led to stagnation and a feeling of disempowerment from local media development partners and beneficiaries. It stimies donor efforts that seek to advance localisation and contributes to the perception that donor aid mostly goes to sustaining international NGOs and Western-based organisations that serve as project managers and oversee the financial and administrative sides of managing donor money. In all three countries where I did research, there were few examples of where local media, civil society and partners were the direct recipients of funding, instead they relied on international NGOs who specialize in media assistance to serve as intermediaries. These intermediaries have largely remained the same set of actors for the past thirty years.

Sustainability of media development programs is misguided and requires a shift in thinking. Localised funding to support media development efforts started and sustained by donors is largely non-existent. While donors may have jumpstarted the media transitions, there are still few examples of where donor funded media is able to go it alone and successfully continue their operations absent continued contributions from the international development community, private foundations, or other sources. That media development efforts are not sustainable absent some

type of donor funding raises some serious issues. The media development community is beginning to grapple with this issue, as evidence by efforts like the creation of the International Fund for Public Interest Media and renewed calls to establish national media trusts and set up national and regional ways for media development funded outlets and civil society to survive and thrive. More research and scoping around alternatives to donor funding would be very useful and provide a lot of value added to a set of very complicated issues and challenges that local media and civil society are confronted with, especially in Global South and Global Majority countries.

Democracy as a frame of understanding the core motivating force for media development has remained the same for thirty years, though some respondents were critical of the idea of democracy and its meaning.

The lack of an overt strategy for most donors was called out by most respondents interviewed. Though, as some noted, having no strategy is, in itself, a form of having a strategy. By design it can be ambiguity, vague, and abstract. Having no policy is a policy; it serves a particular purpose at that point. The notion of power is fluid, it is negotiated. It necessitates adjustments and accommodation. When you are thinking of a strategy, you are thinking of a way of doing. When the strategy is not written, it is common sense. It is a common sensical system. It is accessible to those outside of it.

In trying to make sense of respondents' critique of the donor funding model, on one level, it really does seem that local actors are sceptical, even critical, of the monopoly of the media development model that has emerged with a set list of key actors like BBC Media Action, DW, Free Press Unlimited, IREX, Internews, and IMS, for example, always being at the forefront of programming and the primary recipients of funding. As one respondent commented, 'So in

essence, you see the emergence of monopolies in the donor support structures. They are the power of God' (KII, male, civil society, Zimbabwe). The respondent went on to note that while there are plenty of other local, regional, and even international organisations that could respond to calls for proposals, in the end, in his region, there is a monopoly of foreign actors that dominate, and this is unlikely to change. If it's Sida, it's IMS and Free Press Unlimited; if it's USAID, it's going to be Internews. 'So, in essence, they are the institutions that are controlling how media ecosystems structures will be operated, but without rethinking on how local institutions themselves will exist' (KII, male, civil society, Zimbabwe). This commentary was shared by nearly all respondents interviewed at the 'local level', meaning in the countries where media development operates. It signifies that localisation still has a long way to go before the promises of locally led media development manifest into the form and shape that local stakeholders would like to see. The commentary is also revealing in what it means for current attitudes and thinking around localising development, meaning that local media development actors feel that there is a power imbalance with too much power bestowed on the same set of international NGOs that helped shape media development into what it is today. This critique has several complexities to it, however, that require some unpacking.

First, the model of distributing funding primarily to Western NGOs first and then working through American or European implementing partners to redistribute the funds locally is indeed the dominant funding model, and it is fair to say that donor strategies and funding models have more or less remained the same for the past 30 years, it might be an oversimplification of the model to say that locally led development is not happening or that local actors are completely without any kind of power.

On the contrary, media development is best when it is locally led and when local civil society actors, researchers, and, of course, media drive the agenda. Where possible, government partnerships would also be ideal. Secondly, the case study research and the other interviews done as part of the fieldwork signify that local actors feel the donor funding model needs to be critiqued and evaluated. When local media and civil society see that a large sum of money, for instance, $5 million or $10 million, is being awarded, they feel frustrated that maybe half of the total amount might go to the local media scene. Respondents were critical that the operating model of NGOs and donors allowed for so much of the funding to get eaten up by management fees, administration, oversight of procurement, and overhead costs imposed by the international actors. The feeling of 'we're sick of getting scraps' that shaped much of my interest in looking at how donor strategies impacted local NGOs and media outlets directed, was a common refrain from local actors interviewed. Perhaps there is room for more direct funding by donors to local actors, especially in environments like Southern Africa where you have local partners that have been part of the media development landscape for 20-30 years. This leads to a third observation, the local actors like MISA, the Centre for Independent Journalists in Hungary, and the Independent Radio Network in Sierra Leone, have indeed been at the media development a long time. There are numerous other local civil society and media actors of a comparable stature – in terms of mission, vision, and organisational profile all around the world in the countries and regions where donors fund media development. That so few of these organisations take funding directly from Western donors is curious. Exceptions like the Open Society Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy do award directly to local actors. They might not be awarding tens of millions of dollars, but they do offer substantial awards to the local actors. It seems that if there were changes to the funding models, successful efforts that have found ways to successfully localise funding to

local media and civil society should be studied and better understood so that these models could be scaled and replicated where possible. This is, of course, not always possible. One threat to this is the current trend by some governments to enact Foreign Agents Laws, which makes it harder to fund and support independent media and civil society by Western donors. Moreover, by going through intermediaries like IMS, Internews, BBC Media Action, and Free Press Unlimited, donors get a lot of expertise and accountability for the management of funding as well as technical expertise that can help support media development in a variety of ways. Just as localisation should be the subject of much more critical reflection, the potential pitfalls of doing away with the International NGO model should also be studied. Donors, especially government donors or big institutions like the United Nations, have a lot of rules and regulations about finance and accountability. Setting up the needed systems to provide oversight and reporting on these requirements is sometimes a difficult and cumbersome process that could hinder overall media development. Setting up new --systems would also require donors to change their own staffing models, perhaps, as it would necessitate much more oversight and administrative burden on their end. A final observation about the donor funding model that has really left an impression is the immense amount of work and time that local actors must put into the money that they actually receive in the end. The ‘song and dance’ that is required for local civil society organisations and media outlets to partner with international NGOs and donors that fund media assistance is a unique experience. Hearing the stories of what local media and civil society had to go through to get their ‘slice of the pie’ leaves the impression that many local actors have to endure a lot of humiliation and frustration. It is not easy, and the experience is made even more uncomfortable when you add to the picture that most local actors are engaging and negotiating the world of donors and donor-funded media in a second or third language, often without the cultural ques or experiences that are

part of the Washington, DC, Brussels, or London sensibilities. Much of the 'wheeling and dealing' when it comes to getting written into a project happens in capital or urban settings, even if the real development needs are often in rural or other settings. This leaves a kind of disparity in the funding model that also requires more attention.

At the outset of doing the research, I was broadly interested in the overarching question of how donors impact the development of media systems. The focus on localisation as a core finding was not one that I had initially anticipated or expected to be such a dominant theme or perhaps 'the dominant theme' of my research. As it became more and more clear in the interviews and site visits that I undertook that localisation was a core topic of interest for media development actors around the world, in a whole host of contexts, I began to really probe for how donors were supporting localisation and whether funding models accommodated preferences to support locally led media development. When analysing whether there was a notable change in recent years in terms of donor support for locally led development and whether there were some good examples, the answer, based on the countries that I looked at, was remarkably, no across the board. Both local actors and international stakeholders interviewed were critical of efforts to support localisation. The resounding commentary from respondents was that despite lip service that donors were committed to localisation, in practice, this has not really happened. The upshot of this observation is that indeed a greater effort could be undertaken in terms of how local organisations understand localisation and to put forward a more ambitious strategy for what this could look like and how it could be put into practice. For instance, localisation does not necessarily have to mean that all funding is awarded directly to local organisations. International partners could still have their space. Whether this could or would satisfy those who 'are sick of getting scraps' is another question.

Even with well-intentioned efforts to localize or regionalize, the 'West to the rest' approach that is often associated with donor-funded media development programming is hard to overcome. One example that was cited by many respondents was the Centre for International Media Assistance at the National Endowment for Democracy and their efforts to convene regional actors to help shape the media development agenda. These gatherings were meant to help change the localisation debate, but instead, like the Western NGO counterparts, the convenings were organized by Western actors, the opportunity to 'get a seat at the table' was hard to come by, and certain voices and opinions seemed to count more than others. The CIMA regional convenings happened, reports were written, and in the end, nothing changed, according to respondents. One example, however, that was cited by many respondents was the gathering of stakeholders who represented the interests of media and civil society in Southern Africa.[32] The convening, rhetoric, and overall narratives that emerged from this effort did more harm than helping to support localisation or improve efforts to support civil society-led media development in the region.

The upshot of this kind of feedback is that funding models, donor relations, and partnerships between international NGOs and local counterparts need to change to be more responsive and move past the models that have existed for the past 30 years. There are some signs that this is happening through renewed efforts to support national media trusts and through efforts like the newly launched International Fund for Public Interest Media and with renewed calls for national funding models for journalism and journalism trusts.

[32] The Untapped Potential of Regional Cooperation for Media Reform in Southern Africa, by Herman Wasserman, March 2021, https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CIMA_Southern-Africa-Report_web_150ppi.pdf

7.4: Looking at the past 30+ years of media development assistance, what can we say about its current and future direction?

Donors have long prioritized media assistance as a core form of foreign aid and philanthropy assistance tied to supporting democracy and human rights – both from the perspective of Western liberal democratic ideals as well as based on ideals espoused by in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In recent history--going back to momentous political transitions in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and similar transitions that were spurred in Southern Africa--media transitions have been a core focus for donor support for democratisation, anchored in the belief that journalism, media, and civil society have a crucial role to play in shaping peaceful, democratic societies.

The political transitions that stemmed from the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the apartheid system opened the way for massive social, political, and economic changes in post-communist Europe and throughout Southern Africa that donors, both governmental donors with foreign aid agencies and private philanthropic foundations, considered a window of opportunity for spreading democracy. The initial impetus for and euphoria surrounding this democratic opening has long ago given way to a kind of malaise and frustration about media development and democratisation efforts, nonetheless the core hopes and expectations that drove donors to support media as part of a post-1989 comprehensive set of priorities designed to result in free, open, and rights-respecting societies remain core to current donor commitments. The democratisation project, if you will, has not died, and media, journalism, and, increasingly, information are all considered more vital than ever for ensuring the survival of democracy.

Unfortunately, just as in the Cold War, media and information--particularly propaganda--play an outsized influence in authoritarian efforts to control narratives, power, and money flows. What

have we learned from 30 years of media assistance? When it comes to donor support for media, both short and long endeavours. Donors have gotten good at the short-term aspect of media assistance. Still, long-haul efforts like legal and regulatory reforms and making inroads into the enabling environment for free and independent media may take generations. Each generational shift will require new thinking combined with tried-and-true tactics of supporting local news media, training new (and old) generations of media and journalism professionals, and adapting with each change and disruption that technology and digitalization bring about. Sustainability as a core driving force may need to be dropped from the playbook, and instead shifting norms and attitudes about the importance of investing in media as a public good and key resource needs to replace it. Resilience, a popular buzzword, will need to be embraced, experienced, operationalized, contextualized and supported to make sense in local and regional contexts. Flexibility, adaptability, and uncertainty must be core principles of good media development, as will networking, collaboration, and coordination. Localisation will also increasingly become more of a focus than just an aspiration. Funding models and mechanisms to support direct support for local media are poorly understood, and there are not many good examples of where this works well.

In Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, the legacy of a closed society, state-run system, and authoritarian tendencies left their mark. Three decades later, we are still seeing the effects of the Soviet era as well as the lingering effects of both colonial rule and the authoritarian or weak democratic regimes that have been a hallmark of Southern African countries. In both regions, bribery and corruption, a lack of democratic and participatory governance, insecurity, lack of justice and equality before the law have been perennial problems that donors have tried to address and help alleviate. A crucial part of donor funding has been in democracy, governance, and human rights. Democracy and governance funding support free and independent media, civil society, free

and fair elections, the rule of law, transparency, and accountability, and justice sector reforms, to name several examples. Free and independent media are frequently lauded as key to democracy promotion and long-term prospects of a democratisation process. Notably, as economists like Amartya Sen have written, independent media and democracy are vital for the success of a broader range of political, economic, and social reforms, thus the core thesis in Development as Freedom is that freedom is both the primary objective of development, and the principle means of development. The dialectical relationship between growth and freedom is core to the rationale behind donor-funded media development. At its very essence, free and independent media are foundational to other rights, liberties, and freedoms and essential to attaining other developmental objectives. The rise of donor funding for independent media in a post-1989 era has essentially been premised on this same foundational understanding that former World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn said in a speech in November 1999 to the World Press Freedom Committee:[33]

> A free press is not a luxury. A free press is at the core of equitable development because if you cannot enfranchise poor people if they do not have a right to expression, if there is no searchlight on corruption and inequitable practices, you cannot build the public consensus needed to bring about change. (Wolfenson, 1999)

Nearly a quarter of a century later, these exact words still shape the narrative and the reasoning for donor-supported media; only Wolfensohn's words are not just directed at 'poor people' but to all people and societies everywhere. The sense of the inevitability of the spread of democracy, in turn, 'free media' that fuelled much of the first 15 years of the post-1989 era, has given way to a raft of questions about whether democracy can survive. Several challenges threaten democracy, and many of them are inextricably linked up with free speech, media development, and the role of a free

[33] James D. Wolfensohn, The Washington Post, November 10, 1999, accessed June 7, 2024. Available at: Opinion | Voices for The Poor - The Washington Post

press in our modern, digitally connected world. In a current world riddled with disinformation, dubious data-sharing practices, rampant corruption, unbridled capitalism, and the all-powerful influence of Big Tech, democracy faces several challenges that call for a severe reboot of efforts aimed at supporting open societies and democracies around the world. As part of efforts to 'save democracy', donors have again turned to independent, free media as a core focus of their support-not just in developing and transitioning countries but worldwide.

7.5: Observations on Core Lessons Learned

I. Cold War sensibilities have become permanent fixtures/ constructs of media development

Post-Second World War notions about democracy and its relationship with a free press forged competing visions and ideologies about the role of the media, and the state established the parameters against which media development has taken place that continue to play out today. The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union set in motion a set of core Cold War ideas about the relationship between the media and the state. The seminal work *Four Theories of the Press* (Seibert et al., 1956) sought to outline these different normative visions. In assessing how donor strategies affect the development of media systems, it is evident that Cold War era thinking about media, democratisation, and the state not only influenced the trajectory of media development but the ideas, ideals, and philosophies that Western media development has relied upon as part of implicit and explicit theories of change are anchored in what I refer to as 'Four Theories of the Press Sensibilities'.

II. Promoting democracy is the strategy, but how to get there remains elusive

The idea of democratizing the media and the press is often viewed as good for its own sake, but clear strategies and long-term thinking about how this is supposed to happen remain elusive. The

theory of change that most donors and NGOs implementing programs base their programming on is embedded in the Four Theories of the Press sensibilities, but by and large, nearly all respondents interviewed for this study felt that donors did not have a strategy per se beyond the conviction that it is essential to have a free and independent media as part of a democracy.

III. Civil society-led media development is vital to accomplishing donor strategies

The centrality of civil society as the binding glue or enabler of media development reforms stood out as a key factor in advancing liberal democratic reforms. The overarching takeaway from this study is that civil society-centred media development stands out as a significant strategy that has contributed to democratisation, strengthened commitments to liberal ideals around freedom of expression and access to information, and supported the development of an enabling environment most conducive to media independence or freedom from state interference, control, and overt regulations.

IV. Localising Media Development and Getting Real about Locally-led Efforts

Localisation of media development stood out as core needs and essential priorities for media, civil society, and academics in the countries where donors partner. In all countries that carried out research, donor funding for independent media support has been actively in play for at least the past 20 years. More broadly in Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, and Southern Africa, donors prefer to channel funding to international NGOs that redistribute funding to local actors. The need for the international donor as a 'middleman' to the development of media is seen as counterproductive to localisation strategies and, in some cases, further promulgates the development colonisation myth. One key takeaway from this observation is that media development has not yet found a meaningful way to move past what Craig LeMay describes as 'exporting press freedom' or what Ellen Hume calls the 'media missionaries' approach to media development. Because the donor funding

originates in the West, the power associated with the origin of the money primarily resides in the holder of the funds—the donor—and in most cases, is extended to a small group of Western NGOs that form a constellation of key holders of power in terms of how donor funding gets distributed in the countries that the funding is designed to help. Because money is power, local media, civil society and academia interviewed for this study felt frustrated and unempowered. There was a notable shared understanding and belief that media development does not really have a meaningful localisation strategy or approach, and that media development as it has been practiced for the past 30 years has not seen many changes; the same models and processes that were practiced three decades ago remain in place today.

V. Media development's soft power dynamics

One of the key findings that emerged from my research is that donor-funded media assistance has the effect serving as a kind of soft power function in that through the power that donors yield, it results in what Joseph Nye refers to as the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes you want (Nye, 1990). For many respondents, the idea that media development is associated with a form of soft power is seen in how donors, international NGOs, and actors play to promote the democratic ideals of liberal, democratic media, and this has been a consistent and reoccurring theme for the past 30–50 years. Respondents noted that soft power is one of the most important de facto contributions of the sector—beyond the financial support donors give to local media development projects.

7.6: Conclusion

Donors have played a crucial role in promoting democracy and human rights. Donors are seen as playing a vital role in supporting media systems as a means of promoting democracy and human

rights. This is seen as a consistent them across various donor strategies. My research underscored that there are indeed challenges with donor dependency and sustainability; issues respondents highlighted the dependency of media systems in developing countries on donor funding. While this support is essential, it raises concerns about long-term sustainability and the independence of these media systems once donor funding is withdrawn or reduced. The findings also pointed to challenges that have emerged due to shifts in donor funding priorities. Over the years, there has been a notable shift from providing core funding and equipment to more project-based and capacity building initiatives. This shift reflects a change in donor priorities but also raises questions about the effectiveness of these new models in achieving long-term development goals. The challenges imposed by donor funding models were also related to the diverse range of donor strategies and their effectiveness. Respondents pointed that different donors have varying strategies, which can lead to different outcomes in media development. Some donors, like those in Scandinavia, are perceived as more willing to take risks and support more diverse initiatives, while others might have more conservative or traditional approaches. Respondents expressed concerns about the long-term viability of media outlets that are heavily dependent on donor funding. There is a risk that once the funding ceases, these outlets might struggle to sustain themselves. Above all, respondents advocated for more strategic and sustained support from donors, emphasizing the importance of building media systems that can endure beyond the lifecycle of individual projects or funding cycles.

In addition, respondent opinions that there was sense of overreliance on the role that implementing partners play, i.e., IMS, Internews, and IREX, should be the focus of discussion in terms of donor strategies and what this means for the future of media development. Some respondents noted that they see their role as problematic because the implementing partners are a

main factor in how media development projects are executed. This reliance can impact the strategies and outcomes of initiatives development. More research is needed to examine the role and legacy of implementing partners and whether and how international media development can move past the era of big donor funding as channelled through a rather small sub-set of international NGOs, through whom money gets redistributed and allocated to local media and civil society. In addition to concerns about the role of these international NGOs as intermediaries, the emergence of Big Tech as an emerging donor in the media development space raised several concerns for respondents, suggesting that this could have significant implications for the media landscape in developing and transitioning countries. This means that Google, Meta, and other technology companies have entered the media development business. This is a somewhat newer trend compared to government and foundation funding. It merits further investigation and research to assess its impact and how technology companies' strategies and aims compare and contrast with the traditional donors.

In summary, donors have had a significant but complex impact on the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries. While donor support is crucial, especially in the context of promoting democracy and human rights, there are concerns about dependency, sustainability, and the long-term effectiveness of current funding models.

Chapter 8: Concluding Reflections on Media Development's Post-Cold War Strategies and Ambitions

8.1: Introduction

This study of donor strategies and their influence on the development of media systems in this dissertation was partly informed by my practitioner-based experience working in the media development sector for the past 25 years. It also drew from original research and data collection conducted over a period of years (2019 to 2023) that investigated how donors impact the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries. One of the core challenges of studying media development is the difficulty in showing a causal relationship between one project, donor or actor and the overarching goal or objectives and their intended development outcomes. In isolation, each project may not have an outsizes impact, but taken as a collective set of initiatives, it becomes possible to unpack and critically reflect on how, why, and whether donor-funded media development has made a difference and to better contextualize issues of success, failure, or lessons learned. This is where the stories of MISA, the Centre for Independent Journalism and the Independent Radio Network come in.

8.2 Significance of Research Findings

At its core, my comparative study of donor support for media development in a post-Cold War era has underscored the idea that democracy as a frame of understanding the core motivating force for media development has remained the same for thirty years. Although some respondents were critical of the idea that democracy is a universally understood and practiced mode of governance, the overarching takeaway is that democracy promotion was the chief motivation for Western-backed media development. A fair and chief criticism, however, is that authoritarian or autocratic leaders claim to be democratic or invoke the 'democracy' mantra when it suits them, i.e.,

Hungarian Prime Minister's use of the term Orbán illiberal democracy. Orbán openly advocated for an 'illiberal democracy'[34] He framed it as a new model of governance, blending voting with authoritarianism. However, this concept has been criticized as an Orwellian hypocrisy, as it undermines the principles of liberal democracy.[35]

Core to supporting democracy, as identified by the respondents, was the need for donor support to support free and independent media as part of a broader package of democracy support. The core rationale for donor support to media development stems from the belief that you cannot have a healthy, functioning democracy without an independent media. The Fourth Estate ideal--that the press and news media both have the explicit capacity of advocacy and the implicit ability to frame political issues--is also based on the ideal of independence. While the Fourth Estate ideal has its origins in the French Revolution and is considered a somewhat dated term, its essential meaning still resonates and lies at the heart of much of why donors fund media as a key part of democracy promotion. Current problems facing democracy--the proliferation of disinformation, lack of trust in government and media, corruption of government and corporate powers, disruptive tendencies of digital technologies and the datafication of everything, and rising inequality on all fronts--require a strong, robust independent media to help serve as a check on power, to serve as a kind of

[34] The term illiberal democracy and its association with Orbán stems from a speech he gave in 2014, in which he stated: "Consequently, what is happening today in Hungary can be interpreted as an attempt of the respective political leadership to harmonize relationship between the interests and achievement of individuals – that needs to be acknowledged – with interests and achievements of the community, and the nation. Meaning, that Hungarian nation is not a simple sum of individuals, but a community that needs to be organized, strengthened and developed, and in this sense, the new state that we are building is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state. It does not deny foundational values of liberalism, as freedom, etc.. But it does not make this ideology a central element of state organisation, but applies a specific, national, particular approach in its stead." See: https://budapestbeacon.com/full-text-of-viktor-orbans-speech-at-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo-of-26-july-2014/

[35] See: https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/illiberal-democracy-and-the-struggle-on-the-right/, access on June 5, 2024 and also https://theconversation.com/how-viktor-orban-degraded-hungarys-weak-democracy-109046, accessed on June 5, 2024.

societal historian and record keeper, and to offer a public interest function in that media are the voice of the people.

As this study has confirmed, the Cold War ideals of democracy, liberalism, and social accountability as drivers of media assistance have remained a constant presence in donor strategies and constructs. Unfortunately, just as in the Cold War, media and information--particularly propaganda--play an outsized influence in authoritarian efforts to control narratives, power, and money flows. This current return to Cold War era thinking has added to some of the challenges of media development, and interestingly, for scholars who focus on normative theories of the press, has signalled the need to continue to think about the types of values and norms that are associated with independent democratic media.

8.3: Donor Strategies in Media Development and Lessons Learned

The landscape of media development has undergone significant transformations over the decades, driven by a complex interplay of donor strategies, political shifts, and evolving media needs. Reflecting on the journey from the pivotal moments of the late 20th century, such as the fall of Communism and the end of Apartheid, to the current day reveals a tapestry of achievements, challenges, and critical insights. Media development is essentially about protecting, advocating for, and keeping, the hope alive for press freedom. Martin Scott was right in this regard. It is also very much about what those who gathered in Namibia outlined in the 1991 Windhoek Declaration, and about the hopes and ideals as put forward by activists and scholars involved in the New World Information and Communication Order. As my research has shown, the past 30 years of media development have achieved more than perhaps can be quantified or put into nice and easy-to-understand tables and charts. Nonetheless, there are some core lessons learned.

8.3.1: Strategic Evolution and Diverse Impacts

Initially, donor interventions in media development were largely reactionary, aimed at addressing immediate deficiencies in media systems transitioning from authoritarian to democratic structures. The focus was predominantly on professionalising the media landscape, a necessary step in countries where the media had been tightly controlled by the state. Training programs, often funded by donors like USAID, Sida and the Open Society Foundations (OSF), were essential in the early 1990s. These programs not only equipped journalists with critical skills but also laid the groundwork for independent media outlets.

As time progressed, donor strategies evolved from building basic journalistic capacities to enhancing content production and ensuring the sustainability of media operations. This shift was partially driven by the recognition that without resilient media institutions, gains in democratic engagement and transparency could easily be reversed. Support for media policy and advocacy emerged as fragmented efforts, reflecting a lack of strategic coherence that has often led to chaotic implementations.

8.3.2: Challenges and Coordination Failures

One of the recurring themes in media development has been the challenge of coordination among donors. The lack of a unified strategy has sometimes resulted in duplicated efforts and wasted resources. The absence of a clear framework to assess the financial needs of media institutions before allocating funds has often exacerbated this issue. The diversity in donor strategies—ranging from American to European approaches, and government to private foundation funding—has added layers of complexity, making harmonious coordination challenging.

Despite these challenges, the positive trends are undeniable. The sustained funding by donors has been instrumental in keeping independent media afloat, particularly in regions where political pressures could have easily led to their demise. This support has been crucial for maintaining a diversity of voices and ensuring that the media continues to play its watchdog role in new democracies.

8.3.3: Learning from the Past and Looking Ahead

Reflecting on the past several decades, it is evident that media development assistance has been pivotal in supporting democratisation efforts. However, the sector has also seen its share of failures, often stemming from a lack of understanding of local contexts and needs. The future of media development, therefore, requires a more data-driven and context-sensitive approach. Donors need to adopt more strategic funding models that prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term achievements. This includes supporting local initiatives that align with the specific needs and cultural contexts of the media landscape in different regions. Furthermore, the focus should also shift towards a more audience-centred approach in evaluation. Understanding the impact on and engagement with the audience will provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of media development programs.

8.3.4: Soft power of diplomacy for most donors.

Media today is still in flux. It lacks the fundamentals to be sustainable. It is often seen by its own governments as an opposition force that needs to be controlled. How do we address the challenge? Donors see it not just as a soft power but as a sustainable media that serves the societies for which it exists. To take this seriously, for media to really reach the apex of effectiveness, media needs to be an end to itself, not just a tool of soft power diplomacy.

The lack of political will or outright contempt for liberal norms, laws, policies, and customs around freedom of expression, access to information, and academic freedom has manifested into an unsafe and uncertain climate for journalists, media outlets, and others. It has also stifled progress or compliance with international standards and policies in the areas of public service broadcasting, pluralism, and diversity, and in keeping up with international standards and best practices around internet law and policy that affects content regulation, amongst others.

8.3.5: The enduring influence of the Four Theories of the Press Sensibility

One of the questions that really stuck out for me during my research was the fundamental legacy of Cold War ideals about normative theories of the press. The Libertarian and the Social Responsibility theories are in many ways foundational to the theory of change that underpins media development and explains why they have continued to resonate and have such a lasting influence. Media development theories of change have always been about the libertarian and social responsibility models. To see this one just needs to look at the work of Internews, IMS, FPU, and the OSF / USAID donor trajectory. It goes back to the 1999 USAID strategy that outlined why media development matters. In 30 years, this hasn't changed, but the 'fight for press freedom' and the idealism and energy manifest in the NWICO have now become ongoing struggles. While these models remain aspirational, they still very much serve as a kind of North Star guiding the sector. It is more a goal that media development works toward but is somehow always in jeopardy; a precariousness that is easy to see when reflecting on the more than 17 years of democratic decline and the patterns of the erosion of press freedom around the world.

8.3.6: Measures of press freedom and media contributions to development

One must question the overall state of research and evaluation and the use of theories of change by media development organisations to be sure the practice of program monitoring and

evaluation has markedly improved in the past 30 years. But the focus, as so many researchers and commentators have observed, is still very much on counting the numbers, and at the level of an individual journalist, media outlet or organisation. There have been few models and approaches developed that look at the media system overall or the socio-political context of the media environment in which media development programs are being implemented. There's a kind of parallelism between media development initiatives and interventions and the realities of the country contexts and states in which media development operates. Much of media development happens at the level of working with actors and stakeholders that are not part of the government or the state – could be opposition, activists – activists turned journalists, often people championing human rights and models of journalism that are rooted in human rights and democratic principles – this can often be viewed as antagonistic to the ruling party or existing government structure. But one needs to look to possibilities for models that either further support and reinforce the work with civil society and liberal, democratic media initiatives or look to ways to partner with and work in tandem with government--where this is possible. For media development, the relationship between donors, the state, or the ruling government and then civil society and independent media itself, there's always been a kind of contentious dynamic. The friction, of course, is natural, but to some extent --or perhaps a great extent--progress toward media development goals and aspirations of achieving the hallmarks of the ideal types of media found in the libertarian and social responsibility models cannot happen without some interaction with the government. This is why the movement towards journalism as a public good and the reclaiming of the idea of public-interest journalism and public-interest media is so important.

There's widespread fragility and lack of sustainability of independent media, particularly amongst those that are entirely or primarily funded by donors. In all cases, the situation is so bleak

that if not for donor funding, most or all of the independent media, i.e., media free from government control, government influence over funding and business models, and government interference in editorial policy, would cease to exist or wither on the vine.

8.4: Implications for Media Development Stakeholders – Researchers, Doors, Practitioners/ Implementers, and local media and civil society actors

8.4.1: Media development scholarship and practice needs a public good agenda

A Public Interest/ Public Good Framework for Media Development is Needed

Looking at the past 30+ years of media development assistance, what can we say about its current and future direction? Donors have long prioritized media assistance as a core form of foreign aid and philanthropy assistance tied to supporting democracy and human rights-both from the perspective of Western liberal democratic ideals as well as based on ideals espoused by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In an early study called Mapping Media Assistance, the authors identified at least 20+ areas of focus that media development focuses on --each a field of study unto their own (Price, et al, 2001). My own research into the area of international media development has revealed that there are some core areas of focus that the sector would benefit from further focus on. The broader implications of my research findings indicate that some of the core areas of research that would benefit the sector as a whole include: 1) looking further into the dynamics of power that underpin much of media development, and relatedly, how to better address longstanding issues of colonisation and the social movement that has taken hold around localising development; 2) doing more to probe how and why Cold War era thinking continues to permeate much of the ideological thinking that drives media development; 3) developing better constructs that can inform media development assistance strategies, particularly in terms of how to better

support the public interests functions of information ecosystems and how to strengthen and fortify media as a public good; 4) carrying out research that would better understand the role civil society plays in contributing to democratic media development. Further research in these four areas will hopefully be of use for future work related to media development theory, practice, or policy that guides the ways in which donors seek to support media development.

Media development donors and other actors could do more to focus their attention and advocacy on supporting public and political sentiment around the norms and attitudes about the importance of investing in media as a public good and key pillar of good governance and a resilience society. For most of the past 30 years, sustainability of donor programming has been a key focus or metric of measuring success. But, as my research has shown, few donor-funded initiatives are ever going to make it on their own, absent any type of donor funding or other types of investments. Perhaps that is one of the biggest lessons learned from the past 30 years--media development programming contributes to elements in an information ecosystem that are vital to the democratisation of media and information ecosystems, but they are often not able to exist and function absent any type of outside investment or donor funding. Donors, scholars, and practitioners would be well-served to re-evaluate the public good theories of media development and do more to support an advocacy and research agenda that operationalizes how we can better support and maintain efforts to ensure that media serves the public interest, remains independent, and provides quality information. In this regard, the initial efforts of those who gathered in 1991 in Namibia have come full circle. The somewhat recent anniversary of Windhoek@30 put forward a call to action to remind the wider international development community of the necessity of articulating and pushing for a media development agenda that advocated for a public good set of principles. Scholars and advocates

alike have called for an ambitious agenda that could be a good starting point for furthering the public good agenda, which is based on the following types of efforts:

1) Public funding and subsidies – governments can provide funding to public service broadcasters and independent media organisations to ensure they can operate without relying solely on commercial interests. This can help maintain editorial independence and focus on public interest journalism.
2) Nonprofit models – encouraging the establishment of non-profit media organisations. This will help focus on quality content rather than on purely profit driven content that may be prone to bias, misinformation, salaciousness, or just 'empty-calorie' material. In the past decade or so there's been a real push at embracing the non-profit model of journalism – the effects of its contributions to democracy and supporting public interest journalism need to be further investigated and understood, but early indications show a lot of promising signs. Media development funding and support is largely well-suited to the non-profit model of journalism, which is based on funding that comes through donations, grants, and memberships.
3) Tax incentives – this is another important area for media development and one that there is little scholarship or research around. Assessing how tax breaks or incentives for media organisations that produce public interest journalism could help them thrive financially would be a great place for more scholarship and civil society advocacy efforts.
4) Regulatory support – this is one that has long been a focus of media development. A fresh look at how governments can implement regulations that promote diversity in media ownership, prevent monopolies, and ensure a variety of voices and perspectives

in the media landscape would be useful, especially considering growing trends around democratic backsliding and evidence-based recognition that one of the first signs of closing civic space is a crackdown on press freedom and efforts to curtail freedom of expression. The two regions profiled in my research for this study Central and Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa--also point to the necessity of continuing with efforts to better understand and improve civil society-led efforts to contribute to the legal enabling environment for free and independent media. The MISA case study tells us many things, namely that in any context, whether a 'developmental' or 'developed' society context, the regulatory environment for independent media is going to always be in a state of flux. The different models outlined in the *Four Theories of the Press* have an inherently legalistic quality to them. The normative qualities associated with each depend on regulatory cultures and whole-of-society approaches that lead to the types of values that are associated with each model: libertarian, social responsibility, authoritarian, or Soviet.

In summary, a more pronounced public good agenda for media development might also include a more dynamic and ambitious undertaking related to supporting a massive and intense international effort around media literacy programs, which would include literacy not just related to 'media' but also algorithmic literacy, data literacy, and digital literacy. In addition, a significant amount of funding is needed to support grants, fellowships, and innovation funding--this type of support needs to become the norm rather than the exception. We are undergoing a significant period of transformation related to our media, journalistic and information cultures, and with the popularizing and mainstreaming of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, media development will need to embrace this moment and offer more funding to support small grants,

money for fellowship and funding to support innovative thinking and new approaches in supporting journalism. Funding will also be needed to better support grants for local media, fellowships for academics, journalists, and media entrepreneurs as well as lawyers, judges, and technology experts who can help innovate and design the next generation of media systems and journalism. To support a grand vision for a public goods approach to media development going forward, we will need to re-embrace community media and other forms of hyper-local media, and also embrace the ways in which communities adapt technologies and platforms to serve their information needs, i.e., the use of WhatsApp groups and social media pages. This will require more collaboration and cooperation. Scholars like Nathan Schneider have written about the need to reimagine the social compact around media and information spaces, and this type of thinking will very much be needed as we reimagine media development for the next generation (Schneider, 2024).

The modern media system, with its focus on commercialization and digital advertising revenue, comes at a great cost. Media outlets the world over are really struggling. A public goods-oriented approach to media development will need to be embraced, experienced, operationalized, contextualized, and supported to make sense in local and regional contexts. Flexibility, adaptability, and uncertainty must be core principles of good media development, as will networking, collaboration, and coordination. Localisation will also increasingly become more of a focus than just an aspiration. Funding models and mechanisms to support direct support for local media are poorly understood, and there are few examples of where this works well. The first 30 years of media development were successful in setting up the initial architecture, networks of excellence, and the core infrastructure to underpin international independent media. The next 30 years needs to focus on how to retain these successes and to support and sustain a new generation

of leaders, scholars and activists who can help us reimagine media as a public good and to help map out the type of strategic thinking that galvanized the leading thinkers and activists behind the New World Information and Communication Order.

8.4.2: Research and Scholarship Needed to Support Local Engagement and Ownership of Media Development Programs

One of the key findings of the research is that there is a lot of work that remains to support stakeholder interest in localising development and really work to support and enhance localisation of media development strategies, funding, and overall efforts. Researchers and practitioners could look at how donors and media development organisations could better prioritize local leadership and engagement in defining priorities and designing interventions.

Further research might also look at alternative business models and modes of funding supporting local media organisations in developing sustainable business models that are not overly reliant on external funding. Donors should consider more flexible and responsive funding models that can adapt to changing priorities and needs within the media landscape. This includes supporting core operations of media organisations to ensure their sustainability beyond project-based funding.

8.4.3: Assess and Mitigate Unintended Consequences

Donors and media development organisations should regularly assess the intended and unintended consequences of their interventions. This includes being mindful of how donor priorities might influence media development paths and the importance of maintaining media independence. One of the standout findings from my research was the case study developed around the Media Institute of Southern Africa. The MISA case study had a lot of lessons learned in terms of the consequences of donor funding. One has to question what a punitive response to MISA's management of its

funding was essentially. This came at a great cost to MISA and to media development in Southern Africa. Upon reflection, the damage done to MISA and its constituency as well as MISA's reputation, could have been handled better by the donors and its implementing partners. Rather than forcing MISA's hand, the various actors involved from a donor level could have worked with MISA and the implementing partners to think about potential management issues, leadership training opportunities, or even embedding a management and financial consultant within MISA and using the moment to transform and grow. One of the general rules of thumb in international development is to 'do no harm'. Based on the interviews done for this research, it would seem that the harm done to MISA and its core mission was jeopardized by the actions of the EU and the others involved who used their position of power in a way that perhaps did more damage than good.

8.5: Implications for Individual Stakeholder Groups

The findings of this research have significant implications for three primary stakeholder groups: donors, media development practitioners, and local media and civil society actors.

8.5.1: Donors and Funding Organizations

Donors and funding organizations need to shift their focus toward long-term sustainability rather than relying on short-term, project-based interventions. This entails rethinking funding strategies to explore nonprofit models and public-interest subsidies that can ensure the survival and independence of media organizations. Additionally, donors must empower local actors by reducing reliance on Western NGOs as intermediaries and instead transferring decision-making power to local media and civil society organizations. Supporting locally led initiatives will foster more sustainable and relevant media development efforts that truly reflect the needs and interests of the communities they serve. Furthermore, the soft power function of media development has proven quite successful in promoting democratic values and strengthening independent media ecosystems. Further exploration of how this soft power can be enhanced presents a valuable area for future research and strategic development. However, it remains important to be mindful of calls for transparency in donor motivations and to maintain a balanced approach that prioritizes local ownership while avoiding overt geopolitical influence.

8.5.2: Media Development Practitioners

Media development practitioners should embrace the idea of media as a public good, advocating for its recognition on par with public health or education. This perspective calls for long-term investment and support from both public and philanthropic sources to ensure that media can continue to fulfil its essential democratic functions. In addition, practitioners must prioritize collaboration with civil society organizations, integrating media development efforts into broader initiatives that promote democracy, governance, and human rights.

Moreover, long-standing international media development NGOs, particularly those funded primarily by large donors like USAID and SIDA, must evolve their business models to advance the localization agenda. New forms of partnership with local stakeholders should be explored, and new pathways for collaboration need to be pursued to create more sustainable, locally led media ecosystems. The case studies of MISA, the Center for Independent Journalism in Hungary, and the Independent Radio Network in Sierra Leone—each with over 30 years of history—are particularly instructive in this regard. Their frustration with the lack of meaningful progress on localization signals a deeper issue that requires attention. While there are no easy solutions, the localization agenda will take centre stage in the coming decade, necessitating innovative thinking and approaches from media development practitioners.

8.5.3: Local Media and Civil Society Actors

Local media organizations must prioritize building financial independence by developing alternative revenue models, such as memberships, crowdfunding, and nonprofit structures, to reduce reliance on donor funding and ensure long-term sustainability. However, local media and civil society actors, especially in the Global South, are often in the difficult position of heavily relying on donor funding. Current efforts through initiatives like IFPIM and support for national media trusts need to be more carefully considered in this context. The ongoing struggle to sustain and support much of the independent media and civil society in the Global South raises the question of whether a renewed and reinvigorated NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order) might be worth pursuing. Local actors have significant power and an important voice, and new pathways and platforms must be explored to ensure their survival is not further jeopardized. This is a challenging proposition, however, given the trends of democratic backsliding and the stark realities around the geopolitics of donor funding.

Current debates around how to regulate digital information and address legal and regulatory disparities that have arisen in the digital age add another layer of concern that local media and civil society must address. We are navigating new and uncharted territory regarding the emerging legal enabling environment for free and independent media, as well as how to best sustain freedom of expression and access to information. Countries in the Global South are vital to this debate and need to be included in policy discussions. For that reason, local stakeholders must place high on their agendas legal advocacy and regulatory reforms that incorporate the new realities of the digital information age. Legal advocacy and regulatory reforms remain essential to protect media freedom and pluralism, while embracing digital platforms and community-based media can help local actors innovate and reach underserved audiences.

8.6: Concluding Statement

Reflecting on 30 years of media development, the lessons learned from both the successes and shortcomings of donor strategies offer invaluable insights for shaping future interventions. By fostering more coordinated, strategic, and locally informed approaches, the media development sector can better contribute to the growth of democratic societies. The reflection on these past strategies and outcomes not only illuminates the path taken but also lights the way forward, ensuring that media continues to serve as a pillar of democracy and a tool for societal change.

This research has sought to look at the influence of donor strategies on media development in developing and transitioning countries, connecting findings from a grounded-theory study with broader research questions, aims, and literature. The research has found that donor support is crucial for establishing free and independent media and according to those interviewed vital for democracy. The findings also revealed several key themes that merit further exploration, including deeper research that explores the power dynamics among media development stakeholders, the need to localise media development, and better support for local initiatives.

Donor funding models significantly shape media systems by providing financial stability, capacity building, and promoting democratic values. However, they also lead to dependency and operational challenges, with an emphasis on Western models sometimes stifling local innovation. Overall, the research has found that the role of donors extends to advocating for specific political changes, supporting marginalized communities, and addressing market failures where local funding is insufficient. Moreover, a key takeaway from this study is that media development contributes to democratisation by fostering independent outlets, promoting transparency, and enhancing public discourse. Yet, challenges like media capture, dependency on foreign funding,

and short-term focus limit its effectiveness. Going forward, the ambitions of media development would be well-served if researchers could do more to address the desire to adapt better localised and sustainable funding models to reduce reliance on international NGOs and international donor support could be achieved. In the words of a major civil society advocate for media development, donor funding is best likened as a seed that plants the ideas and starts the process of developing an independent media sector, but what is really needed is major investment and support beyond the types of donor support that have traditionally gone into funding media development. In short, donor strategies need to evolve, and with that, the approaches and models that are used to support the development of independent, local media will need to change. What this looks like and how we get there is a massive undertaking for researchers, and this media viability imperative, matched with updated thinking about normative theories of the press and how to ensure the next generation democratic media, are two of the core priorities that merit continued exploration.

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Annexes

Annex 1 – The Windhoek Declaration

The Windhoek Declaration

We the participants in the United Nations/ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 29 April to 3 May 1991, Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recalling General Assembly resolution 59(I) of 14 December 1946 stating that freedom of information is a fundamental human right, and General Assembly resolution 45/76 A of 11 December 1990 on information in the service of humanity, recalling resolution 25C/104 of the General Conference of UNESCO of 1989 in which the main focus is the promotion of "the free flow of ideas by word and image at international as well as national levels", noting with appreciation the statements made by the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Public Information and the Assistant Director-General for Communication, Information and Informatics of UNESCO at the opening of the Seminar, expressing our sincere appreciation to the United Nations and UNESCO for organizing the Seminar, expressing also our sincere appreciation to all the intergovernmental, governmental and nongovernmental bodies and organisations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which contributed to the United Nations/UNESCO effort to organize the Seminar, expressing our gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia for their kind hospitality which facilitated the success of the Seminar,

DECLARE THAT:

1. Consistent with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development.

2. By an independent press, we mean a press independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.

3. By a pluralistic press, we mean the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community.

4. The welcome changes that an increasing number of African States are now undergoing towards multiparty democracies provide the climate in which an independent and pluralistic press can emerge.

5. The worldwide trend towards democracy and freedom of information and expression is a fundamental contribution to the fulfilment of human aspirations.

6. In Africa today, despite the positive developments in some countries, in many countries journalists, editors and publishers are victims of repression-they are murdered, arrested, detained

and censored, and are restricted by economic and political pressures such as restrictions on newsprint, licensing systems which restrict the opportunity to publish, visa restrictions which prevent the free movement of journalists, restrictions on the exchange of news and information, and limitations on the circulation of newspapers within countries and across national borders. In some countries, one-party States control the totality of information.

7. Today, at least 17 journalists, editors or publishers are in African prisons, and 48 African journalists were killed in the exercise of their profession between 1969 and 1990.

8. The General Assembly of the United Nations should include in the agenda of its next session an item on the declaration of censorship as a grave violation of human rights falling within the purview of the Commission on Human Rights.

9. African States should be encouraged to provide constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and freedom of association.

10. To encourage and consolidate the positive changes taking place in Africa, and to counter the negative ones, the international community-specifically, international organisations (governmental as well as nongovernmental), development agencies and professional associations-should as a matter of priority direct funding support towards the development and establishment of nongovernmental newspapers, magazines and periodicals that reflect the society as a whole and the different points of view within the communities they serve.

11. All funding should aim to encourage pluralism as well as independence. As a consequence, the public media should be funded only where authorities guarantee a constitutional and effective freedom of information and expression and the independence of the press.

12. To assist in the preservation of the freedoms enumerated above, the establishment of truly independent, representative associations, syndicates or trade unions of journalists, and associations of editors and publishers, is a matter of priority in all the countries of Africa where such bodies do not now exist.

13. The national media and labour relations laws of African countries should be drafted in such a way as to ensure that such representative associations can exist and fulfil their important tasks in defence of press freedom.

14. As a sign of good faith, African Governments that have jailed journalists for their professional activities should free them immediately. Journalists who have had to leave their countries should be free to return to resume their professional activities.

15. Cooperation between publishers within Africa, and between publishers of the North and South (for example through the principle of twinning), should be encouraged and supported.

l6. As a matter of urgency, the United Nations and UNESCO, and particularly the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), should initiate detailed research, in

cooperation with governmental (especially UNDP) and nongovernmental donor agencies, relevant nongovernmental organisations and professional associations, into the following specific areas:

(i) identification of economic barriers to the establishment of news media outlets, including restrictive import duties, tariffs and quotas for such things as newsprint, printing equipment, and typesetting and word processing machinery, and taxes on the sale of newspapers, as a prelude to their removal;
(ii) training of journalists and managers and the availability of professional training institutions and courses;
(iii) legal barriers to the recognition and effective operation of trade unions or associations of journalists, editors and publishers;
(iv) a register of available funding from development and other agencies, the conditions attaching to the release of such funds, and the methods of applying for them;
(v) the state of press freedom, country by country, in Africa.

17. In view of the importance of radio and television in the field of news and information, the United Nations and UNESCO are invited to recommend to the General Assembly and the General Conference the convening of a similar seminar of journalists and managers of radio and television services in Africa, to explore the possibility of applying similar concepts of independence and pluralism to those media.

18. The international community should contribute to the achievement and implementation of the initiatives and projects set out in the annex to this Declaration.

19. This Declaration should be presented by the SecretaryGeneral of the United Nations to the United Nations General Assembly, and by the DirectorGeneral of UNESCO to the General Conference of UNESCO.

ANNEX

Initiatives and Projects Identified in the Seminar

I. Development of cooperation between private African newspapers: - to aid them in the mutual exchange of their publications; - to aid them in the exchange of information; - to aid them in sharing their experience by the exchange of journalists; - to organize on their behalf training courses and study trips for their journalists, managers and technical personnel.
II. Creation of separate, independent national unions for publishers, news editors and journalists.
III. Creation of regional unions for publishers, editors and independent journalists
IV. Development and promotion of nongovernmental regulations and codes of ethics in each country in order to defend more effectively the profession and ensure its credibility.
V. Financing of a study on the readership of independent newspapers in order to set up groups of advertising agents.
Vl. Financing of a feasibility study for the establishment of an independent press aid foundation and research into identifying capital funds for the foundation.
VII. Financing of a feasibility study for the creation of a central board for the purchase of newsprint and the establishment of such a board.

VIII. Support and creation of regional African press enterprises
IX. Aid with a view to establishing structures to monitor attacks on freedom of the press and the independence of journalists following the example of the West African Journalists' Association.
X. Creation of a data bank for the independent African press for the documentation of news items essential to newspapers.

Annex 2 –Interviews

The following individuals were interviewed as part of my research on how donors impact the development of media systems in developing and transitioning countries. They all agreed to interviews with verbal consent. All individuals and their responses have been anonymized in the final write-up of the dissertation.

1. Anonymous Respondent, male, (Former Editor of a Zimbabwean national daily based in Harare, Zimbabwe)
2. Anonymous Respondent, male, Executive Director, Media Institute of Southern Africa, civil society, Zimbabwe
3. Anonymous Respondent, male, consultant and former Executive Director Media Institute of Southern Africa, civil society and expert, Namibia
4. Anonymous Respondents, 1 male and 1 female, Group interview – MISA staff, civil society, Zimbabwe
5. Anonymous Respondent, male, Media Alliance of Zimbabwe, civil society, Zimbabwe
6. Anonymous Respondent, male, Executive Director, Voluntary Media Council, civil society, Zimbabwe
7. Anonymous Respondent, male, Media Center, civil society, Zimbabwe
8. Anonymous Respondent, male, ZACRAS, civil society, Zimbabwe
9. Anonymous Respondent, female, Associate Professor, Head of School, School of Communication, University of Johannesburg, academic, and former MISA staff member, South Africa
10. Anonymous Respondent, female, Executive Director, Namibia Media Trust, donor/ civil society, Namibia
11. Anonymous Respondent, male, Former MISA director, now w IMS, civil society, Zimbabwe
12. Anonymous Respondent, male, International Media Support, co-founder of MISA, civil society, United Kingdom
13. Anonymous Respondent, male, Country Director – Zimbabwe, Chief of Party, Strengthening Media for Accountability in Zimbabwe (SMAZ), Internews, NGO/ civil society, Zimbabwe
14. Anonymous Respondent, New York Times, Harare correspondent, media outlet, Zimbabwe
15. Anonymous Respondent, female, National Director, Zimbabwe, Gender and Media Connect, civil society, Zimbabwe
16. Anonymous Respondent, male, ex-Radio Dialogue Community Radio now CITE community multi- media platform, based in Bulawayo, media, Zimbabwe
17. Anonymous respondents, 2 males, Group Interview, former Director of Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe, civil society, and local journalist, Zimbabwe
18. Anonymous Respondent, male, Center for Independent Journalism, Hungary

19. Anonymous Respondent, male, academic, ELTE University, Hungary
20. Anonymous Respondent, female, academic, Central European University, Hungary
21. Anonymous Respondent, male, democracy and governance expert, and program evaluation specialist, academic, United States
22. Anonymous Respondent, male, UNESCO, and academic, South Africa
23. Anonymous Respondent, female, program evaluation specialist and media development researcher and subject matter expert, United Kingdom
24. Anonymous Respondents, Group Interview, 2 females and 2 male, Executive Director, Deputy Director, and Director Media Policy and Advisory, Global Forum for Media Development, civil society, United Kingdom and Serbia
25. Anonymous Respondent, male, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, academic, Qatar
26. Anonymous Respondent, female, IREX, civil society and program implementer
27. Anonymous Respondent, female, Sr. Media Advisor, USAID, donor, United States
28. Anonymous Respondent, male, National Coordinator, Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG), Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Communication, Media and Information, Studies, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, Mount Aureol, academic, Sierra Leone
29. Anonymous Respondent, male, Director, Media and Journalism Research Center former Open Society Foundations, Spain, academic and former donor
30. Anonymous Respondent, male, Co-Founder and Sr. Advisor, International Fund for Public Interest Media, donor