



A theoretical-conceptual framework for South African community radio as participatory media

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Agter-Otto kom hopelik ook in die kraal,

Hannelie Otto

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
MARC	World Association of Community Radios (French)
ANC	African National Congress
AR	Action Research
BRC	The Broadcast Research Council of South Africa
CBNA	Community Based Needs Assessment
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCA	Culture-Centred Approach
CfSC	Communication for Social Change
ECA	Electronic Communications Act
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FM	Frequency Modulation
GCIS	Government Information and Communication Service
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ICASA	Independent Communications of South Africa
MDDA	Media Development and Diversity Agency
NAB	National Association of Broadcasters
NCRF	National Community Radio Forum
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief

PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SA	Stakeholder Analysis
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WB	The World Bank

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to develop a theoretical-conceptual framework for South African community radio as participatory media. Community radio stations, unlike commercial and public services media outlets, are endorsed by scholars in participatory communication in development communication as an ideal platform for individuals and communities to address development challenges and concerns as experienced on a local level. Scholars in community media studies concur that community radio holds unique value and objectives in the larger media landscape. Equally, the legislation on community broadcasting in South Africa has differentiated community radio from other types of traditional broadcasting. It describes it as an accessible media that serves the public interest at a community level as stipulated through several key acts.

All the above frames of community radio assert that it promotes people's direct, active and meaningful participation in problem identification and finding solutions. Despite these encouraging suppositions, community radio's participatory features cannot be successfully enacted if it is not thoroughly theorised from the foundational paradigm in which it is embedded: the participatory paradigm. This paradigm is considered the normative approach to examining and enacting development and social change initiatives. However, it is widely criticised for its theoretical and conceptual fluidity and requires thorough theoretical and metatheoretical interrogation to present a more cohesive framework. This study thus examines it to present a unified metatheory of participatory communication to interrogate community radio's potential as participatory media. An integrative, semi-systematic literature study identified four major assumptions that underpin this paradigm: participation, dialogue, culture, and empowerment. This study also uses the rhizomatic approach of community media to conceptualise community radio and enhance the latter metatheory from a media studies perspective.

Five South African community broadcasting acts were examined using these two frameworks. The main findings of this study indicate that while there are overlaps between the metatheory of participatory communication and the rhizomatic approach, several shortcomings, as found in the community broadcasting legislation, must be addressed for community radio to function fully as participatory media. This study thus formulated five normative assumptions to overcome these gaps and presented a final, synthesised theoretical-conceptual framework of community radio as participatory media. These assumptions relate to an increased emphasis on indigenous

knowledge, subjective empowerment initiatives, fostering external partnerships, encouraging cross-organisational collaborations, and the increased use of dialogic praxis methods in ensuring that community radio empowers its listeners and the wider community. This theoretical-conceptual framework will enhance the existing participatory ethos of South African community radio.

Keywords:

Communication for social change; community media; community radio; development communication; participation; participatory communication; participatory media; South African community broadcasting legislation; rhizomatic community media approach.

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PREAMBLE

This thesis encompasses four major parts and ten chapters, as outlined below.

Part I: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Part I of this study includes one chapter and gives the background to the research phenomenon under study. This first part intends to outline the problems regarding conceptualising community radio within participatory theory:

Chapter 1: Context, problem statement, and research questions

The introductory chapter establishes the problem statement (see 1.2) of this research project by presenting a theoretical-conceptual framework for community radio in South Africa as participatory media (see 1.3.1). This framework will be situated in the participatory paradigm. This is because community radio is commonly regarded, in both academia and practice, as an accessible and valuable communicative resource for communities to actively participate, articulate and address their development concerns and needs often not addressed by traditional media. But despite its normative status and wide empirical use as an analytical tool in development communication, the participatory paradigm is theoretically diffuse and also risks inadequate practice. Chapter 1, therefore, introduces the necessity of more robust theoretical interrogation and improved conceptual clarity to give rise to a more coherent framework that describes South African community radio as participatory media. It further positions community radio in a community media multi-theoretical framework and in the legislative context in which South African community radio operates. These lenses inform the study's theoretical-conceptual inquiry throughout and thus enable its final framework.

Part II: THE PARTICIPATORY PARADIGM

Part II of this study is divided into six chapters and theorises and metatheorise the participatory paradigm. The aim is to interrogate participatory communication in the paradigm to develop a more coherent metatheory framework of participatory communication:

Chapter 2: Communication for development and social change: a historical and conceptual reading

Chapter 2 emphasises that the participatory paradigm cannot be coherently theorised unless its historical trajectory and conceptual evolution are explored. The paradigm emerged in a critical response to several of its antecedents that failed to deliver sustainable development and social change. Reviewing the academic discourse, Chapter 2 presents a deeper contextual understanding of the participatory paradigm's complexity *and* diffuseness. The paradigm's major predecessors, as evident in binary development communication approaches, are outlined in Section 2.4. In so doing, a better understanding of the participatory paradigm and its foundational notions will be gained. The chapter describes the participatory paradigm as initially emerging from the multiplicity framework (see 2.5 and 2.6), enhancing Part II's further theorisation of the paradigm.

Chapter 3: Theorising participation in the context of a participatory communication approach for development and social change

This chapter reviews the literature on how the concept of participation has been theorised since it first gained traction in theory and practice in the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter 3 examines the metatheoretical assumptions of participation, namely its ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (see 3.4). Through this literature review, the perspectives of various scholars are considered to establish a more coherent and complete interpretation of participation.

Chapter 4: Theorising dialogue in the context of a participatory communication approach for development and social change

Likewise, Chapter 4: interrogates the concept of dialogue as a particular kind of communication that is vital for participation in development communication settings. It considers various available dialogic theories (as gleaned from the literature) that would assist in understanding this notion but, as its central optics in theorising dialogue, it draws primarily on Paolo Freire's (1970) dialogic pedagogical model and Jürgen Habermas's (1984, 1987, 1969) public sphere and communicative action theories (see 4.4.1 and 0). In particular, this chapter discusses how these

scholars' theories are instructive in analysing and theorising the role of dialogue in the participatory paradigm more comprehensively.

Chapter 5: Theorising culture in the context of a participatory communication approach for development and social change

This chapter describes how the notion of culture is a vital prerequisite to enact participation in the participatory approach. The available scholarly literature in development communication is examined to theorise this concept. Freire's dialogic pedagogy again proves useful by providing the notions of the cultural revolution and cultural invasion as entry points into the theorising culture in the participatory model (see 5.3). Furthermore, Dutta's (2015) culture-centred approach (CCA) presents further theoretical-conceptual scaffolding to explore the notion of culture in the participatory paradigm. It underlines that culture is a dynamic, complex system that, in addition to shaping people's subjective and collective identities, beliefs and values, informs human action in more inclusive ways.

Chapter 6: Theorising empowerment in the context of a participatory communication approach for development and social change

In Chapter 6, another literature review explores how "empowerment" is also a contested notion in development communication settings. This chapter appraises how empowerment is often invoked in these settings without critical examination of its meanings and enactments. The discussion homes in on the potential implications of overlooking the aspect of "power" when theorising and implementing empowerment strategies (see 6.3.1) before it is metatheorised further in a subsequent section (see 6.4).

Chapter 7: Towards a theoretical-conceptual framework of the participatory communication approach for development and social change

Chapter 7 partly answers the general research question (see 1.3.1) by putting forward an integrated framework for the participatory communication approach as based on Chapters 3 to 6's theoretical examinations. It presents a final guiding theoretical argument concerning each of the participatory paradigm's interfacing theoretical assumptions that were interrogated in the preceding four chapters. This discussion offers the foundations for the synthesised theoretical-

conceptual of this study, which follows in Part IV's Chapter 10. But before this framework can be presented, community radio's theoretic and legislative notions are first examined in Part III of this study (Chapters 8 and 9).

Part III: COMMUNITY RADIO IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Part III of this study is divided into two chapters. The purpose of this third part is to position community radio within community media theory that emphasises its participatory ethos. It also aims to outline how South African legislation supports community radio as participatory media.

Chapter 8: South African community radio: a media studies perspective

To discern what community media entails theoretically, this chapter explores community radio in South Africa from the perspective of a media literature study. As alternative media, community radio exhibits unique features that allow it to operate according to differentiated configurations and rituals when compared with traditional commercial and public broadcasting models. Since it aligns with the envisioned empowerment goals of community media as viewed through the participatory paradigm, the multi-theoretical framework of community media (see 8.4) – specifically the rhizomatic theoretical optic of Carpentier *et al.* (2003, 2001) (see 8.4.4) – is presented as the most suitable theory to define community radio.

Chapter 9: South African community radio from a legislative perspective

A concise historical account of the origin and growth of community radio in South Africa is presented in the penultimate chapter of this thesis (see 9.2). This narration is followed by an examination of the relevant South African legislation that is relevant to community radio broadcasting (see 9.3).

Part IV: COMMUNITY RADIO IN SOUTH AFRICA AS PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

Part IV of this study is divided into one chapter. The last chapter will present the final integrated framework of South African community radio as participatory media:

Chapter 10: A theoretical-conceptual framework for South African community radio as participatory media

This final chapter presents the final synthesised theoretical-conceptual framework for South African community media as participatory media. This is the primary contribution of this study.

PREFACE PART I

As noted in the preamble, the first major part of this study consists of only Chapter 1. It presents the research problem of this thesis: To present a theoretical-conceptual framework of community radio in South Africa as participatory media as situated in the participatory paradigm. The chapter clarifies, however, that the latter paradigm's theoretical diffuseness needs conceptual clarity before the participatory ethos of community radio can be further examined in this study. Chapter 1, furthermore, states that community radio should also be examined from a multi-theoretical community media framework, as well as from the South African legislative context to inform this study's inquiry and final framework.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTION

"Community radio should not be popular, it should be necessary." – Zane Ibrahim, 2004, Bush Radio, Cape Town.

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This thesis is concerned with community radio. In its most basic description, community radio is referred to as the “third space” or “third tier” of broadcasting (see Bosch, 2024, 2017; Conrad, 2014; Fox, 2019; Granger *et al.*, 2018; Mhlanga, 2016, 2009; Tyali, 2021, 2017). Unlike radio stations owned by private businesses, community radio broadcasters operate as decentralised media organisations that are free from commercial imperatives. Backhaus (2024:1-2) describes community radio as “hyperlocal” since it is usually tied to a specific geographic locale or a community with a common interest, a shared culture, and specific lived experiences and needs. This hyperlocality contrasts sharply with national broadcasters’ legal mandate to serve mass audiences as an entire nation.

These concise descriptions suggest that community radio differs characteristically and functionally from mainstream and legacy broadcasting media configurations and practices, which means that it has a unique place and role in the larger mediascape and society.

1.1.1 The study of community radio and its role and place in society

Community radio’s distinctiveness can be explored through various disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and theoretical frames that extend beyond the present thesis’s location in the humanities. These include economic and management sciences, educational, and environmental sciences. Concerning research in the humanities during the last two decades, several postgraduate studies about South African community radio have been conducted at local universities and abroad in, for example, the fields of journalism and media studies, development studies, translations studies, and governance (see, for example, Bosch, 2003; Modiba, 2020; Msileni, 2021; Osunkunle, 2013; Sithole, 2020; Tella, 2022; Tyali, 2017; Van Rooyen, 2019).

The present study locates its inquiry into community radio within the communication studies subfield of development communication. It explores how South African community radio can be conceptualised as participatory media for development and social change initiatives. This investigation does not involve an empirical study but instead analyses community radio from a theoretical perspective. It contends that community radio coincides with the participatory paradigm's aim to ensure participatory communication in development and social change settings. As these preliminary remarks indicate and as is articulated in the problem statement (see 1.2), this line of inquiry considers the available research in media studies. The vast, combined corpus of literature on participatory communication and media studies demonstrates that both scholars and practitioners have been examining community radio's status and potential development role in society ever since its rise in the early 2000s (see, for example, Bosch, 2003; Carpentier, 2011; Fuller, 2007; Howley, 2005, 2010; Huesca, 1995; Hyde-Clarke, 2010; Lewis, 1993; Manyozo, 2011; Metula 2023; Mhagama, 2016; Servaes, 1999; Teer-Tomaselli, 2001; Zeeman, 2006). The scholarship and practice in these two fields share a fundamental question: How can community radio be utilised as a communicative platform and a participatory media for development?

Despite their often differing contexts and foci, proponents of community radio (academics and practitioners) mostly contend that local communities can use it to contribute meaningfully to their own development. This is because community radio operates from *within* and with a concern *for* a community's specific needs and challenges. The assertion is that the mediatisation of broadcasting media on a local level is an ideal approach or strategy to increase people's participation in development and to broaden democracy in society through media democratisation (cf. Gaynor & O'Brien, 2017; Howley, 2010; Manyozo, 2012; 2017; Moyo, 2020; Servaes, 1999; Tacchi, 2003; Tufte, 2017).

Fox (2019:58, 89), for example, explains that community radio celebrates the notion and practice of "community" as its distinguishing, foundational feature, clarifying that it affords the critical participation and articulation of previously suppressed and overlooked voices in development initiatives and processes (see 8.4 for more discussions on "community"). Community radio "amplifies communication for social change" since it is committed to the needs and lived experiences of individuals and communities. Specifically, it "embodies divergent values and

intentions” that struggle to find representation or direct expression in traditional (i.e. state and commercial) media structures and rituals (Fox, 2019:vii, 58). This line of argument holds that the development agendas of social actors on the community level are actively overlooked or colonised by neoliberal media structures and rituals. Understood in this way, community radio provides the interventionist institutional, social, and cultural communicative framework in which such gaps can not only be overcome but also actively disrupted in favour of previously marginalised voices and concerns (cf. Dutta & Zapata, 2019; Fox, 2019; Habermas, 1989; Moyo, 2020; Pavarala & Malik, 2021). The renowned scholar Jan Servaes (1999:260) perhaps provides the simplest description of community radio, stating that it, “is an act of participation in communication”.

Moylan (2021:222) agrees with this assessment, arguing that community radio and “community” should be seen “as an ongoing series” of “collective cultural practices [that can be] mobilised to reproduce and reinforce [the] communal subjectivity” that is so often evaded or deliberately ignored by traditional media. In a development communication context, these descriptions are particularly appealing and useful, as they orient the current research to explore theoretically how to define community radio as participatory media.

1.1.2 Community radio as an international phenomenon of practice and study

Any scholarly study should consider community radio’s presence in the Global North and Global South. Depending on differing regional locales, community radio and its component parts carry multiple connotations in different theoretical and instrumental terms (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2001:6; King, 2017:19-21; Mtshede *et al.*, 1998:10-11; O’Connor, 1990-102). Chapter 8: and Chapter 9: explore these differing theoretical, ideological, and regulative descriptions in more detail. The discussions in those chapters demonstrate that community media and (particularly) community radio do not represent one unified academic or even practitioner model, but instead exemplify numerous conceptual notions and varied practices.

For now, it must be noted that community radio is prevalent in various nations in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, notably in either established or developing democracies. In the North, the Low-Power FM (LPFM) sector, campus radio and “rural” radio broadcasters are commonly found on the American continent, in Canada and the United States (U.S.) (Fox,

2019:24-27). Community radio is well-established in Europe in several countries, including Belgium, Spain, France, and the Netherlands. In the United Kingdom (U.K.), community radio broadcasters operate in all four constituent countries. Given the current study's South African context and focus, the examination of community radio must explore its prevalence in the Global South, which traditionally represents several developing nations and democracies. Community radio stations are found in numerous countries in the Asian-Pacific region, Latin America and, of course, on the African continent (Barranquero, 2020; Busolo & Manalo IV, 2023; Raghunath, 2020).

Chapter 1's current contextual purposes, the historical and conceptual evolution of community radio needs a bit more contextualisation. The formal creation and eventual academic study of community radio can be traced back to two defining moments in the early 1980s.

1.1.3 Community radio's advent internationally and in South Africa

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC International¹, 2024), which is an umbrella non-governmental organisation for community radio broadcasters, recounts that – without prior planning or intention – several community radio enthusiasts gathered in Montreal, Canada, in 1983, only to realise later that their meetup was emblematic of a growing, global social movement toward establishing community radio as a unique sector in the broadcasting sphere. Since its official establishment in 1986 as an international representative body for community broadcasters (AMARC International, 2024), thousands of members from over 100 countries and numerous different types of community radio stations have joined AMARC's ranks, thereby encouraging the sector's growth to the benefit of people on a community level (see 8.3 for a more detailed discussion of AMARC's definition of community radio). These events coincided with the global decentralisation of broadcasting media during the 1990s, which notably also occurred on the African continent in postcolonial nations. During this period, broadcasting systems, policy, and regulation were transformed from state-monopolised configurations – reminiscent of colonial administrations – to diversified, pluralistic mediatisations, organisations, and practices (Teer-Tomaselli, 2011, 1994).

¹ AMARC is the French abbreviation for the *Association Mondiale Des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires* also known as the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC International, 2024).

1.1.4 Community radio as a facilitator for liberation: a global and South African view

This transformation trend, which coincided with the global “third wave of democracy”² in the 1980s and 1990s (Huntington, 1991), came to be known as the “liberalisation of the airwaves”. It is well-documented and has been analysed by various scholars in the South African context, specifically set against the country’s political transition from an apartheid state to a democratic one (see Barnett, 1999; Bosch, 2003, 2017; Duncan & Seleokane, 1998; Gunner *et al.*, 2010; Hadland & Thorn, 2004; Horwitz, 2001; Moyo, 2012; Olorunnisola, 2002; Olorunnisola & Lugalambi, 2011; Wasserman, 2018; Teer-Tomaselli, 2004, 2011).

Briefly described here, the early 1990s entailed a profound transformation of the South African telecommunications and broadcasting sectors (section 9.2.2 gives a fuller description of these changes). Most notably, the changes in the latter sector, which traditionally included radio and television, reflected the new South African political and social order right before the first democratic elections in 1994 and the period following that. Referring to the South African sectoral restructurings and changes, Teer-Tomaselli (2004:7-8) notes that corresponding international trends intensified them; namely, on the one hand, the “crisis [in the] public broadcasting and telecommunications sectors” and, on the other, the increasing reach of the growing global economy and the impact of its neoliberal agenda on the place and role of governments and traditionally state-owned enterprises.

Considering these global compounding nuances and challenges (Servaes & Lie, 2003:7-23; Wasserman, 2020:451-453) that took place during the 1990s, South Africa was confronted with the profound project of changing its political and social order while being confronted with the demands of restructuring the previously apartheid-owned and controlled telecommunications, broadcasting and media environment, all of which needed to be done in the face of global economic pressures and changes. Teer-Tomaselli (2004:8) explains that, in a post-apartheid

² The “third wave of democracy”, conceptually popularised by Huntington (1991), refers to the historical period when democratic transitions occurred in previously colonised and politically suppressed countries in Latin America in the 1980s, Asian-Pacific countries during the mid-1980s to 1988, the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and consequent liberalisation of many Eastern European countries, as well as several African countries in the 1990s in the post-Cold War era (Nur, 2015:55-59). The so-called first wave occurred during the gradual expansion of democracy in the United States and Europe and its authoritarian reversal during the 1820s-1920s, whereas the “second wave” followed World War II and extended to the 1960s in mainly European and Asian countries.

South Africa and even in the years that immediately preceded the change to democracy, “‘Transformation’ has come to mean the adaptation and reformation of institutions, both in the public and private sectors, to accommodate the change in political culture and ethos following the first universal franchise election of 1994”.

While Part III of this study provides fuller versions of community radio’s development, several international events and movements that spurred its academic and practitioner standing need to be mentioned here. Scholars describe the first phases of community radio that originated in the 1940s³ by focusing on the establishment of so-called miners’ radio in Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru (Bosch, 2017; Gumucio-Dagron, 2001; Huesca, 1995; O’Connor, 1990; Servaes, 1999). They explain that, as the early pioneers of community radio, miners and various marginalised groups started using radio as an educational tool. Later on, during community radio’s second development phase in the 1960s, it was used as an instrument of political activism for fundamental social change (Servaes, 1999:257-258). This stage drew inspiration from the ideas of scholars and activists, such as Paolo Freire’s critical pedagogy, as a strategy for popular revolution. Locally, the African National Congress’s (ANC) underground Radio Freedom and the Cassette Education Trust (CASET) in Cape Town, which later became Bush Radio, articulated an anti-apartheid agenda (Bosch, 2017:49-50; Lekgoathi, 2010:139-140). The third phase, Servaes (*ibid.*) relates, expanded and formalised during the 1970s when radio became recognised as a “communication medium” that was different from the mainstream. In this line of reasoning, radio was understood “as part of the communication process as a whole: that is, as radio that is there for the people and made by the people”, meaning that this communication medium that was enacted by the people’s active participation and their self-management of community radio systems.

Bosch (2017:49-51) notes how small-scale, community-owned stations also emerged globally and were exemplified in the political and popular revolutionary struggles that gained momentum during the 1980s, when more countries formalised community radio systems in legislative terms. Like AMARC, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

³ In their educational form, stations like *Radio Sutatenza* arose in Colombia (from 1943 onwards) that focused on increasing farmers’ literacy and educational levels. In 1949, *Miner’s Radio* in Bolivia sought to empower miners against capitalists’ exploitation (Servaes, 1999:257-258).

MacBride Commission Report of 1980 gave further impetus to the global need to create open, democratic media and communication systems that promoted media pluralism while giving voice to dissenting opinions on a grassroots level (MacBride, 1980). Community radio expanded with the third wave of democracy, sweeping the globe during the 1990s, especially in Latin America and Africa.

Coupled with the growth of the global economy and advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) (e.g. satellite networks, Internet radio etc.), the progress of independent, alternative media in the form of community radio continued to swell (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001:15-16). Elsewhere, King (2017:21) describes the abovementioned different phases of community radio as including the experimental, wildfire, solidarity and resurgence” periods. These stages will be revisited in Section 9.2.2, which recounts the history of community radio in more detail.

1.1.5 The creation of community radio in South Africa in legislative terms

One of the first critical transformations made in preparation for the country’s transition was the creation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), promulgated by the IBA Act of 1991. In the build-up to the first multiracial democratic elections in 1994, the IBA was also mandated to issue temporary broadcasting licenses to several newly established community radio stations. Prior to these elections, attendees of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA)⁴ in 1992 identified community radio as a suitable means for effecting democratic change, not only to break the monopoly of the apartheid-era government mouthpiece that was the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) but also to prepare the previously politically disenfranchised majority of South Africans to participate in the elections in an informed manner (Olorunnisola, 2002:130-131). Community radio was also envisioned as a medium that would provide the

⁴ In the early 1990s, CODESA took place at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park just outside of Johannesburg in the form of two series of discussions and negotiations that preceded the 1994 election (SAHO, n.d.). Ninety-two different organisations united as the Patriotic Front to oppose apartheid and negotiate the changeover of political leadership with the National Party government. Other issues of concern included drafting a new constitution, setting up an interim government, the electoral system, the fate of the homelands, and the time that would be needed to implement all these changes. The website of South African History Online (SAHO, n.d.) notes that, during the second series of talks, discussions occurred on the role of the media in a democratic South Africa and, more specifically, on the future role of the SABC as an impartial broadcaster. As part of these discussions, the issue of community radio in support of democratic reforms also took place. Concerns about media diversity, pluralism and representation were also tabled.

communicative space for cultural and linguistic groups that had been neglected or entirely ignored by the SABC and the apartheid government, and for the newly founded commercial stations that were established in the 1990s.

The IBA Act of 1991 established the regulatory authority and was followed by the IBA Act 153 of 1993, which formed the three tiers of broadcasting in South Africa. Today the authority is known as the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), as per the ICASA Act no 13 of 2000. Apart from depoliticising the public broadcaster and increasing commercial broadcasting services (Olorunnisola & Lugalambi, 2011:25-26), the aforementioned acts of parliament officially established the community broadcasting sector in the country. These changes therefore departed from the previous apartheid government-controlled broadcasting systems and policies and hence increased the open, democratic flow of information and communication in South Africa. The IBA Acts and several other key pieces of legislation are reviewed in full in Chapter 9.

One of these is the Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999. It states that community radio stations in South Africa function as non-profit entities that address and promote the needs of a specific community for whom they exist. The South African government further supports the Broadcast Act through agencies such as the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), established in 2003, which is mandated by the MDDA Act No 14 of 2002 to provide support for community media. This support is meant to encourage the growth and development of small commercial and community media for greater access and participation, diversity and local ownership and furthermore to address the developmental needs of communities (MDDA, 2024).

One of these acts included the Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999. It states that community radio stations in South Africa function as non-profit entities that address and promote the needs of a specific community for whom they exist. The South African government further supports the Broadcast Act through agencies such as the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA), established in 2003, which is mandated by the MDDA Act No 14 of 2002 to provide support for community media to encourage the growth and development of small commercial and community media for greater access and participation, diversity, local ownership and to address communities' developmental needs (MDDA, 2024).

1.1.6 The current state of South African community radio

Two recent reports by The Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRC) (BRC, 2024, 2021) found that 91% of South Africans listen to radio every week, a percentage that corresponds to 35,8 million listeners, of which 77% of them do so via AM or FM radio (including either a radio set or a car radio), 29% via their smartphones or mobile phones, 12% via television, and 1% via a computer. The report further states that these listeners spend about 4 hours per day listening to radio services, indicating that while social media is gaining traction yearly as a popular form of communication among South Africans, radio remains a cost-effective, accessible, and popular media platform. Even though the community radio sector has grown significantly over the past three decades, finding reliable radio listenership numbers is very hard to come by.

As stated in the BRC (2024) report, in March of 2024, there were 293 community radio stations that were licenced for operation by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa. According to interim data provided by the BRC (2024), there are a handful of community radio stations with numbers of listeners comparable to commercial and public radio stations. The top five biggest stations include Jozi FM in Gauteng with 455,000 listeners, Izwi LoMzansi 98.0 FM in KwaZulu-Natal with 300,000, Theta FM 100.6 In Gauteng with 226,000, and two Western Cape stations, Radio Ziobonele 98.2 FM with 189,000 listeners and the Voice of the Cape 91.3 FM with 170,000 listeners. In the latter province, eight community radio stations have also breached the 100,000-listenership threshold. The report indicates that the remaining fifteen biggest community radio stations' listenerships vary significantly, anywhere between 90,000 and 149,000 people who listen daily.

Despite community radio's proliferation and continued celebrated status as an important participatory vehicle of development communication in South Africa, research (Da Costa, 2012; Krüger *et al.*, 2013:8-9) on the health of the sector exposes that several issues of concern threaten its sustainability. Krüger *et al.* (2013:8-9) and Gumucio-Dagron (2001), among other researchers, have identified how the wellbeing of a community radio station includes issues of social, institutional and financial sustainability. Stable financial income for daily and long-term operations, adequate technological infrastructure, and sufficient human resources that are necessary to run and sustain community stations are often lacking (Krüger *et al.*, *ibid.*).

Similarly, although the sector is legislated to function independently from government and political interests, community stations remain exposed to the interests of politicians and commercial role-players. Especially on a local level, these community stakeholders have the ability to interfere with a radio station's impartial management and people-centred mandate. As mentioned before, an enabling regulatory and policy environment in which community radio functions is crucial to its sustainability. Furthermore, when this supportive institutional framework is lacking, the participatory ethos and mandate of community radio are also compromised. Therefore, Section 9.3 interrogates the regulations and policies that are supposed to create an enabling environment for community radio as participatory media.

1.1.7 Issues of theoretical concern: community media studies and participatory communication

As introduced in the first subsection of this chapter, community media scholars and development communication proponents reason that community radio is one of the most accessible resources that communities can employ to voice and address their specific development needs and interests (see Busolo & Manalo IV, 2023; Carpentier, 2011:97; Conrad, 2014:774; Tucker, 2013; Bosch, 2017). Both fields view community radio as a medium that encourages the public communication process, which is to say as a democratising vehicle that allows public communication to be participatory and open. It particularly encourages diversity of voices, inclusivity and participation in local development issues and processes that private or public entities do not exclusively or comprehensively cover (cf. Atton, 2002; Cammaerts, 2009; Howley, 2010; Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010).

Whereas there is an ongoing debate and a difference of opinions about what precisely the participatory approach to communication for development and social change entails, most proponents of such participation agree on key principles of the paradigm and its communication approach (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:93; Scott, 2014:47-51; Dutta, 2020:15-19; Servaes, 2020a:4-11). For the current study, these have been identified as including the assumptions of participation, dialogue, recognition of and sensitivity to cultural diversity, and the notion of empowerment through development processes. The participatory paradigm conceptualises the individual as being active in the communication processes of a media organisation instead of merely being a passive recipient of media products and content. This model places a high

premium on the self-determination of a community and its individual members, seeing them as agents with particular resourcefulness, innate energy, and ingenuity as drivers of social change (Morris 2003:226-227; Servaes & Malikhaio, 2008:164). Burger (2015:21-22) explains that this conception of the participatory approach emphasises the community-driven, internal process of empowerment instead of relying on participation that is perhaps strategically motivated by an external development agent or social movement.

As stated in the chapter's introductory remarks, despite its normative status, experts in academia, planning and practice agree that the concepts "participation" and "participatory communication" represent a variety of abstractions and applications. Using the vivid imagery of a kaleidoscope cylinder, White (1994:16) describes "participation" as colourful and explains that "[i]t changes its colour and shape at the will of the hands in which it is held. And just like that momentary image in the kaleidoscope, it can be very fragile and elusive, changing from one moment to the next." In other words, depending on the social actors involved, different views exist on the notion of participation and communication, which could also be based on the complexity of dissimilar development agendas, interpretations, contexts, goals, processes and evaluation criteria (Chang & Jacobson 2010:660-661; Carpentier 2011:1-4; Servaes, 2020b:v-vii). All of these variables can impact how development and social change are interpreted and implemented. Such myriad conceptions and practices result in a participatory paradigm that remains fundamentally abstract and fragmented, making it empirically challenging to measure (cf. Chambers 1994; Jacobson & Servaes 1999; Melkote & Steeves, 2001, 2015; Jacobson & Storey 2004; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte 2006; McAnany 2012; Scott, 2014).

The participatory approach's theoretical fluidity poses a significant problem because history has shown that the theory and practice of development and communication are interrelated (see Chapter 2). As the image of the kaleidoscope above illustrates, people's view of the world determines how they organise their environment, approach their thoughts about the world and, ultimately, how they act therein (McAnany 2012:6, 88). To put it in more philosophical terms, certain ontological viewpoints inform one's epistemological perspectives, as well as one's methodological strategies. Quarry and Ramirez (2009:39) point out that the way top-down commanding "planners" conceive development greatly impacts how communication is viewed and implemented by the "searchers" or practitioners who seek the desired development or social change. Therefore, as this study argues, it is essential to define the metatheoretical assumptions

that underly social change via the participatory paradigm for it to be implemented effectively and meaningfully (Manyozo, 2012:100-102; Tufte & Tacchi, 2020:2, 8-10; Melkote & Steeves, 2015:358-402). In community media studies, several different approaches are available to describe community radio theoretically. Chapter 8 examines several approaches, but proposes that the multi-theoretical framework of Carpentier *et al.* (2001, 2003) presents a more coherent definition that captures the theoretical complexity and the varying social and cultural settings in which community radio takes place.

If community radio is conceptualised and governed as participatory media, it is important to consider closely *how* participation *in* and *through* such media is constructed and applied. This is even more true, Gumucio-Dagron (2008:10) states, when community media often “fail due to its lack of connection with the social actors it is supposed to represent”.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As stated earlier, in South Africa, community radio rests on the ideal of the participation of communities in communication processes that are envisioned to facilitate their development and social change. Local legislation encourages communities to participate and be involved in the management and production processes of community radio stations to deliver localised content that would benefit community members. Local broadcasting policy encourages community members to not only be audiences or listeners but also active producers or broadcasters of content that would benefit them directly.

On paper, it seems as if South African community radio stations encourage a theoretical and policy perspective of participatory community media. Therefore, the importance and need for community radio as a participatory medium for community development are evident. However, *how* community media actually fulfil these ideals remains misunderstood because of the many different conceptualisations of “participatory communication” and *how* and *whether* these ideal types have traction in empirical circumstances. Community radio in South Africa, as a research interest, offers an opportunity to study how the notion of participatory communication for development and social change should be theorised and understood conceptually at the intersection of the fields of development communication, community media studies and the South African legislative policy environment. As a research site, it opens entry points to examine

how democratic, participatory communication happens as organised at the community level of community radio.

1.3 GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1 General research question

Against the preceding discussions and given the above problem statement, the general research question that follows is: *What should a framework for a South African community radio station, as participatory media, consist of?*

Following the general research question, specific questions can be formulated:

1.3.2 Specific research questions

Following the general research question, specific research questions (SRQs) can be formulated:

1.3.2.1 How is participatory communication conceptualised according to the literature on the participatory paradigm?

1.3.2.2 How is community radio conceptualised according to the literature on community media as relevant to community radio in a South African context?

1.3.2.3 How is community radio conceptualised according to the applicable South African broadcasting legislation?

The general and specific research aims can now be formulated as general and specific research aims.

1.4 SPECIFIC RESEARCH AIMS

To answer the main research question set in Section 1.3, the specific research aims (SRAs) for this study intend to conceptualise:

1.4.1 Participatory communication according to the literature on the participatory paradigm.

1.4.2 Community radio according to the literature on community media as relevant to the South African context.

1.4.3 Community radio according to the applicable South African broadcasting legislation.

1.5 CENTRAL THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The following central theoretical points of departure guide the present study:

- Proponents of the participatory approach to development communication maintain that community media are well-suited to the type of democratic communication where those whose interests must be mediated, are directly involved in managing community media and meaningfully participating in all the communicative processes involved (Conrad, 2014:773-789; McQuail & Deuze, 2020:160). The participatory approach advocates for this community media mandate. Advocacy for this approach rests on the argument that, via the participation of individuals and communities and their dialogue *on* and *in* development communication processes and initiatives, they would be meaningfully empowered (Morris, 2003:226; Cornwall, 2004:85; Hickey & Mohan, 2004:3-9; Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:96; Manyozo 2017:12, 76; White, 2011:60-61; Servaes, 2020c:19-20). Simultaneously, the scholars and practitioners who champion the participatory approach reason that the cultural diversity and identities of development communication beneficiaries or participants must be valued throughout the development communication process (i.e. throughout its planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages) to inform this process or initiative to be locally relevant and sustainable (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:98, Servaes, 1995:46, Mefalopulos & Grenna, 2004:27,29).
- Community radio, in this study, is conceptualised as an ideal medium for participatory communication, as this type of broadcaster is small-scale and owned by the community to their benefit. As an agent of change, a community radio station's listeners and community must be encouraged to, through participatory communication, participate indirectly and directly in a station's programming and management. This thesis will

contend that community media offers the possibility of realising participation beyond the confines of interpersonal participatory communication, as evidenced in project—or programme-based development initiatives, by considering how this type of communication could be explicitly theorised within a media-centred setting on a local level (Carpentier *et al.*, 2003, 2001; Howley, 2010).

- From a regulatory and legislative standpoint, the South African Broadcasting Act of 1999 defines community radio as participatory media in service and to the benefit of communities (South Africa, 1999). The legislation and applicable policy documents underscore community radio's value as a platform for the potential socio-economic and cultural development or social change of communities whose specific localised needs are not met by mainstream commercial media or the public broadcaster. These legislative and regulative frameworks emphasise that, as a development agent, community radio should exist in the community, for the community and by the community. Community radio is owned and operated by the community and their participation in and through the station must be guaranteed and encouraged.

1.6 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

This study employs a qualitative methodological research paradigm to study the theory and praxis of participation in a community radio context. This methodology permits the researcher to reflect thoroughly on the metatheoretical assumptions of the participatory paradigm. Through the literature studies that are described in the subsequent section, a qualitative research design (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:56-57, 59) encourages a deep examination of the academic discourse on the participatory approach and allows it additionally to be read through the lenses of community media literature and the legislative framework. Essentially, the qualitative paradigm acknowledges the importance of studying the participatory approach to gain a complete interpretation from multifaceted and metatheoretical viewpoints (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28-30).

This type of research is therefore decidedly explorative and interpretative. Though these methodological characteristics permit the researcher to explore and theorise participatory communication, the current study remains empirically untested. This study accepts the critical

theory interpretation of the qualitative methodology in that it seeks to explore how power, human subjectivity, and societal systems interact and create systems of oppression that require disruptions and transformation. That having been said, this study also remains cognisant of the fact that the research's final theoretical framework would require empirical application in the future (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:60-61; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:33-37).

1.7 RESEARCH METHODS

1.7.1 Literature review

This research uses a literature review to develop a framework for community radio as participatory media. Snyder (2019:333, 339) writes that, irrespective of the discipline in which an academic or student is positioned, research and knowledge production remain among of the most fundamental and multifaceted scholarly activities and responsibilities that any researcher can and must undertake. According to her, conducting research in fields where there is a lack of information on complex phenomena is vital and challenging. These fields are expanding and becoming more interdisciplinary, which makes research even more urgent – an imperative that is certainly true for the current study based on its three-pronged theoretical conceptual interrogation (i.e., the participatory paradigm, community media studies, and the legislative frame).

Consequently, a literature review is an appropriate and requisite research method for taking stock of the standing literature, research, and criticisms on this research topic (Hart, 1998:3, 15). It will furthermore enable the research to synthesise the analysed literature, especially concerning its meta-level or meta-conceptual concerns (Snyder, 2019:333).

1.7.1.1 An integrative, semi-systematic literature review

Webster and Watson (2002:xiv) clarify that, essentially, two types of literature reviews exist; firstly, where scholars engage with a mature topic and an accumulated body of research, and secondly, where they confront an emerging research interest or topic that requires exposure to potential theoretical foundations. However, Snyder (2019:333) identifies three major categories

of literature reviews, namely, the systematic, semi-systematic and integrative reviews. Each one's application depends on the researcher's particular field of study and research goal.

For the current research purposes, the integrative literature review was chosen as the most appropriate method, given the need to critique and synthesise the available literature on three different theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Snyder (2019:334) explains that this type of review can be combined with a semi-systematic review, which seeks to review the chronological development of a theme, give a historical review of a field, and identify the main themes within the applicable and available literature. As has been stated clearly by now, Chapter 2 of this study will review the historical conceptual trajectories of the participatory paradigm and community media theory.

To this effect, Whetten (1989:490-493) claims that a legitimate, value-added theoretical contribution constitutes a study that answers the *what*, *why* and *how* questions concerning a particular phenomenon of interest instead of the limited *who*, *when* and *where* concerns. This study is, as Webster and Watson (2002:xvi) would describe it, concept-centric in its research concern and nature. Accordingly, as they are implemented in this research, the above two combined reviews support mapping the fields of study concerning their conceptual scope (i.e., as based on the criteria of comprehensiveness and parsimony), as well as determining how concepts are related and ultimately motivating and reasoning why certain concepts should constitute a new reconceptualised theoretical model or framework (Whetten, 1989:490-493; West & Turner, 2018:56-57).

1.7.1.2 Literature review: sources, databases and research projects

In this study an extensive review of books, academic journals, postgraduate studies, conferences papers, newspaper articles and internet sources was conducted via the following databases: the North-West University (NWU) Library Catalogue, SA Media, the National Research Foundation (NRF): Nexus, EBSCOHost, JSTOR, Google Scholar, SAePublications, Sabinet References and the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD). The focus throughout was on surveying development communication and community media studies literature. Some seminal research focused specifically on small-scale media projects such as community radio and its participatory potential in promoting social change in developing countries (see for example,

MacBride, 1980; Berrigan, 1979; Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Gumucio, 2001). Numerous examples of international and South African scholarship have already been cited in Section 1.1 of this chapter as well and will be examined again in Part III of this research.

1.7.1.3 Postgraduate community radio studies in Southern Africa

A NRF Nexus Database System search indicates several completed postgraduate studies on community radio in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of these studies are categorised under communication science, with a smaller number cited in fields such as political science, business administration, business leadership, marketing, education, religion, comparative studies, sociology, and even fine arts, dating as far back as 1996 (NRF, 2021). The Nexus results show that most community radio research comprises empirical case studies based on existing, selected theoretical frameworks. Some of the research themes of these studies concern sustainability (see Mati, 2001; Muswede, 2009; Mafani, 2015) while others involve participatory communication in community radio for development (Mhalanga, 2006; Mukendi, 2010; Miche'l, 2016), with only Tyali's (2017) doctoral thesis consisting of a critical inquiry into the Africanisation and decolonisation of South African community radio as based on a case study of an Eastern Cape station.

Mgaga (2014) researched the role of isiZulu radio drama and its cultural impact on the culture of a Zulu-speaking community. More recently, Sithole (2020) examined the interrelationship between community radio, funding, programming and developmental roles, while Matijila (2020) examined gender portrayal in community radio programming. Nyathi (2016) explored community empowerment in the context of public governance through community radio broadcasting case studies. Other research focussed on the developmental role of community radio in Eastern Cape stations, respectively, in environmental and communication studies (Lupele, 2017; Mawokomayi, 2018). Mashau (2019) did a master's study on language policies for community radio stations in the Limpopo Province. Gavaza (2017) did a master's in business administration on social media utilisation in a local case study, while Patel (2018) explored the construction of masculinity in Indian Muslim community radio. Additionally, there have been studies done on community volunteers and participatory research methods in producing community radio content (Ellis, 2009; Davidson, 2004). Rangana (2002) and Matsila (2001) focussed on community radio and its role in development, while Ngcezula (2009) studied possible

business models for community radio. Ndlovu (2000) completed a case study on the role of community radio in the coverage of the 1999 South African general elections.

Doctoral studies by Banda (2009) and Zeeman (2006), respectively examine governance broadcasting paradigms for Zambian community radio broadcasting and the development of a community radio station for a national game park. A common thread in all the above-listed studies is the centrality and general uncritical acceptance of participatory communication as the theoretical framework for different empirical case studies. Several postgraduate studies focus on community radio beyond the South African borders including studies, for example, on Zambian and Namibian community radio (Mukendi, 2010; Moloongo, 2009; Ellis, 2009)

1.7.1.4 Community radio scholarship in the broader research community

The literature review also concerned research conducted in other developing nations in South America and Asia, while also including studies from Australia, as South Africa and Australia not only share a similar broadcasting regulatory structure, but also were formerly colonised by the United Kingdom, and are still part of the British Commonwealth of Nations (The Commonwealth, 2021). Research done by Australian scholars Van Vuuren (2009, 2006, 2004) and Order (2013) provides comprehensive examinations of community radio and the notions of value that underpin this type of media phenomenon.

In the broader academic community, scholars have studied community radio relating to participatory communication, the public sphere and community representation in post-apartheid South Africa (Olorunnisola, 2002; Tsarwe, 2014), while Krüger (2011) researched community news broadcasting as a way to broaden the South African public sphere in which democratic discourse can take place. Teer-Tomaselli (2001) explored the notion “community” in community radio stations in Durban, South Africa. Bosch (2003, 2007) also conducted notable research on community radio and identity construction in a post-1994-South Africa using a rhizomatic methodology to study Bush Radio and its community, while international scholar Jo Tacchi (2002) comparatively studied the growth of the local community radio "mediascape" and the Australian sector. International scholars (Sandoval & Fuchs; 2010; Santana & Carpentier, 2010) attempted to reconceptualise the problematic notions of community media, alternative media and participation from a rhizomatic theoretical perspective. As is evident from these listed research

topics and studies: in addition to studying the phenomenon concerning its empirical nature and practice, community radio can and has been studied from various theoretical optics and concerns.

For current research purposes, the integrated literature study explores and identifies the main applicable assumptions of the participatory communication paradigm, focusing on its relevance to the context of community radio in South African broadcasting legislation and the country's regulative environment. Although the paradigm has been theorised extensively and from many perspectives, the unique niche – hence: contribution – of the current study is to provide an integrated theoretical-conceptual framework that examines participatory communication in South African community radio stations from the perspectives of the participatory paradigm, community media studies, and local legislation.

As part of the above research method, the current study will analyse the metatheoretical and paradigmatic historical and conceptual context from which the participatory paradigm emerged. This deconstruction and reconstruction form part of this thesis's research strategy and design since it provides a more nuanced conceptual scaffolding from which to further theorise its fundamental assumptions in Part II.

1.7.2 Metatheory, paradigms and theories in communication scholarship

Before a more focussed paradigmatic overview of the latter paradigm follows, the philosophical notions of metatheories, paradigms and theories are clarified within the larger field of development communication. These notions are pertinent in communication scholarship and any of its subdisciplines as they serve as the foundational elements that guide any theoretical and metatheoretical research such as this study entails. As they function on a higher-order level of abstraction than specific communication theories, they permit researchers to ascertain the fundamental philosophical and foundational assumptions that underpin theoretical approaches and concepts. As stated before, this study will critically explore the fundamentals of participation and participatory communication through a metatheoretical and paradigmatic analysis of the participatory paradigm and its antecedents. This will provide the study with a deeper, more nuanced understanding of

1.7.2.1 Metatheories

Scholars sometimes refer to metatheory as the “philosophy of science”, “metascience”, “metadiscourse”, “metamodels”, and sometimes the “epistemology of science” since they all denote the critical scholarly reflection on the nature of scientific inquiry (Craig & Muller, 2007:55; Babbie and Mouton (2001:20). Metatheory refers to a theory about theory. As Morrow and Torres (2002:3) note, it refers to a larger framework or overarching theory or tradition within a particular discipline that gives philosophical insights into the underlying assumptions of theories that, for instance, development communication experts who work in academia may hold. Unlike the conventional or, as Muller and Craig (2007:ix-xiii) term it, “practical theory” of everyday life and communicative instances, metatheory or a metamodel of communication focuses on the underlying philosophical assumptions that theories are built on and theorists subscribe to; namely, ontology, epistemology, methodology, praxeology and axiology. Craig and Muller (2007:55-56) clarify the metatheoretical assumptions as follows:

- a) *Ontology*: includes suppositions about the nature of reality or existence both in the subjective and objective worlds. It concerns what phenomena exist in these worldviews, their fundamental features, and how they relate, and ultimately what the meaning of existence is.
- b) *Epistemology*: interrogates knowledge assumptions within a particular paradigm and its associated theories. Epistemology asks the composition of knowledge and its veracity. It also concerns the origins, scope, and limits of knowledge.
- c) *Praxeology*: involves assumptions about how theory practice should be organised and presented within the larger academic domain, its intellectual community and its associated theories, sometimes referred to as a paradigm.
- d) *Axiology*: examines the underlying values of a theory that establish its ethical, aesthetic and societal worth, and hence deals with the presuppositions of normativity (Morrow & Torres, 2002:32).
- e) *Methodology*: refers to the systematic set of principles, procedures and tools that are used to conduct research and as conventionally divided between the qualitative and quantitative paradigms, the participatory action paradigm, and a mixed methods approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:48-49). Furthermore it considers the research assumptions and protocols, including ethics, in addition to the limitations of a particular

research design. Methodologies relate to different ontological and epistemological assumptions and are hence attached to different metatheoretical traditions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:20, 67).

In 1999 Robert Craig proposed a “*constitutive metamodel* of communication theory as a field” due to the vast number of available, different theories and applications (Craig, 2007:125). The scholars reasoned that, despite the epistemological pluralism – hence, the fragmented nature of communication theory – it was possible to formulate a matrix of seven main traditions or metatheories of communication. The seven traditions are well-known and include the rhetoric tradition, semiotics, phenomenology, cybernetics, socio-psychological and sociocultural traditions, and the critical tradition. Craig (2015: 356; 2007:125, 127) maintains that this metamodel does not force all communication theories into any particular version of first-order theories but presents scholars with the “dialogical-dialectical opportunity” to appraise the validity of existing and historical communication theories in addition to assessing their practicability and contribution to society. Metatheory allows communication scholars to critically interrogate the possible common principles that connect different theories in a particular field.

The current study does not conform exclusively to any of the seven metatheories. Nonetheless, discussions on different historical development communication paradigms (see 2.4 to 0) will reveal that different discourses within the field fit more easily within certain metatheories than others. Craig’s matrix also recommends that it is quite possible to categorise certain paradigms and their associated theories simultaneously in more than one tradition. In Section 2.2 a brief comparative metamodel analysis will reveal the modernisation approach’s basic metatheoretical assumptions, aiming to enhance Part II’s reinterpretation of the participatory paradigm’s metatheoretical and theoretical assumptions.

It relies on Chambers’ (2008:173) description of the modernisation approach as concerning “things and procedures” contrasted with the participatory model as being people-centred and about emergent processes as a vantage point for further discussions in Sections 2.4 to 2.6. By examining the binary approaches and the multiplicity framework from which the latter paradigm emerged, this research will better grasp the ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions of the participatory model as evolving from its predecessors and decidedly as a critique of their limitations and failure to deliver meaningful development and social change. For

example, in the modernisation approach, an instrumental, top-down logic to development marginalised the power and agency of individuals and communities that the people-centred participatory model wants to address.

Following Chitnis's (2005) structuration theory strategy, the embedded power dynamics of communication of both paradigms can be revealed and reinterpreted. This interrogation similarly uncovers how development communication shifted from Western-centric epistemic assumptions (i.e. embodied in the notion of universality) to the participatory model's socio-culturally cognisant and context-dependent approach. These types of preliminary higher-order interpretations are essential in enhancing the theorisation of the participatory paradigm in Chapters 3 to 6, and its eventual synthesised, refined theoretical-conceptual framework that is presented in Chapter 7. With this in mind, a brief word on the nature and function of paradigms within this theoretical interrogation is necessary.

1.7.2.2 Paradigms

Chambers (2008:72) describes paradigms as “a mutually reinforcing pattern of concepts, values and principles, procedures and processes, roles and behaviours, relationships and mindsets, and orientations and predispositions.” He claims that while paradigms can differ sharply from one another (like the metamodel presented above), elements of one paradigm manifest in the other. Therefore, communication scholars should caution against interpreting paradigms as mutually exclusive or in terms of “good/bad or either/or”.

Unlike metatheories, paradigms enable reflection on specific approaches used within a research field (e.g. positivism, integrative or critical theory) to understand a research topic. Where metatheories are broader and more abstract, paradigms are a subset thereof, presenting a more specific conceptual framework within which to structure communication inquiry (Tomaselli, 2011:1-2). Paradigmatic thinking equips researchers with shared metatheoretical assumptions and thus guides research practices, particularly by also calling attention to shifts in methodologies with which to conduct research. For example, the modernisation paradigm's positivistic logic and associated quantitative methods can be critiqued from the participatory model's interpretive frame, which promotes qualitative and participatory research methodologies when interrogating development communication concerns.

Paradigms evolve conceptually as new alternative assumptions emerge within communication fields either as the result of new theories that emerge or evidence that counters dominant paradigms. As stated in the preceding section, Sections 2.4 and 0 will present a delineation between two main paradigmatic models in development communication and their evolutions over time. This paradigmatic shift happened because of metatheoretical critiques of earlier development communication models. In other words, metatheoretical analysis helps the development of communication inquiry, such as the investigation and theorisation conducted in the present study, so that the limitations of older approaches can be understood and revealed. It also articulates the need for and refinement of the participatory model. Concerns that were overlooked in previous development communication paradigms can be identified with a view to addressing them in the participatory paradigm.

1.7.2.3 Theories

A theory can be defined as any systematic set of notions, explanations and assumptions on some aspect of the human experience, phenomenon or a set of related phenomena (West & Turner, 2021:43). A theory thus describes a set of concepts, principles, ideas and so forth that attempt to make sense of a phenomenon by determining the relationships between variables (Imenda, 2014:186-87). A communication theory presents a researcher with not only a structured but also a coherent way to understand complex communication phenomena, as well as further research on such experiences. The current study is concerned with practical theory and normative theory or theorising. Muller and Craig (2007:xii) describe practical theory as permitting scholars to engage in discourses through which they can investigate and name problems and provide tools to strategically manage communication challenges. Normative theory, in contrast, presents the formulation of abstract principles that can be applied to ideal models for how things ought to be. Throughout Chapters 3 to 6 (Part II), various theories and approaches in the participatory paradigm will be discussed and used to theorise the latter paradigm from a multi-theoretical optic.

1.7.2.4 A theoretical-conceptual framework

In light of the above discussions, the differences between conceptual and theoretical frameworks need clarification. A conceptual framework, Jabareen (2009:50) explains, is usually the result or

product of theorisation process in qualitative research. Following the ideas of the French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1991:15, 19), Jabareen (*ibid*) states that a conceptual framework represents a plurality of heterogeneous but inseparable elements or components that, taken together, comprise the total approach to a study from the start to end.

Literature on conceptual frameworks gives vague and imprecise descriptions of conceptual versus theoretical frameworks (Imenda, 2014:185; Jabareen, 2009:51). Some sources describe it as the visual representation of theoretical framework, while others maintain it can also be presented in narrative form, and for these reasons, the term “model’ is often used interchangeably with a conceptual framework (Imenda, 2014:185; Leshem & Trafford, 2007:99-100). The current study accepts the description of a “conceptual framework as a network, or ‘a plane,’ of interlined concepts” that form a holistic view and understanding of a phenomenon, especially in a qualitative research context (Jabareen, 2009:51, 52). A conceptual framework then involves at least one or more formal theories, which can be utilised in part or as a whole, in addition to incorporating other concepts and empirical findings gained via literature and application. The value of a conceptual framework lies in its interpretative ability to indicate the relationships between ideas and concepts, especially in a metatheoretical sense, and thus, rather than offering a theoretical explanation, extends to a deeper understanding (Jabareen, 2009:50, 52). Imenda (2014:189) states that these frameworks are usually formulated when a single theory cannot comprehensively research and represent the complexity of a particular phenomenon or phenomena.

Punch (2000:23., 54) explains that a conceptual framework is involved when the “conceptual status” and the interrelationship of research phenomena are examined. He calls this level of abstraction and inquiry as occurring on a hierarchy continuum where different levels of abstraction and generality occur. A descending hierarchy means the researcher is examining the research domain, the topic, the general research questions and specific research questions, and the data collection issues. An ascending hierarchy then implies the opposite, where the levels of conceptualisation increase during the research process. The current study uses this continuum as a useful tool in synthesising the proposed final framework presented Chapter 10. Therefore, the data, so to speak, of the conceptual framework involved analysing the literature by mapping or tracing the available literature on the participatory paradigm discussed, interrogating it for the

most prominent concepts, and thereafter synthesising it into a new conceptual framework (Jabareen, 2009:53).

The final theoretical-conceptual framework of this study will, however, first present a theoretical-conceptual framework of the participatory paradigm in Chapter 7. This framework will be presented in narrative form and a synthesised review of the theoretical notions of participation, dialogue, culture, and empowerment. As stated in Section 1.7.1.1, an in-depth, integrative literature study on the theory and practice of participatory communication. In this manner, this study followed a deductive approach in appraising the literature concerning available theory and concepts on the participatory paradigm, while being perceptive of the study's general research objective: presenting a conceptual-theoretical framework of community radio as participatory media for social change and development. Chapter 7 thus used an inductive approach to synthesise the theorisations of Chapters 3 to 6 into a new coherent whole. This framework will then provide additional insights with which to develop this study's final framework of South African community radio as a participatory media in Chapter 10.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As this study is primarily theoretical-conceptual research, no human participants and associated ethical concerns impacted the conceptualisation or execution of the study. Despite the study's no-risk ethical status, it adheres to the NWU's official ethical clearance policy and procedures. To achieve ethical rigour and integrity, this study complied with the Faculty of Humanities' Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) and Scientific Committee ethical protocols and prescriptions, which included:

- Securing an official letter from the Scientific Committee's chairperson confirming that this is a "no-risk" study and that includes a scientific justification that motivates why this is the case; and
- that the researcher and study supervisor completed an ethics application form for no-risk studies that was submitted to BaSSREC for review, feedback, and final approval with the ethics number NWU-00951-22-A7.

Additionally, as a no-risk study, this research greatly emphasises the rigour and integrity of the theorisation process, as is explained in the section about an integrative literature study. Theory

and source triangulation and integrity are essential, and this will be reached by consulting a wide variety of sources and academic discourses on the participatory paradigm, community radio and applicable local broadcasting legislation and policy.

1.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the field of participatory communication for development and social change by examining the relevance of applicable theoretical constructions of the participatory approach to the task of conceptualising how to theoretically describe community radio in South Africa as participatory media. Through an in-depth and critical literature review, the research contributes to the participatory paradigm's metatheoretical enlargement. It informs this intention by also reviewing the subdiscipline of community radio studies and evaluating applicable South African broadcasting legislation and policy.

As argued thus far in this chapter, the notion of "participation" remains multifaceted and ill-defined in academic debate. At the same time, in a developing country such as South Africa, the remaining relevant assumptions of the participatory approach (i.e., dialogue, cultural diversity and identity, and empowerment) must also be meta-analysed and theorised within the specific context of a communication phenomenon such as community radio. Knowing *what*, *why* and *how* participation must occur offers a theoretical enhancement of the participatory paradigm and informs this study's contribution of presenting a more coherent theoretical-conceptual framework of community radio as participatory media. While this research is primarily theoretical and analytical, the final framework presents a coherent foundation that scholars and practitioners could utilise in assessing a wide variety of different participatory media initiatives. This contribution pertains to both scholarship and the function of community radio as participatory media in a South African context.

1.10 SUMMARY REMARKS

This introductory chapter has presented this study's research concern; namely, that community radio has a crucial role in encouraging development communication and social change on a grassroots level in South Africa. Community radio proponents in development communication and community media scholarship contend that community radio is an ideal communicative

platform for people's autonomous and meaningful participation in development settings and initiatives. However, given the theoretical diffuseness of the participatory paradigm and community media theory, a more coherent conceptual-theoretical framework to describe and assess community radio as a participatory medium for development is an imperative that demands examination. At the same time, Chapter 1 has highlighted that the South African broadcasting regulative and policy environment needs further interrogation to provide instruction in formulating a more coherent theoretical framework.

The following chapter contextualises the development of the participatory paradigm by first discussing its antecedents.

PREFACE PART II

As noted in the preamble, the second major part of this study concerns six interrelated chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a historical and conceptual analysis of the trajectory of development communication. It contextualises the complexity of theorising the contemporary participatory paradigm, considering its roots in previous development communication approaches that failed to deliver development and social change. While the new paradigm attempts to encourage positive social change, its foundational assumptions are hard to theorise because of how its antecedents conceptualised and enacted people's involvement in development decisions and processes.

This chapter forms the critical foundation from which this thesis then examines the theoretical-conceptual foundations of four key selected assumptions of the participatory paradigm (i.e. participation, dialogue, culture, and empowerment) in Chapters 3 to 6. Each chapter trails a similar structure: first, it presents an etymological examination of each notion, followed by their further contextualisation in communication studies and, after that, within the participatory communication context. Theoretical and metatheoretical examinations of each assumption then follow. All four chapters conclude with summary remarks on how each associated assumption is theorised in this thesis.

Chapter 7 then synthesises these chapters' theoretical findings into a new theoretical-conceptual metatheory of participatory communication. This framework will further guide the analyses of South African community broadcasting legislation in Part II of this study. It will also support the research's final, comprehensive framework that is presented in Part IV's Chapter 10.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE: A HISTORIC AND CONCEPTUAL READING

“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they aren’t true, but they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”

— Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter established the thesis of this study which is to theorise the normative, theoretically diffuse participatory paradigm in a more consolidated manner that informs further how community radio in South Africa can be defined as participatory media. As Chapter 1 indicated, as one of the paradigm’s foundational concepts, participation retains diverse meanings and enactments in development communication settings that are shaped by diverse theoretical frames.

These nuances are even more pronounced in institutional and social-communicative media settings, specifically community radio, which operates in diverse regulative and cultural settings. Chapter 8 will, however, examine these and other theoretical views on participation in a community media context more closely.

For present purposes, Chapter 2 describes the participatory paradigm’s antecedents and its contemporary multifaceted nature. It draws inspiration from Chitnis’s (2005:231-233) proposal that theorising the paradigm and participatory communication requires its conceptual deconstruction and reconstruction in historical terms. As Chitnis (2005:229-231) rightfully claims, participatory communication’s present-day discourse, meanings and practices result from “political restructuring [and the] limitations of the earlier approaches or to account for new knowledge” over almost forty decades and hence requires present interrogation.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: A CALL FOR HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL READINGS

Communication for development and social change is a complex field with a rich history that dates back almost eighty years. There are several scholars (Cornwall, 2006:62-71; Manyozo,

2012:100-102; Servaes, 2020b:v, Servaes, 2020c:15-20; Tufte & 2020:1-2) who have studied this communication subdiscipline extensively, comprising a considerable heterogeneity of theories and practices (Manyozo, 2012:100-102; Melkote & Steeves, 2015:358-402; Tufte & Tacchi, 2020:2, 8-10). Thomas (2014:8) aptly describes the field, both in theory and practice, in plural terms as “broadly speaking, development communication/communications [emphasis added] and social change is about understanding the role played by information, communication and the media in directed and nondirected social change.” Elsewhere, Servaes (2020a:4) traces the term development communication back to the scholar Nora C. Quebral, who coined the term in 1971 and elucidated the field as follows,

“If I were pressed for a definition of development communication, I would say that it is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential.” (Quebral, 1971:101)

Quebral (1971:101) distinguished development communication from Western-centric ideas about communication as a form of persuasion, as evident in “advertising, public relations, and propaganda” by stating that the former differs in “the purpose it serves and the venue of its action” and as based in the developing, or as previously known, the “Third World”.

With this in mind, the Dutch scholar Jan Servaes (2020a:4-5), goes on to cite various development communication definitions that have been offered by academics and international aid and development organisations. These range from Everett M. Rogers’s (1976) description of the field as extending beyond material indices to include social aspects and human values previously ignored in modernisation approach. The Dutch scholar cites the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) 1984 definition that underlines “communication for development” as a process driven by social elements and concerns aimed at common understanding between different development social actors. He then goes on to reference Fraser and Villet’s 1994 interpretation, which speaks to the strategic use of different “communication techniques, activities and media” that permit local people the agency and tools they need to autonomously encourage social change, enacting it through the circulation of ideas on all levels in the different sectors of society. Lastly, Servaes (*ibid.*) recounts the World Bank’s (2006) version of development communication as: “creating mechanisms to broaden public access to information

on reforms; strengthening clients' ability to listen to their constituencies and negotiate with stakeholders; empowering grassroots organizations to achieve a more participatory process; and undertaking communication activities that are grounded in research."

Elsewhere Servaes (2020c:vi) describes it as:

"Communication for development and social change is the nurturing of knowledge aimed at creating a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned. It is thus a social process, which has as its ultimate objective sustainable development/change at distinct levels of society."

The constituent parts of development communication, however, also beg clarification. Development and social change, Servaes (2020a:5) writes, are an ever-changing complexity of notions and practices, as demonstrated by the history and conceptual evolution of development communication. This complexity has caused, the scholar notes, many to call for the altogether abandonment of the term "development" in favour of the more supposedly natural notion of "social change", while others bemoan that even such a term is simply a placeholder for the continued conceptualisation and application of "buzzwords" and "fuzz words" (see for example Cornwall, 2006; Gaynor, 2013) and as Cooke and Kothari (2001) assert, the continued "tyranny" of ubiquitous language and application.

For now, this study accepts Servaes's (2020a:6) basic description of development and social change – with a view to interrogating different meanings and practices in the remainder of the chapter – "as a significant change of structured social action or of the culture in a given society, community, or context". Concerning the notion of communication, as indicated above, communication for development can be process-based, and it could also involve the employment of media and technology to bring about social change, as associated with different paradigmatic thinking and applications. Servaes (2020a:5-6) regards communication in development as constituted in a spatial-temporal context. In this contention, communication is not ahistorical but tied to the ways, the motivations and the contents that people communicate, in addition to the choice they make with whom they communicate, and of course, as set against their motivations and the contents of communication. Accordingly, different development communication approaches hold different views of the place and role of communication therein.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION PARADIGMS: OBJECTS VERSUS SUBJECTS

In Table 2-1 below, Robert Chambers (2008:72) distinguishes between two binaries of development communication paradigms, noting that the conflicts and shifts in development ideology and application can be understood as paradigms that divide between object-centric associations versus human-centric connotations. The implication of these different stances suggests that theorising can either involve objective distance from the objects of study on the one hand or, on the other, be formulated in relation to the subjects of study. Chambers clarifies that each paradigm also relates to a fitting context and that sometimes “good physical infrastructure on the things side” is necessary, while at other times “good relationships and capabilities on the people side” are needed. Arguably, circumstances could also arise where a combination of different paradigms apply in specific development contexts.

In the table below, Chambers’s (2008:173) broad outline of development paradigms offers a useful foundational conceptual loadstone for the rest of this chapter’s discussions about the predecessors of the participatory paradigm (see 2.3.1 to 2.3). This outline also puts into view what Servaes (2020a:4) calls the multidimensionality and complexity of the concepts that underlie each approach and its view of communication for development. These are the concepts of power and, as indicated above, the constituent parts of communication and development, all of which have formed part of the social reality of each approach all of which have at different times formed part of the social reality of each approach.

A study of the available literature shows that various scholars have sought to find ways by which to examine and cover the participatory paradigm as a more coherent field of study (see Cornwall, 2006; Cornwall & Scoones, 2022; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Servaes & Malikhaio, 2008; Servaes, 2020c). Tufte and Tacchi (2020:2) state that the amorphousness of the field has been discovered in various volumes and collections that focus on knowing the role of communication in the processes of development and social change, all of them carrying intellectual and institutional bias and baggage, as well as retaining different names that speak of diverse philosophies, knowledge systems and ways of ‘doing’ development. Just in the past 10–15 years, the field has resulted in many historical anthologies and examples of theoretical-conceptual research that have intended to give shape to the multidisciplinary origin and nature of the participatory

paradigm (see for example, Manyozo, 2012; Dutta, 2012, 2011; Fagan & Munck, 2018; Gumicio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Hemer & Tufte, 2016; Servaes, 2020c; Wilkins *et al.*, 2014).

Table 2-1 Contrasting paradigms of things and people

Generative basis	Things and procedures	People and processes
Orientation, planning and access	Top-down Centralised Controlling	Bottom-up Decentralised Empowering
Keywords	Planning Design Blueprint	Participation Emergence Process
Methods	Standardised Reductionist Universal Fixed	Performative Inclusive Contextual Flexible
Embodying Expressing	Rules Conventions	Principles Values
Implicit assumptions about causality and change	Linear Controllable Predictable	Non-linear Uncontrollable Unpredictable
Valuing and relying on rigour and quality on	Regulation Precision Measurement Statistical analysis	Responsibility Fitness Judgement Triangulation
Roles and behaviours	Supervising Enforcing	Facilitating Enabling
Typical procedure and processes	Questionnaire's Randomised control trials Logframes	Participatory methodologies
Mode and ethos	Hierarchical	Democratic

(Source: Chambers, 2008:173)

In fact, Gaynor (2013:295-298) and Manyozo (2012:101-102) reason that what we read as participation in contemporary terms has always existed as so-called gradations or biased (to be sure: monological) interpretations of the notion. From the metatheoretical perspective, the differences in these paradigms can be evaluated for their strengths and limitations. Likewise, in outlining these differences, each paradigm's foundational concepts concerning development

communication are also revealed and explained. In this manner, the need for the participatory paradigm becomes more apparent, as does the current study's research interest in further theorising this model.

In Table 2-1, it is evident that development communication theorists have historically disagreed on whether to study phenomena in the field objectively or interpret them subjectively and as being socially contextualised. Such discourse necessarily also determines how to encourage development and social change. Even today, some experts prefer a top-down, highly centralised view of planning and managing development, thereby suggesting that development is linear and controllable, that it is implemented via the adoption of predetermined ideas and technologies, and that it is enacted via certain behaviours (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:3-5; Servaes, 2020c:15). This is emblematic of a highly hierarchical methodological orientation. In contrast, critical and participatory-oriented paradigms see development as a bottom-up, decentralised and democratic process geared at empowering individuals and communities. There are also differences pertaining to the nature of knowledge, where some view it as being dependent on empirically observable and measured phenomena as opposed to those who claim that it results from innate reasoning and is a social construction. This ties in with scholars' varying views about the supposed neutrality of theory versus the claim that theory-practice is a false dichotomy; consequently, knowledge is inextricable from its social context.

As noted before, while there are conflicting development communication models that precede the participatory approach, several of them are still practised today (Thomas, 2014; Huesca, 2008:192-194). It bears repeating that the current understanding of the participatory paradigm is a historical lens through which to view human history, as Fagan and Munck (2018:xvi) maintain. According to Munck (2018:1-2), this demands a critical discourse that permits the reading of historical paradigms through a genealogical approach, accepting the context of the complexity of the social world, which is becoming increasingly multifaceted and indefinable. A critical reading cannot occur in a simple linear or mechanical fashion. Therefore, acknowledgement of duality (Chitnis, 2005) or, as some prefer, the dialectical tensions between present and the echoes of the past paradigms of development communication is inevitable. Accordingly, the present theorising of the participatory approach must accept this fact and determine what sets it apart from its antecedents (Chitnis, 2005:233; Hemer & Tufte, 2016:12-13).

Besides the historical dialectic, such a theoretical stocktaking also happens in an interdisciplinary context, ranging beyond the disciplines of communication and media studies. Rural sociology provided much of the basis for the development of the diffusion of innovation approach, as well as the radical pedagogy of the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, while Marxism, feminist theory, postcolonial and subaltern theories, identity theory, globalisation, social movement theory, and information and communication technology (ICT) for development theories all shaped the field (Dutta, 2020; Hemer & Tufte, 2016:12-13; Tufte *et al.*, 2020:16).

For this reason, Servaes (2020b:v-vii) advocates for a transdisciplinary method to synthesise the many scattered parts of the participatory paradigm literature. He proposes appraising the field by incorporating several different clusters of concepts and practices in grasping what is presently available for a participatory paradigmatic view of development communication. These clusters include, among others, the already-mentioned historical (i.e., the political-economical) view and normative lenses (e.g. notions about democracy, empowerment, social justice etc.). These are what Claude Lévi-Strauss' (1964) thinking on the role of animals in tokenism called "concepts to think with", and what later inspired Sherry Turkle (2011) to use the image of the bricolage as: "making something out of whatever is available, involving the creation of something new and meaningful, sometimes subverting otherwise established thinking" (Tufte and Tacchi, 2020:5).

This is exactly what Chapters 3 to 6 endeavour to accomplish. Each chapter takes stock of the available literature on the participatory paradigm, while also keeping in mind that the paradigm is inherently interdisciplinary and multifaceted (see Chitnis, 2005; Servaes, 2020a-c, 1999). This strategy at once accepts the complexity of the paradigm and allows it flexibility so as not to conform to the universal idea of development communication as a one-size-fits-all model. It permits, in theory and application, a more holistic and culturally aware interpretation of development communication initiatives.

According to Tufte and Tacchi (2020:5, 6-13) this strategy affords scholars an opportunity for paradigmatic thinking that spurs renewal of thought and the use of a range of intersecting conceptual stepping stones (i.e., the concepts of citizenship and justice, critiquing development, and renewing thought and its associated subsets of themes and concepts) that would help establish a new repertoire of development thinking and doing. Servaes (2020:vi-vii) adds that making the effort to assess different communication activities for development (e.g.,

globalisation, gender, social movements, etc.) and strategic and methodological concepts (i.e., diffusion of innovation, social marketing and so forth) can offer valuable insights to enrich the field and theorisation projects (cf. Dutta, 2011; Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Tufte, 2017).

He describes these a so-called clusters of concepts focusing on methods, techniques and tools in the development setting that, for example, can include digital and social media storytelling, oral history, drama and art. Another cluster of reviews examines the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in development (Servaes, 2020b:vii-vii; cf. Servaes & Malikhao, 2008). Additionally, Servaes notes that new research clusters are concerned with pressing developmental themes such as climate change and sustainable development. A study of the literature must accordingly interrogate a set of different contexts in which development communication occurs: for instance, the health, agricultural, and community-based development communication settings. Servaes (2020:vii) states that another conceptual cluster should focus on participatory communication in either regional settings or specific nation-state case studies, while in the last instance, a cluster can zoom in on specific case studies and their evaluations.

In comparison, Manyozo (2012:1-3) compares different development communication approaches and three schools of thought; namely, media for development, media development and participatory/community communication in a dialectical strategy. This analysis rejects the dominant Western development discourse by instead tracing the roots of the field to its origins and turning to alternative readings in the Global South, effectively offering a useful analytical tool to examine different development communication paradigms. This approach is instructive to this study, particularly as it pertains to discussions about the participatory paradigm's optics of community and empowerment (Manyozo, 2012:152-195).

Considering the clarion call to deconstruction and reinterpret the participatory paradigm the next section of Chapter 2 presents a rudimentary retrospective analysis of the modernisation and growth theory or the dominant paradigm, the critical paradigm, also known as the theory of dependency and underdevelopment follows (Preston, 1996: 153-195; Servaes, 2020c:17-19; 2008:17-18). This is followed by Section 2.6's overview of the multiplicity framework for communication for social change, as it is argued that this people-centred view of development provided much impetus to the participatory paradigm and its theoretical and empirical trajectory. As stated earlier, these delineations set the scene for the comprehensive analysis of

the participatory communication approach to development and social change occurring in Part II.

2.4 THE BINARY APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: FROM MODERNISM TO DEPENDENCY

A range of scholars agrees that the modern notion⁵ of development discourse and practice emerged from foreign aid strategies and large-scale programmatic political-economic and social interventions that were initiated in Europe after World War II (Melkote & Steeves; 2015:385-389; McAnany, 2012:36; Waisbord & Obregon, 2012:9).

2.4.1 The modernisation paradigm

In 1947, the US implemented the European Recovery Plan, also commonly referred to as the “Marshall Plan”, as its first and primary government-sponsored foreign aid assistance project working toward recovering the European economy in the wake of post-war devastation. Overall, the US contributed 2.5 per cent of its gross national product (GNP) toward the European recovery programme. Yet, this programme was not restricted to European assistance only. Instead, the “Marshall Plan” paved the way, in the 1950s and 1960s, for the US, and other Western countries to implement their ideology of development on a global scale.

In 1949, President Harry Truman announced the so-called Point Four Program, whereby the US intended to address “underdevelopment” in the “third world” or developing countries of the world. In his second Inaugural Address, often referred to as the “Four Point Speech”, Truman proclaimed that it was the role and moral duty of the Western developed world to address the perceived “underdevelopment” of others by providing, among other interventions, technical assistance and infrastructure in the fields of agriculture, public health and education services

⁵ The likes of Preston (1996) and Fagan and Munck (2018) can be read for more detailed reviews of the idea and practice of development as dating back as far as the time of Antiquity, Western ideas of Enlightenment and progress of the 17th and 18th centuries that predated the philosophical, economical and sociological readings of 19th century scholars. These sources also trace the continuation and interpretations thereof to today’s more contemporary readings, in effect reflecting on the development of imperialism, the imperialism of development, as well as colonial and postcolonial development discourse and practice. Especially the latter two references historicise the existing global and regional framings of the economic-political, and social aspects of development ranging from Bretton-Woods system, post-Washington Consensus to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of 2020.

(Cornwall, 2006:69-71; Melkote & Steeves, 2001:51; Singhal & Sthapitanonda, 1996:11; Truman, 1949). In fact, this modern idea was not as novel as commonly claimed. Already after the first inter-imperialist war, Woodrow Wilson drafted his Fourteen Points programme for Europe's structural and political reorganisation by claiming that "every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along the great and powerful."

In contrast, Truman's (1949) post-World War II "Four Point Speech" stressed that it was the obligation of the US and the UN to implement programmes globally that, in addition to promoting economic recovery programmes, would secure democratic and human rights and advance Western scientific advances and technological systems to the benefit of all underdeveloped nations. In short, the concept of international aid was introduced by way of Truman's "Point Four Program", and so, the idea was conceived that modern "development" involved the institutionalisation of democratic systems and values was conceived.

Out of this framework emerged the modernisation development paradigm, which, aside from an economic understanding, conceived of development in terms of industrialisation and democratic political systems (Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Waisbord, 2001:3; Servaes, 2020c:17-19). In the post-World War II era, development discourse assumed that underdevelopment was solvable by the mechanical progression of importing and applying Western ideals and systems into recipient countries. These development interventions included importing capital, technology, expertise, and skills from the West with the view to stimulate a kind of development catch-up in the supposed development beneficiaries (Servaes, 2020c:17). In brief, *industrialisation* involved the replacement of local labour in developing countries with large-scale Western *capital-intensive technological infrastructure*. The underlying assumption is that an industrial revolution and the economic progress of Western Europe and the US could be replicated in "underdeveloped" countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia that supposedly lagged in terms of these developments (Rogers, 1976; 2006:110-11).

The economic ideology stressed that a country's increased GNP and improved standard of living per capita income demonstrated authentic development. These foci hence framed development, ontologically, in macro-economic terms and materialistic terms (Cornwall; 2006:69-71; Servaes,

2020c:16-17). This approach necessitated large-scale programmes and initiatives on a national scale that were supported exogenously by international aid agencies. Implicit in this ideology of development was a belief that developing countries were unable to achieve development fully or autonomously (Melkote & Steeves, 2001:193).

Furthermore, Western positivism and ideas of “quantification” and empiric expressions (e.g., the increase of physical well-being, GNP, literacy levels, urbanisation, etc.) took primacy over qualitative measures of development. Melkote and Steeves (2001:72) explain that this imbued the modernisation approach with reductive development ideas that left little room for more abstract and immaterial notions and evaluation of social change. The non-material or spiritual welfare of specific communities is not easily calculated; therefore, these “abstractions” were not thought to be representative of the existential reality of Western development and, furthermore, not considered as being conducive to the economic growth model (Cornwall, 2006:65-71; Melkote & Steeves, 2015:387; Rogers, 2006:112-113). Therefore, the resident traditions, cultural values, and religious or belief systems were perceived as impediments to modernisation, as they threatened the ideal, exogenously framed interpretations of evolutionary progress and economic growth (Servaes, 2020c:17-18). Melkote and Steeves (2015:386) clarify that neoclassical economic theories underscored modernisation. They mention that several sociological theories⁶ infused it as well, particularly on how the “backward” and “undesirable” attitudes and behaviours of the “Third World” should be adjusted and eliminated to enhance and accelerate the desired economic development and modernisation processes. This ethnocentric and secular view reasoned that the characteristics and behaviours of the subject in a premodern society are deficient in that they are not aligned with Western ideals, attitudes and behaviours pertaining to development and progress.

⁶ These sociological theories include a range of so-called bipolar theories that seek to organise society and its individual members into arrangements of the premodern, modern and high-modern. Melkote and Steeves (2015:386) list the work of various 20th-century scholars in this regard, such as Maine (1907), Durkheim (1933), Toennies (1957), Lerner (1958), Cooley (1962), Redfield (1965) and Castells (1996, 1997, 1998).

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Servaes (2020c:17) succinctly states that “development is the state of being or becoming ‘westernised’”. Hence, the perceived cultural shortcomings of the underdeveloped world were seen as needing replacement with the traits and behavioural aptitudes (patriarchal in nature) of the Western, modern or high society. The subjectivities and actions of “backward”, “traditional”, “underdeveloped Third World” countries had to be traded with modern colonialist thinking and actions that were beneficial to economic growth and democratic ideals (Gaynor, 2013; Servaes, 1995; Waisbord, 2020, 2001; Shah, 2020).

It is mistaken to assume that communication issues were not considered in modernisation processes. A more accurate view is that modernisation’s metatheory was decidedly Western, instrumental, scientific, macro-scaled and formalistic. Within this framework, communication was primarily viewed as a one-way, top-down process, corresponding with Berlo’s Source-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) model of communication (Melkote, 2001). Also drawing on Harold Lasswell’s (1948) traditional communication effects model, the communication process entails the *sender* transmitting a *message* or content to the *receiver* to achieve a specific effect on the receiver; thereby leading to a particular result. This causal communication was exemplified within the mass media and mass communication systems, where these media acted as the authoritative, omnipotent source of technical information/diffuser of innovations from the expert West to the information-deprived and passive “Third World” recipients (Melkote & Steeves, 2015:388-390; Rogers, 1969:48).

⁷ These sociological theories include a range of so-called bipolar theories that seek to organize society and its individual members into arrangements of the premodern, modern and high-modern. Melkote and Steeves (2015:386) list the work of various 20th century scholars such as Maine (1907), Durkheim (1933), Toennies (1957), Lerner (1958), Cooley (1962), Redfield (1965) and Castells (1996, 1997, 1998).

Mass media was decidedly instrumental in purpose and method. Development was traditionally seen as a linear, progressive process, thus making mass communication systems ideal to transmit development knowledge, technologies, and practices from developed to underdeveloped nations (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:92). In this frame, Tomaselli (2011:10) explains, the modernisation approach espoused the epistemological notion that transference of correct information from the expert to the local would lead to the modernisation of any premodern society. This epistemology led to many different models and theories of communication, including Lasswell's (1948) magic bullet theory or transmission model, Lazarsfeld's (1948) two-step flow theory and others that focus on the instrumentality of the mass media and opinion leaders to spread expert content (Dyll-Myklebust, 2011:114-115).

Broadcasting media, particularly radio, were considered as particularly apposite development communication channels and used as leading agents and multipliers of modernity. Proponents of this view have included as Daniel Lerner (1958), Evert Rogers (1962) and Wilbur Schramm (1964), who have argued that the mass media could simultaneously transfer expertise to masses of local subjects (Waisbord, 2020:93-102). Schramm and Lerner theorised modernisation as a process whereby the media can introduce development ideas and practices from a modern society to the social systems of a traditional one, whereas Rogers later conceived of modernisation as the diffusion and adoption of innovation via personal channels and influencers (Manyozo, 2012:116-199; Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:92). In this media effects model of development, communication was argued to create the climate and ideal conditions in which modernist development discourse and praxis could take hold and then further develop toward progress and change (Melkote & Steeves, 2015:388).

2.4.2 The dependency approach

During the 1960s and 1970s the modernisation approach was increasingly criticised for its failures to deliver development in developing countries. One of the first critiques against this Western-centric approach emerged in the form of the "dependency paradigm", which focused on the structural disparities between the supposed developed and developing countries (Mefalopulos, 2008:47; Servaes, 2020b-c; Waisbord, 2020:108-110). Most of these critical voices (Barranquero, 2020:329-340; Servaes & Malikhao, 2020:71-72) emerged from Latin America that questioned the modernisation approach from a structural analysis of the binary distinction between

developed and developing countries (for some notable voices, see Beltran, 1976, 1993, Cardoso, 1982; Escobar, 1995). These detractors rejected modernisation's essentialist development worldviews, reductive theoretical conceptualisations, and objectives, as well as the instrumentalist communication paradigm and strategies used to achieve modernisation (Dyll-Myklebust, 2011:13, 15, 17; Huesca & Dervin, 1994:53-73; Waisbord, 2020). The media effects exemplar and diffusion of innovation theory proved inadequate in effecting development in social change (Melkote & Steeves, 2015:359). Development, these critics claimed, was not a process of playing catch-up between a state of development versus underdevelopment or reminiscent of a trickling-down effect from the Global North to the Global South.

Critical interrogations of modernisation were largely informed by Marxist and socialist theory, which maintained that the world can be conceptualised as an international system of two structurally bound sociopolitical blocks or a "world system" (Mefalopulos, 2008:47-50; Waisbord, 2020:108-110). On the one end of the system, a few rich countries were centred at its core, while on the other end of the system, poorer states were pressed to the periphery. Dependency theorists claimed that developed Western countries created a system of capitalism and trade that manipulated less developed countries into an imbalanced binary relationship of dependency. The countries at the core were seen as industrialised, developed, and superior in terms of their technology and infrastructure, while this centre exploited the peripheral countries for their cheap labour, raw materials and resources (Mefalopulos, 2008:47; Waisbord, 2001:6).

Usually, these marginalised countries included Latin America, as well as former European and British colonies that were already reliant on core countries in a political-economical sense. Proponents of this paradigm, which included Paul Baran (1967), Gunder Frank (1967) and Arturo Escobar (1995) among others, claimed that Western developed countries not only subjugated weaker states in this relationship but also primarily blamed development problems in these marginalised countries on their domestic conditions (Dyll-Myklebust, 2011:15; Mefalopulos, 2008:47-50). While these assessments were still similar in their analysis to the modernisation approach (i.e., a binary examination), they did succeed in problematising the interdependence between the developed and underdeveloped world.

Critics argued that the structural relationship between core and peripheral countries created an imbalanced relationship of dependence (Servaes, 2020c:18, Waisbord, 2020:108-110; Shah,

2011:141-143). To them, the problems of underdevelopment lay not in internal conditions or the successful linear, evolutionary process of modernisation, but rather in the external imbalances that exist in the global economy. Proponents of the structuralist approach argued that these disparities did not only form dependency but also slowed down autonomous development and growth in marginalised countries. The process of development was therefore analysed as two sides of the same coin (Servaes, 2020c:18). *Dependistas*, hence, advocated that the marginalised countries had to delink or dissociate themselves from the wealthier core nations in the world system to instead formulate self-reliant approaches to development. These dependency theorists and advocates contended that domestic development policies had to be reclaimed by the governments of developing countries to regain control over the production and ownership of the domestic industries that would encourage local economic growth. As such, the structuralist approach was economically and politically oriented (Lubbock, 2018:53).

Uncoupling from the Western world had to be accompanied equally by the alignment of poorer countries with one another to establish a stronger political presence. In 1961, 120 developing countries allied under the name of the Nonaligned Movement to reframe development, not only as an economic concept but also as a political struggle that was linked structurally to the world market system. To interrogate the global development-underdevelopment dichotomy, the New International Economic Order (NIEO) emerged in 1974 as an alternative to the Group of 77 (G77) states in the UN General Assembly (Lubbock, 2018:53). These non-aligned countries encouraged a new political economy interpretation of the place of communication in development.

Besides calling for a new capitalist system, the peripheral countries also demanded a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in 1976. This was done in an attempt to interrogate the global communication system, which was criticised as an unequal, biased flow of information between the Western and non-Western world, and which represented the imperialist ideals of the former (Barranquero, 2020; Mefalopulos, 2008:49; Servaes & Malikhao, 2020:67, 69-70).). This demand asserted that there was an uneven flow of information and, consequently, a cultural imperialism that existed between countries with more advanced communication and media systems and those with less developed structures. In 1980, the “MacBride Report” – also called “Many Voices, One World” – appeared under the auspices of UNESCO (MacBride, 1980). By way of five main ideas, this report proposed that the right to

information and to be informed was a fundamental human right, essential to any modern society as a necessary resource of development and well-being.

Like its antecedent, the structuralist framework of the *Dependistas* was nevertheless not without challengers. Criticisms were aimed at the approach's binary theoretical division between centre versus peripheral countries. McAnany (2012:95) recounts that the dependency framework was particular regarding its principles and assumptions about development versus underdevelopment, but lacked a clearer understanding of the policies and practices that would encourage development in less developed countries and communities. It therefore rightly problematised external conditions (i.e., Western development discourse and practice) as the root of underdevelopment yet overlooked the interior problems and structural challenges that encumbered the progress of developing nations (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:163). With the post-development discourse of the 1980s questioning the simplistic centre-periphery notion of development, recognition of the mutuality between the different development trajectories of nations increased. In turn, this increase of recognition prompted a need for new understandings of development and social change that would reflect the dynamic interplay of global and local contexts and perspectives (Servaes, 1995:42; Kumar, 1994:86; Oscar & Tufte, 2005:14-15). This model also discounted the agency of individuals and rural communities to participate in their own development process on a local level. Instead, local subjects were once again perceived as passive recipients and beneficiaries of top-down, authoritarian national development plans and implementations. Mefalopulos (2008:50) states that, while there are distinct, meaningful differences between modernisation and dependency conceptualisations of development, communication followed the use of mass media and a linear, top-down model in both approaches.

Dyll-Myklebust (2011) conceptualised both of these approaches of communication in terms of a process whereby submissive local subjects were reliant on access to information and resources that were owned and controlled on a national level. This ignored the mechanisms of grassroots participation, internal conflict resolution and community or individual empowerment. While dependency theory refocussed on the communication process in a development context, like its precursor, it nevertheless remained too media-centric by focusing on the authority of the mass media as the primary agents of development communication. In fact, Dyll-Myklebust (2011) describes dependency theory as a scaled-down version of modernisation, since the developing

world's self-reliance, industrialisation, import substitution and foreign aid simply exacerbated the division between developed and advanced economies and reinforced the reliance of developed economies on advanced economies.

2.5 AN EMERGING PARADIGM: FROM BINARIES TO MULTIPLICITY

Even though they failed to address the issues that were identified within the prevailing hegemonic, the analyses that dependency theorists conducted in the 1970s encouraged academia and professionals alike to reconceptualise development beyond the binary optic (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:158-163; Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:95; Chitnis, 2005:45; Hemer & Tufte, 2005:14-15). This shift led to the participatory approach's emergence as a counter to the dominant paradigm's grand narrative and to dependency theory's shortcomings, considering that the latter lacked detailed explanations and solutions to development. Leal (2010:89) recounts that, emerging during the 1980s, the participatory approach gained momentum in the 1990s along with the rise of popular normative approaches, such as "sustainable development", "basic needs", "capacity building", and "results-based approaches". Unlike previous theories, the participatory approach underscored the notions of multidimensionality and cultural identity of communities, while also advocating for "democratisation and participation at all levels" in the development process (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:95).

This era of deconstruction and reconstruction of development expressed a multiplicity of ideas and approaches that were far less rigid and dichotomous in their conceptualisation of development and communication for development – ideas that were prevalent in the previous development discourses and practices (Hemer & Tufte, 2005:14). Consequently, the participatory model emerged out of what Jan Servaes called "the multiplicity paradigm" or the framework of "another development", suggesting that, instead of constituting a universal idea and unilinear path, development and communication in support thereof are a heterogeneous complexity of thinking and praxis, (Servaes, 1995:45, 1996:84-85, 2008:17-19, 2020:18-19; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:163-165).

This reading of "development" required a framework shift from unyielding, one-dimensional and monologic clarifications to analyses that were more holistic and multifaceted in concept and use. Development scholars and experts started reflecting on approaches that acknowledged notions

such as cultural identity, self-reliance, access and participation, while also reflecting on how these notions impacted development practices (Servaes, 2020a:4, 7, 9). As indicated earlier, Servaes and Malikhao (2005:95) recount that the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, chaired by the late Seán MacBride, commissioned a report that argued for the reconception of development studies in terms of diversity, plurality and respect for the belief systems, customs, dignity and equality of people who live in local communities (see 5.3.3 for more on this report's cultural views). Such a reinterpretation meant that development discourse and its approaches were now conceived as a dialectic process (rather than an evolutionary, direct one), which suggests that this process entails far more than just the singular, grand narrative of economic growth and sociological change, and furthermore that development is a relative conception (Servaes, 2020c:19; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:165). More to the point, in the post-development era, the discourse and practice of development had to emanate from inside a particular community.

The Swedish Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation⁸ articulated these new ideas in 1975 in a framework called “Another Development”, which emphasised multiple, diverse voices in development instead of a monological Western one (Dag Hammarskjöld, 1975; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:163). Several scholars (Ashcroft & Masilela, 1994:268-269, Servaes & Lie, 2020:33-34; Servaes, 1999:6) underline that, at its core, the “Another Development” or “Multiplicity” framework rejects the philosophy and practice of universal development. Servaes (*ibid.*) emphasises that development is a relative notion since no country or society could ever be fully developed. This view suggests that development arises depending on the specific experiences and how development needs vary between societies and cultures. Therefore, development is subjective and achieved via divergent contextual applications. This view underlines the importance of recognising the complex interplay between internal and external factors in addressing development challenges, which also suggests a more inclusive approach to formulating development principles and strategies (Melkote & Steeves, 2001:41; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:136). The literature shows that the

⁸ In 1975 UN's General Assembly commissioned a special report – in tribute to the late Dag Hammarskjöld, the then UN's Secretary-General – namely, the Report on Development and International Cooperation to investigate how the existing global order at the time could be redirected to address people across the globe's development needs. The report was meant to inform world leaders at the time on how to better address the world development crisis.

“Another Development” or “Multiplicity” paradigm relies on six main assumptions and principal foci (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:164):

- The satisfaction of *basic human needs* (material and non-material) and *poverty eradication* are key attentions of the development process.
- As submitted in the above paragraphs, development is *endogenous* and imagined as proportionate to the society or country in which it transpires.
- Furthermore, societies are *resourceful* or *self-reliant* in terms of their natural and cultural resources and the energies of their individual members concerning development.
- Additionally, a multidimensional perspective maintains that *environmental harmony* and present and future *responsibility* towards natural environments are intrinsic values of development.
- The framework’s principle of *participatory democracy* underscores that the government should take place at all levels of society and should not be limited to the government of the people, but comprise government by the people.
- Finally, to realise a *participatory democracy* and “Another Development”, *social and economic structures* and *relations* need horizontal adjustment and decentralisation to establish the basic conditions for a people’s self-management and participation in their development (Tufte, 2017:58; Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:164; Servaes, 1995:42-43; Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1982). For these democratic conditions to arise, the bedrock of the participatory model involves the “framework of multiplicity” (as outlined briefly in the previous section) (Servaes, 2008:21).

In summary, this framework highlights the complexity of development, stressing the importance of multiple notions in a participatory approach. According to Servaes (2020c), development surpasses binary discourse and practice in this approach, relying instead on the intricate interdependence of variables in a development setting, especially at a micro or communal level. While community involvement is central in this perspective, it still entails a dynamic relationship between the global and local worlds. Development is a multifaceted concept, specific to each society and informed by several past and current paradigms. It follows then that there is no fixed or universal development path, and the process involves a holistic perspective that considers not

only economic factors but also social, cultural, and religious aspects (see section 5.3.3, which explores these ideas further).

2.6 TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

McAnany (2012:87) writes that, during the mid-1980s, scholars, practitioners and public policymakers began arguing that meaningful social change could only materialise if people's "self-development" became central to the idea of development. Proponents of "participatory communication" therefore conceived development as a transformative process, maintaining that participatory communication is a precondition and essential instrument of change (Servaes, 2020a:4-6). In this conceptual reorientation, development is defined as the process by which people participate fully and during all the different stages of the development process (i.e., throughout the conceptualisation, design, implementation, and evaluation) (Melkote & Steeves, 2001:337).

This process of self-development encourages change to effect from beneath, within the local community, rather than effect in a top-down manner as facilitated by external involvement as it requires the full participation of the community throughout the social change process (Nair & White, 1994). This shift is antithetical to the dominant paradigm's conception of the development process driven by external, "authoritative" actors (i.e. political and economic elites or so-called development experts) who do not take cognisance of the unique cultural identities of the communities which are supposed to benefit for development initiatives (Dutta, 2011:246-265; Waisbord, 2014a:1-13; Waisbord & Obregon, 2012:10;).

Likewise, in the participatory approach, communication is theorised in terms of open and free human dialogue. Waisbord (2014b:151-152) clarifies that the etymological roots of the word "communication" point to "community" and "commonness" that are achieved through dialogue and action. The fundamental emphasis of this dialogue and action is on participation, democratic communication and the uninhibited course of ideas within a community. To this, Waisbord adds that the participatory model is predominantly concerned with analysing and interpreting the circumstances that either encourage or encumber community dialogue, mutual learning, solidarity and collective agency. Participatory theories assert that democratic communication,

development, and social change are only likely when there are fair and sustainable conditions for the exchange of ideas (Dutta, 2011:169-194; Waisbord, 2014:152).

As the previous section on multiplicity suggested, development discourse and the influence of communication can no longer be conceived in a singular, Western worldview. In other words: As a notion, culture must now also be interrogated for its prejudices and interpretations, which eventually also includes interrogating how these prejudices and interpretations frame the development communication phenomenon. At the core of these examinations are the privileging of local voices, agency and lived experiences as expressed in meaningful patterns of performances and worldviews that go beyond the Western view of cultural superiority. In paraphrasing Thompson *et al.* (1990), Servaes (2020:7-8) reasons that culture is a multifaceted, complex phenomenon that can be described either in a broad or a narrow sense. One view sees it as comprising values, beliefs, rationalisations, symbols, or mental products, whereas the other regards it in a totalising manner as the total way of life of a people that includes their social attitudes as well as their unique individualism. The scholar goes on to explain that, whether one takes the broad or narrow definitional conceptual route, culture is ultimately nothing more than a matter of describing an awareness – which is to say, it is the social construction this awareness.

Servaes (2020:7) contends that a multiplicity of cultures exists concurrently, and often, the lines between them blur as they tend to absorb and blend into ever-expanding reconceptualisation. Furthermore, differentiation occurs in line with a multiplicity of environments, customs, social classes, and worldviews, and to boot, in the context of the language we use to describe it all. This study agrees with this stance, as it will argue that culture is neither singularly material nor immaterial in conception and expression in the participatory paradigm (see 5.3.3 and 0). In the manner that Dutta (2012, 2011) establishes a culture-centred approach (CCA) (see 5.4) to social change, Servaes (2020:9) too maintains that “culture” should not be viewed as partial phenomenon of social reality, but as a distinct perspective or even subdiscipline in viewing society. More specifically, in a development communication setting, culture orients, structures the dialogue and participation of people in their development process, and therefore as Paolo Freire, in his dialogical pedagogy (see 5.4) and Dutta’s (2011:169) CCA argue, the goal of dialogue is to dismantle the constructions and hegemonic cultures in which development and social change occurred not only in the historical contexts. This applies in the present day in

commemorative arrangements between existing dominant designs and the voice and cultural organisation of the subaltern⁹.

In the participatory paradigm, the self-development process works toward involving disempowered and marginalised peoples at the grassroots, thereby empowering them in their development. Accordingly, they can accomplish *liberation* from the oppressive conditions, configurations and relations that impede development while additionally reaching the objectives of self-reliance and empowerment (Melkote & Steeves, 2001:44). This view accents that the lived experiences and felt needs of the local communities are essential to driving the development. It is important to prioritise the needs of grassroots communities and listen to their voices so that they can be empowered to achieve the development and change that they desire. This approach ensures that people are not just passive receivers of external, Western ideas of development, but instead become active participants and decision-makers in their own development processes (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:169).

The notion of empowerment suggests that individuals, organisations and communities confront the social and economic conditions and relations that shape their lives or hinder their development. In doing this, they participate democratically within their communities and gain the power to self-express their subjective felt needs, narratives, feelings, and life experiences (Melkote & Steeves, 2001:44; 337). To reiterate this change is a definitive shift that moves from the informational, persuasive and mass media-effects strategy of the economic-oriented modernisation approach to a notion of development that is aimed at raising awareness and increasing knowledge of the passive recipients or beneficiaries of development (Mefalopulos, 2008:23). In its place, the participatory model understands development as a multidimensional concept (i.e. not only in the material sense of well-being) where people participate in the practices and policies that are meant to change their lives meaningfully. This changed conceptual shift, and altered praxis means that the participatory model necessarily addresses the notion of power and how it is distributed in society (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:169-170) (see 6.3.1.1 -

⁹ Writing about the culture-centered approach (CCA) in a health communication context, Dutta (2007:310, 2011:xii) describes the subaltern as referring “to the condition of ‘being under’.” He describes subaltern personhood as exemplified in the disempowered and oppressed voices of individuals and communities that must regain radical agency in a development setting. He draws his definition mostly from Subaltern Studies by scholars such as Guha (1988) and Spivak (1988).

6.3.1.2 and section 6.3.2 for this interrogation of power and empowerment). For authentic development to occur, power must be shared equally among all participants in social, cultural, political and economic terms; even more so when it comes to the marginalised and oppressed peoples in society. A redistribution of power would not only change the relations in a society or community but also lead to structural changes in the broader social system (Raiño, 2006:447). While individuals must be able to take ownership of their development through participation in the process, the influence of broader social structures on any ability to take ownership must also be addressed.

2.7 SUMMARY REMARKS

This chapter aimed to introduce the complexity of the discourse and application of communication for development and social change. It discussed that, while the participatory paradigm retains the status quo as the present-day approach in academics and practice, its emergence and application remain challenging due to its interdisciplinary origins and nature. At the risk of oversimplification, Chapter 1 charted the development and eventual failures of the modernisation approach and dependency theory to demonstrate that the discourse and empirical realities of development communication entail a differentiated and complex field of study. Both of these approaches comprised particular metatheoretical views of development: expressly, the role and influence of communication therein and, even more specifically, pointed questions about who, why, where and how people could participate in their development processes.

Thereafter the multiplicity framework was outlined as the intellectual and philosophical loadstone from which the participatory paradigm emerged in response to the binary theories of development communication. Servaes (2020c:19) summarises the trajectory of the three major development theories as involving several shifts in scientific thinking:

1. From a positivistic, quantitative, and comparative approach to a normative, qualitative and structural approach;
2. From the grand narrative of a universal development path for all nations to a more contextual, change-oriented and less predictable model;

3. From a Western (i.e., Eurocentric or ethnocentric) view to one that is indigenistic, contextual and polycentric;
4. From endogenism to exogenic views, and then from globalism to localism;
5. From a macro-level of analysis to a global view, and finally a local and combined level of analysis;
6. From segmentary to holistic approaches, followed by problem-concerned ones;
7. And from integrative, reformist development strategies to revolutionary ones, and subsequently to holistic ideas of revolutionary and evolutionary changes.

Chapters 3 to 6 will now examine these shifts in the participatory paradigm by beginning with an analysis of the notion of participation in the following chapter.

PART II: PREFACE

Part II of the study will interrogate the participatory paradigm's foundational assumptions of Chapters 3 to 6. These chapters aim to conceptualise and theorise *participatory communication* in the participatory paradigm as relevant to community media (see specific research objective (see section 1.3.2.1)). As evident by now, this study's primary thesis is that participation embodies the core assumption of the participatory paradigm, and that the notions of dialogue, culture, and empowerment have been identified as its other core, interfacing assumptions. The current study selected to view the latter assumptions "interfacing concepts" as this study's emphasis is on understanding participation but as enriched and facilitated by, as well as integrated with dialogical communication in culturally embedded contexts and with the intention to empower individuals in development communication settings to gain meaningful agency in addressing their development concerns and lived needs.

Each of the four chapters will assess the above-mentioned theoretical assumptions by first analysing their etymological roots. Chapter 3 examines the root words of participation in a historical setting, revealing its many meanings and uses during different historical periods in everyday language. Chapter 4 interrogates the origins of dialogue; the remaining two chapters follow suit in analysing their featured assumptions. Understanding the notions' word history and application represents a preliminary conceptual analysis of the notion. These analyses thus the scene for clarifying the four concepts' theoretical conceptualisation in the field of development communication, and specifically, with the participatory paradigm. All four chapters, hence, have two larger subsections following the etymological analyses to contextualize each identified notion in its disciplinary and paradigmatic contexts. The first section concerns a more historical reading, while the second section delves into the contemporary meanings of the participatory paradigms' notions. After that, the metatheorisation of each assumption follows before every chapter concludes with a section, "summary remarks" that synthesises the main insights and conclusions of each chapter and its theoretical and metatheoretical examinations.

Part II concludes with Chapter 7, which presents an integrated theoretical-conceptual framework of the participatory paradigm based on the above chapters' examinations.

CHAPTER 3: THEORISING PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEXT OF A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

“In this sense, participation as freedom is not only the right to participate effectively in a given space, but the right to define and to shape that space.”

— John Gaventa (2006).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As has been previously determined, several scholars claim that participation is the primary notion of the participatory paradigm (Cooke & Kothari, 2001:47; Cornwall, 2011:xii-xx; Gaventa, 2011:67-68; Hickey & Mohan, 2004:5, 11-12; also see Servaes, 2020a-c). Compared to its criticised antecedents, this concept initiated a significant alternative philosophy and fundamental paradigmatic shift to understanding and applying development and social change (refer to sections 0 and 2.6). Chapter 3 will now conduct a thorough examination of this notion.

As mentioned from the outset of this study, participation, like its associated paradigm, lacks a clear definition and a more coherent meta-narrative. This chapter is divided into five main sections. As the preface to Part II indicates, an etymological review of the roots of “participation” is followed by a historical reading and a contemporary examination of the notion (see 3.2). These discussions frame participation in several of the frameworks, typologies, and associated concepts available in development communication scholarship. This chapter provides a more detailed analysis of the literature on participation; therefore, it already recognises some of the underlying philosophical assumptions related to this concept.

Section 3.4, in the words of Lubombo (2011:18), reveals “the binding meta-narrative” of participation by examining the notion’s underlying philosophical assumptions. Section 3.5 gives summary remarks and a conclusion concerning this chapter’s theoretical interrogations of participation in the participatory paradigm.

3.2 PARTICIPATION: ETYMOLOGICAL ORIGINS AND MEANINGS

What is the meaning of the word participation? Likewise, how does the notion relate to ideas about social change and human development? A simple keyword search for the noun on Google Search¹⁰ and an online dictionary relates that it means “the action of taking part in something”, citing the example of “participation in chapel activities” (Google, 2024; Oxford English Dictionary, 2024a). The same search reveals a list of synonyms: “involvement; taking part; part; engagement; contribution; sharing; association; partaking and joining in.” Google Search (2024a) traces the linguistic geneses of participation to three languages in the Indo-European language family, originating in the Latin noun *participat* that evolved to *participatio* in the former and Old French, then changing to *participation* in late Middle English. The below figure gives a simplified linguistic evolution of the term “participation (Google Search, 2024).

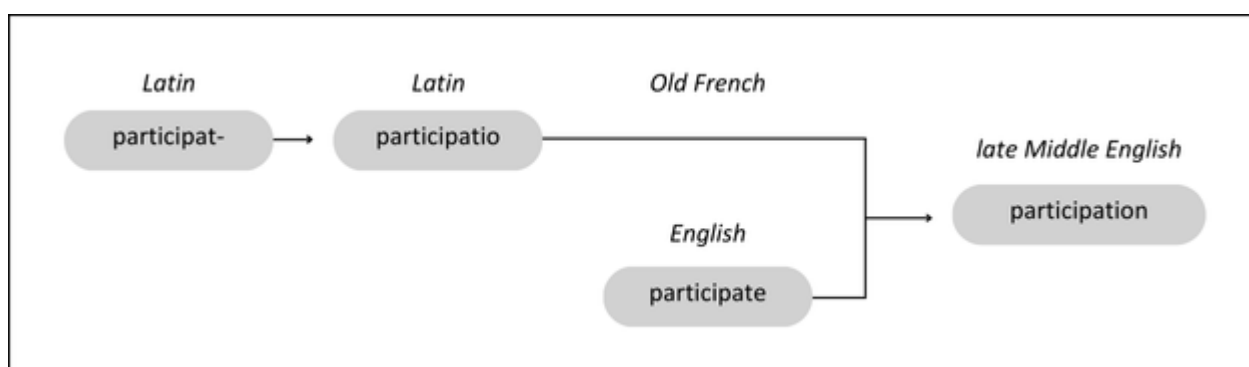


Figure 3-1 Google Search illustration of the linguistic origins of “participation”

Without going into too much detail here¹¹, Douglas Harper (n.d. Participation) recounts in his compilation that the noun’s Old French roots were already in use in the thirteenth century and as derived directly from the Late Latin *participationem*, meaning “partaking”. In his own etymological inquiry into the word “participation”, Colin Chasi (2011a:138), also focuses on how

¹⁰ Google Search (2024) (also called Google or Google.com) explains that the search engine’s English dictionary is provided by one of the world’s most authoritative dictionary publishers, Oxford Languages. The dictionary is reported regularly updated and sourced from “one of the world’s largest lexical research programmes” that comprises more than “350 000 words and phrases” (Google Search 2024).

¹¹ Harper (n.d. Participation) provides a far more meticulous account of the etymology of ‘participation’ by detailing *participationem* in his compilation *Online Etymology Dictionary*. The latter compilation, he writes, was compiled by consulting a corpus of printed reference works. In explaining ‘participation’, Harper even breaks down the *capere* into its Proto-Indo-European meanings rooted in **kap-* and **pere*, which for current purposes are considered unnecessary.

this Late Latin noun was the root of the contemporary noun, noting that the former means “to take part”.

Participationem can be divided further into *pars* and *capere* (Harper, n.d. Participation; Chasi, 2011:138). The former translates as “part”, “piece”, “side”, “share assigned”, or “granted lot”. *Capere* means “take”, “grasp”, “lay hold of”, “catch”, “undertake”, “be large enough for”, or “comprehend” (Harper, n.d. Participation). This etymological slicing and dicing, as it were, proposes that “*participation* [historically] involves those who are considered to be capable or competent being granted a share in the common welfare” (Chasi, 2011:138). The Merriam-Webster (n.d. Participation) dictionary entry replicates such a political view by firstly defining the noun’s legal definition as: “the action or state of taking part in something: as a) association with others in a relationship (as a partnership) or an enterprise usually on a formal basis with specified rights and obligations”, and b) as a form of “profit-sharing”. Secondly, it defines participation as a) “something in which shares are taken by more than one party” and b) “something that results in a share (as of a distribution)”.

From these initial etymologies, one can already gauge how participation has historically been expressed in development communication. Working several decades ago and concerned with the term’s meaning, Cohen and Uphoff (1980:213-214) noted that inquiry about participation and its relation to social and human development have origins in ancient Greek philosophy, specifically as theorised by Aristotle, who assessed the meanings and the actions that are required for the “good life” and human fulfilment. Aristotle argued that participating in politics and social activities is essential for human happiness. However, he neglected to determine a causal link between the two notions and to theorise which of the two concepts preceded the other (Cohen & Uphoff, 1980). Nonetheless, his philosophies allowed for further theorising of participation that involves “taking part in something” with a view to improve human fulfilment.

As the development communication scholar Chasi (2011:138) claims, a concerted analysis of the etymology and theory of participation raises questions about *how* a society is established and *who* is regarded as qualified or competent enough to participate in its various forms of enactment. He employs Aristotelian views to compare participation and development as analogous to an electoral process in a democratic society. In this analogy, individuals actively and

responsibly contribute to a democracy by casting their vote in, for example, a national election. Apart from this formal democratic practice, it encourages other democratic values and formal and informal forms of participation on different societal levels and spheres. Chasi (2011:138) argues that eligible voters must be legitimate citizens of their country to vote; furthermore, the assumption is that their ballots are based on informed decision-making. Non-citizens and minors (i.e., even if they are quite politically precocious) will not be able to partake in elections, as they do not qualify as participants in electing a government. This limited view corresponds to historical accounts of Aristotle's view on participation and development (Cohen & Uphoff, 2011:34-36).

Following this line of thinking, participation gains a decidedly political and institutionalised appearance – that is to say, assigning people goods and granting them rights and responsibilities to partake in society's construction, reconstruction, and sustained well-being (Cohen and Uphoff, 1980). Through participation and their implied responsibilities and costs, citizens would, in turn, receive certain benefits from the state. In a more contemporary setting, Chasi (2011:138-139) suggests that the complexity of participation in South Africa, both before and after apartheid, necessitates examining the impact of various factors such as “structural, institutional, policy, and attitudinal dynamics” on its conception and application. This contextualised view of participation can also be seen as a political inquiry.

This study, however, proposes that while participation is indeed enacted in political or legal contexts and formalised human practices, it also appears in a wide variety of public and private spheres through direct or indirect conducts that take on informal arrangements. In fact, upon cross-referencing with the Merriam-Webster (n.d. Participation) Thesaurus, it is evident that participation is closely linked to its corresponding noun, “contribution”. The Thesaurus lists thirty-five synonyms and similar words for “contribution”. These include, among others, “occupation, pursuit, purpose, capacity, activity, help, function, use, duty, niche, place, and role”. In a development communication context, these synonyms can manifest in various forms within social, cultural, economic, and political contexts and furthermore as enacted in diverse arrangements and activities, some of which occur beyond institutional forms (see 3.3). Concerning human actions, the Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines participation as being involved in an event or activity. It cites various examples of participation as they are enacted in

different environments. This study then infers that other kinds of actions or activities qualify as participation and as bound to a multiplicity of types, contexts and different objectives. The Cambridge Dictionary states associations with participation as entailing a typology of active, audience, and broad participation. In the current study, this leaves room for classifying participation as a complex notion associated with characteristics and features that are representative of different kinds of participation (see 3.3).

In considering the antonyms of participation, several words crop up: namely, “non-participation, non-involvement, avoidance, eschewal, hinder, impede, obstruct, prevent, stop,” and so forth (Meriam-Webster, n.d. Participation, Dictionary and Thesaurus). The lack of participation is indicated by words that suggest a lack of interest or willingness on the part of participants and by terms that potentially represent the participants’ inability to take part in an activity or event due to some limitation, preclusion or obstruction. An etymological analysis of participation’s antonyms suggests that, in a theoretical sense, the notion’s meanings might connote limited or constrained understandings thereof, or minimalist versus maximalist meanings of participation as conceived in different theoretical frameworks and typologies (see 3.3 for an exploration of such classifications). Given the above discussions, the next section reviews the notion of participation by reviewing the literature on the participatory paradigm.

3.3 PARTICIPATION: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONAL PLURALITY

In an attempt to offer a comprehensive assessment of participatory approaches in their book, *Participation: from tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development*, the academics Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan (2004:5) explain that, if participation is to be seen as a workable approach to development and social change, its key thematic questions must first be identified – both in its present guises in development theory and in its related communication subdiscipline. They affirm the idea that a contemporary review would be lacking without also tracing its historical origins.

3.3.1 Early notions of participation in binary development communication approaches

Chapter 2 explained that the participatory paradigm emerged in response to its ascendants' failures and their narrow views and application of tokenistic participation (see 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). Development beneficiaries' "participation" in a development project was seen as instrumental in reaching modernisation and not at empowering them. Participation was expert-driven in the dominant paradigm and thus denies local recipients communities any agent in the development process (cf. Lasswell, 1948; Lerner, 1958; Rogers, 2006/1976; Schram, 2006/1964; Shah, 2020) (also see Table 2-1 which depicts the "dominant paradigm").

Section 2.4.2 recounted the "*Dependistas*" critique of the dominant paradigm, using Marxist ideas and critical theory (inspired by the Frankfurt School) (Servaes & Malikhao, 2020:64; Waisbord, 2020:108). These criticisms had taken shape in a structuralist interpretation of development (i.e. the world systems theory), but did not explicitly connect the lack of meaningful participation by development beneficiaries to underdevelopment. They instead framed participation as a question of self-reliance and as rejecting hegemonic Western solutions to underdevelopment, preparing the way for later theorisations that would underline the notions of emancipation and empowerment (cf. Barranquero, 2020, 2011, 2006/2005). Sections 2.5 and 2.6 then outlined the participatory paradigm as emerging from the framework of multiplicity, which envisioned alternative development ideas and practices that are holistic, endogenous, ecologically responsible, and sustainable.

Before the varying optics and practices of participation in the participatory paradigm are examined, the concept of participatory communication must first be explored. Conceptually, participatory communication and participation are deeply interlinked and reinforcing. In the present study, participatory communication forms the foundational conceptual scaffolding from which participation and its theorisation and metatheorisation can transpire. Participatory communication presents the optic through which to examine different assumptions and purposes about participation and the strategies with which to achieve it.

3.3.2 Participatory communication

As a major approach and a primary concept in the participatory paradigm, Servaes and Malikhao (2020:69) note that *participatory communication* became prominent during the 1980s and 1990s – alongside the emergence of “participation” – and is often associated with the multiplicity paradigm (see 2.5). As a subfield of communication, the notion of participatory communication arose out of discontent with binary development theories, most notably expressed in the work of Latin American dependency scholars such as Augusto Boal, Jesús Martín Barbero, Luis Ramiro Beltrán, and Paolo Freire (Waisbord, 2020:108-110 Servaes & Malikhao, 2020:71-72).

Participatory communication, Bhatia (2018:1-2) explains, “unmoors the development discourse from the safe harbors (sic) of the capitalist calculus”. She maintains that participatory communication steers toward creating alternative epistemologies and methodologies of development. Bhatia adds that this shift opportunes possible structural changes in a development setting, thereby setting in motion the emancipation from hegemonic models. She elaborates that participatory communication has two dimensions (Bhatia, 2018:1-2). The first involves that a community must identify their development goals. Secondly, community members must critically think about and assess socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances to determine the most effective ways to reach their identified development goals.

Participation and its embodiment in communication then become primary concerns when addressing or redressing how society is enacted and who gets to partake in these processes (Chasi, 2011:138, 145, 148; Dutta, 2011:243; Molale, 2021:3-4; Otto & Fourie, 2016:22-23; Otto & Fourie, 2009:230). According to scholars such as Dutta (2011:243-246) and Brown (2004:237-238), participation must have a radical, transformational agenda by foregrounding local community voices of the oppressed or the subaltern. In this view, participation and communication should not be coopted by hegemonic development actors. The inclusion and foregrounding of local agents that dominant structures have long marginalised signify participatory communication or what Gaventa (2020:67-68) terms “empowerment participation”. This interpretation follows the radical philosophy of Latin American scholars and activists, such as found in Paolo Freire’s liberation theology, which will receive detailed attention in Section 3.4.

In the empowerment participation view, the ontological and epistemological commitments are to local subjectivity, meaning that top-down, linear and centralised communication controlled by external “experts” are impeded. Participatory communication values community intersectionality or what Servaes (1999) calls social multiplicity. It recognises that local individuals can belong to multiple collectives or groups concurrently and that their individual and cultural identities are not uniform as the dominant paradigm would have.

Elsewhere, participatory communication is defined by Mefalopulos (2008:223) as comprising a dialogic or participatory mode that combines participation and two-way communication strategies and tools. In his definition, emphasis is placed on using participatory communication to establish mutual understanding when assessing development concerns and the best solutions to address them (see Chapter 4). The idea of reaching a “broad consensus” among “stakeholders” is also emphasised in this description. This view appears to value consensus but, as will be argued throughout this study’s theorisation of the participatory paradigm, critical, dissenting voices that seek to disrupt hegemonic agendas and methodologies must be incorporated into the meaning of participatory communication. While mutual understanding is certainly a worthwhile and necessary objective in communication, it should not come at the risk of co-option or misappropriation by dominant voices in society (Section 3.2.4 and 3.3.5 revisit this statement when reflecting on the different typologies of participation).

In Bhatia’s (2018:3) view, participatory communication is akin to a critical pedagogy of collective, public participation wherein communities are enabled to become aware of their innate capacities to self-manage their community development needs and solutions. Participatory communication emphasises the agency of the subaltern to self-represent their development concerns. In contrast to passively accepting external information, individuals and communities become active agents in their social change initiatives. Being active further means that the knowledge systems, lived experiences, situated values, and cultural realities of local communities take precedence over exogenous development epistemes and strategies.

As evident in the above discussion, participatory communication owes much of its philosophy and practice to the thinking and methodology of the Brazilian scholar Paolo Freire (1970) (Chitnis, 2005; Barranquero, 2006/2005; Tufte, 2017; Altamirano, 2020; Servaes & Lie, 2020). The

literature indicates that participatory communication is traditionally described according to two primary approaches. First, there is the *dialogic pedagogy* by Paolo Freire (1970), and second is the UNESCO approach, which comprises ideas about access, participation, and self-management (Servaes & Malikhao, 2020:84). Freire is often described as one of the key thinkers and champions of participation and later interpretations of the role and place of communication in the participatory sphere (Barranquero, 2006/2005:920). The current study uses his dialogic pedagogy, specifically when theorising dialogue as a notion of the participatory paradigm in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, since it underlines the dialogic aspect of participatory communication that needs present attention, a summary of this thinking follows below.

Freire uses the dichotomy of “banking education” versus the dialogic pedagogy as originally published in this foundational work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970). Although his original ideas pertain to an adult literacy context, his philosophy and methods apply to broader settings that are applicable in this study (Barranquero, 2006/2005:920-923; Suzina & Tufte, 2020:411, 416). Freire’s critical pedagogy is strongly embedded in a Marxist societal analysis that recognises power disparities between individuals who assume the roles of “teachers” and “learners”. In the arboreal education model, the teacher is regarded as the bearer of knowledge that transmits it to the receptive learner, who is considered uninformed. Freire, however, maintains that the “banking model of education” must be contested and replaced by the cultivation of critical awareness, the application of critical thinking, and active learner engagement in a problem-posing educative setting (Freire, 1970:52-67). Freire believes that subjugated people can find self-emancipation from oppressive circumstances and relations by becoming cognisant of their dehumanisation. This is achieved via dialogic communication.

While Chapter 4 examines the latter proposal comprehensively, it is already evident that the dialogic pedagogy introduced notions such as active participation, two-way communication, social and cultural embeddedness, problem-posing reflection and action (i.e., praxis), and empowerment. It underscores that participation is resistance to power, thus bringing empowerment into the fold of participatory communication. While participation encourages peoples’ active involvement or engagement in development initiatives, the communicative aspect ensures that participation is authentic, meaningful and ultimately empowering.

3.3.3 Participation: a plurality of contestation

Participation in development has a “longer and more varied genealogy” of theory and application than is generally recognised (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:5). It became particularly popular in development communication discourse and practice during the mid-1980s and 1990s (Leal, 2010:90; Thomas & Van De Fliert, 2015:39-40) and, as Cornwall (2006:62) notes, “as a novel, common-sense way to address a range of development ills” after the so-called passing of the dominant paradigm.

Its buzzword status in the research and professional fields came to recognition in the foundational research of scholars and practitioners like Robert Chambers, whose book *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* was published in 1983. He offered an incisive, alternative paradigm to the reductionist approaches to development while presenting a novel methodology of development, which he termed the Rapid Rural Appraisal approach (RRA) (Chambers, 1997, 1983; Cornwall & Scoones, 2022:6-9; Thomas & Van de Fliert, 2015:40). Other methodologies included Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Community Based Needs Assessment (CBNA), and Stakeholder Analysis, all of which promised to deliver the meaningful development that top-down approaches failed to realise (Leal, 2010:89).

Some scholars (Cornwall, 2011; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2005; Manyozo, 2012; Servaes, 2021, 2020) have attempted to anthologise historical and conceptual research on the notion and along much broader lines, while others have researched participation in far more specific terms as representative of different research interests and contextual empirical evaluations. Some of the genealogical texts operate on an introductory and graduate level (e.g. McAnany, 2012; Tomaselli & Chasi, 2011; Mody, 2003; Waisbord, 2001), while others are written to specific audiences and purposes, for example, Quarry and Ramirez (2009) target professionals, Melkote and Steeves (2015), and Dutta (2011) interrogate participation about notions of power dynamics and empowerment, while Thomas (2014) examines citizen perspectives in development communication. There are also practical guides or manuals abound, focusing on different conceptual and participatory methodologies in various contexts and on different organisational scales (such as Cornwall, 2011; Papa, Singhal & Papa, 2005; Mefalopulos & Grenna, 2004; Servaes, 2021; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009, 2008). Very few studies have been done on the

metatheoretical aspects of participation (see, for example, Dutta, 2021, 2015; Dervin & Huesca, 1999; Jacobson & Kolluri, 1999; Lubombo, 2011). As evident by the above repeated citation of certain of these sources, many of them clearly overlap concerning their foci, audiences, and purposes. While the sources mentioned above represent mostly academic handbooks and some organisational manuals, Chapter 3 also employed a wide variety of scholarly journal articles in interrogating the most prominent notions and sub-concepts of participation.

Regardless of its ascension in scholarship and practice, Thomas (2014:10) argues that participation's meaning is so infused in and shaped by different structures (both past *and* contemporary), ideologies and power dynamics that its praxis has become almost abstract or at the very least variegated (cf. Cornwall, 2006; Chang & Jacobson, 2010; Carpentier, 2001; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Manyozo, 2017, 2012). How people view and experience the world consistently shapes and bounds their observation and arrangement of their environments and how they finally act (McAnany, 2012; 6, 88). Depending on the development actors involved, disagreements are still prevalent in contemporary settings, whether it be over who should participate, at what level, how, in which processes, to what extent and to what ends (Dutta, 2012:247-248; Tufte, 2017:57).

For example: Notwithstanding the efforts of development actors to convince beneficiaries that actual changes in discourse and practice orthodoxy have transpired, participation still faces a challenging position – often attributable to the institutional status quo that intimates the language and strategies of apparently *passé* binary approaches (Cornwall, 2006:63-65; Dutta, 2020:105-109; Leal, 2010:91). In this view, Thomas (2014:10) states that “participation” has become a theoretically and empirically nebulous term, making it an “empty signifier” or “weasel word”; or, as Cornwall (2006:63-64) states, merely an echo of past approaches. Some incisive criticisms argue that participation has lost its authentic meaning and purpose as a direct result of its popular use and misuse by private companies, governments and international development agencies. They claim that these organisations overlook the real lived concerns of beneficiaries by couching their programmatic institutional development agendas and interventions in participatory development discourse (Cooke & Kothari, 2001:3-5; Cornwall & Brock, 2005:1043-1045; Dutta, 2020a:106-109).

Leal (2010:93-94) claims that participatory development has become a tool for neoliberalism rather than a counter-ideology and practice. Leal notes that, under the auspices of international development and financial aid institutions¹² such as the United Nations, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), participation is too often synonymous with concepts such as “good governance”, “human rights”, “participatory development” and “sustainability”. Bureaucratic and professional discourses – past and present – are rife with terms such as “self-reliance”, “enabling environments”, “ordinary people”, and other concepts that supposedly designate people’s authentic participation in development (cf. Cornwall, 2006; Dutta, 2020a).

In support of these critiques, a recent meta-analytic study of the use of *information and communication technologies for development* (ICT4D) revealed some disconcerting findings (Kim & Lee, 2023). This analysis concerned 107 studies, spanning the period of 2009-2020 and building on previous, similar meta-analyses regarding “participation” in the context of development communication (see Fair and Shah, 1997; Morris, 2003; Shah, 2010). Kim and Lee (2023:141; 158-159) conclude that while many researchers situated themselves in the participatory paradigm, the majority idealised participation while holding overoptimistic, deterministic views of ICT4D. Most studies also concerned national-level concerns, therefore neglecting the global context of structural disparities, privatisation and other political economy issues that impact local use of ICT4D. Whereas communication scholars (29% of the studies examined) were more likely to take a critical stance on modernist interpretations of technological use in development, most other disciplinary studies espoused uncritical diffusion of innovations views. Meta-analytic research further underscores that where ICT4D is framed in participatory terms, it is regarded in materialist terms and as being limited in access to technology – or to what they term the “first

¹² Leal (2010:93-94) claims that these vocabularies solidified in several World Bank compilations, such as the *Participation Sourcebook* (1996) and the *Development Communication Sourcebook: Broadening the Boundaries of Communication* (2008), which were de facto methodological guides for participatory development praxis. Similarly, he lists *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* (2000) by the institution’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and other directories that would alleviate poverty via participation and empowerment. He also takes a dim view of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000, which were supposed to reduce global poverty by fifty per cent by 2015 and were the epitome of such institutional development speak and praxis. In September 2015, the UN elaborated on the MDGs in a set of seventeen global goals that were called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and formed part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to critics such as Leal (2010), these institutional guides and frameworks espouse that people’s participation and their agency in development are a priority when the dominant ideology co-opts participation (cf. Cornwall, 2006; Dutta, 2018).

level” of participation. This framing discounts the influence of structure and power dynamics on ICT4D while also overlooking the role of communication in technology use. Their research shows that while the “second level” (participation as empowerment) is noted by several studies, most fail to critically analyse participation as expressed on the “third level” (participation as social justice) in which power and agency are the notion’s key dimensions.

Leal (2010:90) clarifies that during the height of participation rhetoric, operational methodologies that seemed to prioritise human interests, ethics and morality were trojan horses of sorts, heralding a wave of denationalisation, elimination of subsidies, budgetary austerity, devaluation, and trading liberation in developing nations (cf. Dutta, 2020a). All these phenomena occurred in the name and practice of participation. The consequence of such misappropriation is a lack of clarity and consistency in how participation is described in theory and empirical practice, which arguably amounts to a continued form of oppression – as was evident in the binary development communication paradigms. Instead of accepting this incoherence or a complete disillusionment with the notion, this study maintains that participation should be viewed as operating in a vast sphere of plurality that can counter orthodox development ideologies and applications in a constructive manner.

Considering Cohen and Uphoff’s (2011:54) assertion that participation is “not a single thing” but a multiplicity of approaches, it exists in a rubric of plural approaches and associated activities that can strengthen one another. In this view, participation is not static since it encompasses different approaches to development under varying circumstances. However, Dutta (2020a:108) cautions that care must be taken not to merely use participation as a programmatic design tool that can be co-opted for specific functionalities. He criticises institutions that employ participation to encourage social behavioural changes in beneficiaries while ignoring their real-lived development challenges and needs. His disclaimer is a decidedly normative instruction and one that the current study espouses. Proponents of authentic participation therefore argue that people’s participation is necessary for meaningful social change to occur and ultimately to ensure the empowerment of those who participate in improving their well-being and their environments (Chitnis, 2005:232; McAnany, 2012:57). Servaes (2020a:7) clarifies:

*“Development is shaped and done **by** [emphasis added] people – not **for** [emphasis added] people. In order for people to be able to do so, they need to understand ‘how the system works.’ Therefore, development or social change should be equated with empowerment: the ability of people to influence the wider system and take control of their lives.”*

The statement above underscores that empowerment is feasible if people can influence the system and claim ownership over their lives. This already points to arguments that participatory proponents make, such as that participation necessitates structural changes that disrupt the status quo and result in increased agency. For meaningful changes to arise, participation cannot be theorised, co-opted and enacted according to orthodox development models. Instead, as already made evident above and as has become apparent during the last 15 to 25 years of scholarship, numerous scholars have contended that foregrounding communication’s relation to social and human development is critical for meaningful development to occur (cf. Bhatia, 2018; Dutta, 2020a-b; Dervin & Huesca, 1999; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Manyozo, 2017; Wilkins & Mody, 2001). The argument is straightforward, development cannot happen without participation. Participation must be based on communication.

3.3.4 Participation: an overview of frameworks and typologies

The complexity of the scholarly literature about participation demonstrates that the notion can be understood from generalised to more specific expressions. The language used to pronounce participation often includes notions of and about social justice, redistribution of power, inclusion of the voiceless in development, and mobilisation of people to deconstruct hierarchical knowledge structures (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009:3-4). For some, participation is limited to the inputs of community members or affected beneficiaries concerning the design and implementation of a development initiative. These different perspectives can represent a social movement and a project-based or institutional understanding of participation (Burnside-Lawry, 2012:102-105; Chang & Jacobson, 2010:660-663; Tufte and Mefalopulos, 2009:6-7). Their definitional commonality is in interpreting “participation as the involvement of ordinary people in the development process, leading to change. Their scope and methods, however, can differ.”

The following section argues that participation should be seen from a rights-based theoretical optic, which is inspired by Freire's notions of liberation and *conscientization* and by Shirley Arnstein's (1969) seminal "ladder of participation" (Arnstein, 2019:24-34, 1969; Tufte, 2017:62). In this frame, participation is a multi-accented, multi-levelled notion. It imagines that to accomplish the social objectives that individuals set for themselves and their communities, communicative processes and involvement must be used to empower them in a self-reliant manner, and this should happen in all the stages of their development.

Thomas (1994:49) writes that the logic of participation stems from changed ontological, epistemic, political, and theoretical positions that underscore the notions and values of community, dialogue, reciprocity, and understanding as based on mutual respect. These humanistic values agree with Freire's contention that participatory communication is impossible without these ethics guiding dialogic interaction (Freire, 1970). People become the subjects of their self-directed change instead of suffering as the objects of externally controlled objectives and processes. Participation manifests as a basic human need and, therefore, as a human right. It is at once a prerequisite and a goal for meaningful social change to occur, but it also remains open-ended and relative, meaning that is a continually emergent process. This contrasts with the teleological bias of the binaries development theories, which claim that development is inevitable and has clear final objectives in mind (Melkote & Steeves, 2015:392).

Or, as Dutta (2011:249-250) theorises in the CCA, participation must be conceptualised as the entry point to social change precisely because it problematises the nexus points and relations between local and global structures (see 5.4 for a closer examination of the CCA). Participation is a site of struggle where dominant development knowledge is examined for its ontological and epistemological commitments, its development objectives, and how it conceives or constrains participation in different understandings (Dutta, 2011:251). More to the point, in the participatory approach, participation ties in with the notion of self-reliance, as will become more apparent when the notion of empowerment is meta-theorised in greater depth in Chapter 6 (see 6.4). For current purposes and aligning with White's (2006:483) suggestion, autonomy is viewed as both a result and part of the process, which is to say as an essential dimension of participation. White further posits that participation should be accompanied by self-confidence so that

individuals can break their dependency relationships from outside development agents, structures, ideologies and processes. For people to promote their self-directed social change, they must utilise local resources and intrinsic energies to identify and meet basic local needs (Nair *et al.*, 1994:161-162).

Authentic participation then means that people should be involved at different levels of development initiatives and projects for development and social change to be meaningful (Bordenave, 1994:47; Mefalopulos, 2008). These advocates argue that participation cannot be restricted to the localised level, but that participation can extend beyond the local village, neighbourhood, or town district (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:95). This means that the scale of projects need not be restricted to only community projects, but that it can similarly take form in larger scale programmes on meso and macro levels of society, involving many different stakeholders other than beneficiaries on a grassroots level. Jacobson (2003:87-88) notes that developing areas on a community level often connect to social relations and processes that are embedded in large-scale institutions within the nation-state or global context. This transaction with large-scale institutions and processes impacts the local scale in either good or bad ways, all of which must be accounted for in how participation occurs in a localised context (Carpentier, 2011).

When examining participation as a locus of conflict, it is insufficient to associate it with resistance against external factors and actors, such as instances of colonisation or cultural imperialism. The proposition for social change to originate from a grassroots, internal perspective implies that the absence of progress can frequently be attributed to the authenticity or lack thereof in localised engagement (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:158-163; Riano, 2006/1994:447). This view accepts the interconnection between different scales and levels of participation, which may be limited by both external agents and inherent characteristics within the local community.

As previously indicated, proponents of the participatory model contend that participation must be incorporated across all the stages or life cycles of an initiative, including *research*, *implementation*, and *monitoring and evaluation* (Mefalopulos, 2008:87). It is also posited that the highest level of participation involves *self-management*, suggesting that in a development setting, community members have the right to reciprocal collaboration and interaction during

the entire lifecycle of a development project or initiative (Mefalopulos, 2008:87; Servaes & Malikhao, 2005:95). Whenever information or knowledge is shared, or decision-making processes for development is taking place, it is imperative that the maximum number of community members participate fully and without constraint (Habito-Cadiz, 2006:427-428)

According to this line of reasoning, participation encompasses an empowerment process as power is operationalised at a local level and as it originates from inside community participatory spaces. This view contrasts the utilitarian optic as it is a more ethical way of ensuring people's actual involvement in their development (Chasi, 2011:147). Participation, can, however, still be conceived in an instrumental manner. In the utilitarian view, individuals who are considered "epistemologically superior" can employ participation to use community resources and energies (i.e., time, effort, land, labour and money) to counterbalance the costs of providing their development services (Chambers, 1995:2).

Participation then aims at directing development in efficient, effective, and cost-effective ways, and toward repeatedly achieving pre-set purposes that render community participation a form of co-option. In fact, Chambers (1995:2) states that regular participation only retains "cosmetic value"; external development non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donor agencies and governments claim to use approaches, consultants and managers in a participatory manner when, in reality, they employ top-down approaches all along. Or as Chambers (1994:2) puts it, development becomes a situation of, " 'they' (local people) participate in 'our' project" evident in the erstwhile dominant paradigm. This view can also easily be co-opted as a means-to-end approach that is geared towards specific, predetermined goals.

Against utilitarianism, Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:4-5) contend that local development actors can be empowered by demanding more accountability from external development agents, as well as examining their methods and tools. They maintain that when development interventions use participatory strategies, a continuum of outcomes are possible on at least three different levels:

- a) *psycho-social outcomes* which involve increased ownership of a problem and a commitment to resolve it (i.e. in relation to individual-psycho-social level);

- b) the *improvement of competencies and capacities* needed to engaged with the defined development problem (i.e. comprising the level of life skills and acquiring competencies);
- c) *actual influence* over the institutions that can affect an individual or community and can take place on an institutional or community level.

As discussed in the next section, debates in the literature on various typologies of participation reveal that communities often withdraw their involvement, along with their resources, either voluntarily or because of overt or covert manipulation or coercion.

3.3.5 Participation typologies

One such typology is Sherry Arnstein's (1969:216-224) "ladder of participation". According to Cornwall (2008:269) typologies are instructive in examining the normative elements of participation. In so doing, interrogations can differentiate between meaningful and inauthentic types of participation as aligned with varying interests by different social actors and their approaches to participation. Arnstein's typology distinguishes between different purposes of participation, as well as the different levels at which it occurs, and hence as Thomas (2014:7) states, the ladder symbolises the minimalist and maximalist versions of participation. Although this entails a reductionist view of reality (Arnstein, 2019:25), it is a useful analytical tool in a development setting because it illustrates the variety and different meanings of participating (Cornwall, 2008:270). It assists in critically assessing when participation is being manipulated in a utilitarian manner and when it is viewed as an empowerment process. Dutta (2011:248) agrees that the degree of decision-making in a local community can vary immensely as participatory approaches and methods are used differently by various stakeholders. Arnstein's "ladder" comprises eight different rungs or levels, depicting a non-participation to participation continuum. The different rungs signify the degree of authentic influence that citizens have in the participation process as classified according to the following three variants:

- a) non-participation;
- b) tokenism;
- c) citizen power.

The two bottom rungs, namely 1) *manipulation* and 2) *therapy*, represent *non-participation*. In a development setting, these two rungs indicate that citizens or community members exert very

little influence over development initiatives and that they generally lack information pertaining to such projects. They remain passive beneficiaries of external development projects without any influence in the planning or implementation processes of these projects (Arnstein, 2019:24-25).

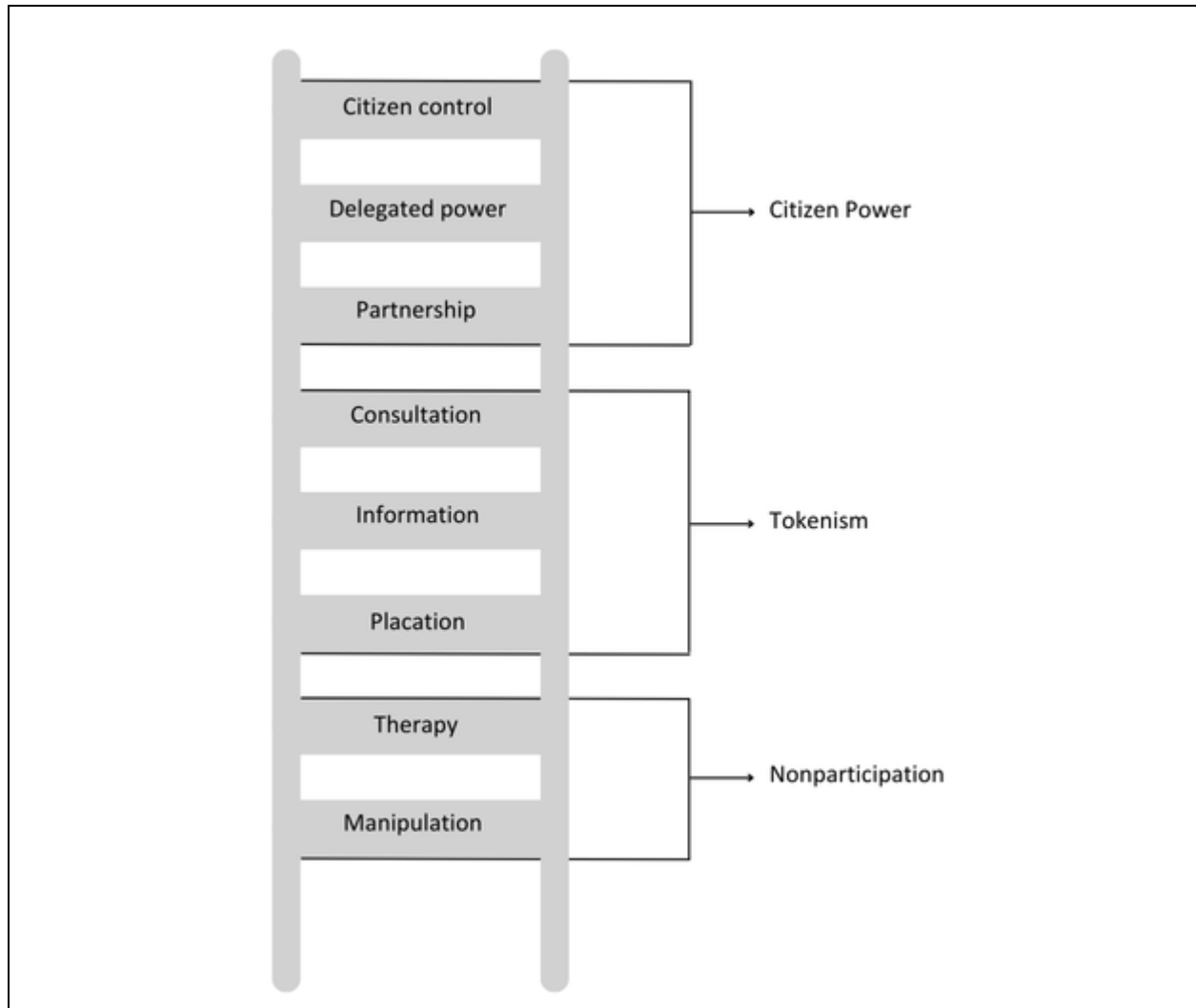


Figure 3-2 Arnstein's ladder of participation

Usually, community members are manipulated into, for example, attending community events and activities, but their inputs concerning their felt needs are ignored. On top of this, external agents often employ support structures, agents and services (i.e. in the form of “therapy”) that advise and educate community members on solutions and strategies that would supposedly best address these pre-set needs.

Passive participation is the least participatory approach in any project. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:6) describe it as the most common “participatory” method used in passive participation (also referred to as participation by information), meaning that communities’ feedback is either

severely delimited or non-existent. *Tokenism* is represented by the next three rungs on the ladder, thereby incorporating the ideas of 3) *informing*, 4) *consultation*, and 5) *placation*. Here community members become more informed on development projects, and they can give their opinions about these projects by way of consultation and feedback processes. These processes are, however, merely forms of directing and mollifying community members into thinking that they are participating. While they are requested and allowed to provide their input, their contributions have no real bearing on the actual final decision-making processes of the “experts” and their predetermined development goals. Community “participation” is therefore nothing more than a token form of participation and is merely symbolic.

These levels are collectively referred to as “participation by consultation” and are characterised as an extractive process whereby stakeholders provide outside researchers or experts with answers to posed questions (Arnstein, 2019:24-25; Mefalopulos, 2008:11; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009:6). Typically, outside stakeholders or professionals use meetings or other similar forms of “consultation” at different points in time to obtain “input”. Eventually, the final decision-making power remains in the hands of these outside parties, as they are under no obligation to incorporate local people’s input. At his end of the spectrum, participation aims at what Dutta (2011:248) describes as effective and efficient social change communication efforts. Participation is instrumental in nature and epistemically concerned with information transmission. This approach to participation is also called “grassroots participation”. While it signals a shift from top-down, prescriptive social change processes, Melkote and Steeves (2015:397) also concede that this kind of participation equates co-option and external control. Arnstein (2019:24) describes these types of participation as empty rituals that fail to reconfigure the axis points of power between the dominant powerful and the remaining powerless local contexts into a more balanced arrangement.

The participatory model imagines communities as a different model of participation, where local communities and individuals cannot be forced to accept the development knowledge and practices of external agents, regardless of how advantageous an outsider perceives a development project would be to the community (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009:20). Instead, the community must be encouraged to initiate their own development by becoming active agents

and participants in the planning and implementation of projects. According to Arnstein (2019:29-33), the top three rungs – 6) *partnership*, 7) *delegated power*, and 8) *citizen power* – demonstrate the highest form of participation. This top level is called “citizen power”. Here, *partnership* (number 6) means that community members and outside agents are equal participants in the development project (compare with the “empowered participation” notion of Mefalopulos, 2009:11). Together they can negotiate development goals and plan the necessary initiatives that would reach these goals. In such a partnership, locals have the power to exert real agency over the development decisions. The top two rungs of the ladder assume that community members should be empowered to take control over their development and that they should become self-sufficient in managing it. These ideas will be recast in Section 6.3.2, where the intersection of power and empowerment and its relation to participation are examined. What is clear concerning power in Arnstein’s ladder, is that it presents a decidedly political approach to reading participation (Carpentier, 2016:73).

These levels are often called “participation by collaboration” or “empowerment participation”, thus incorporating Freire’s notions about the *conscientization* or consciousness-raising of marginalised people (Melkote & Steeves, 2015:397; Mefalopulos, 2009:6-7). First, groups of primary stakeholders participate in discussions and analyses of predetermined project goals. Predictably, this type of participation does not result in dramatic changes because objectives are fixed. Regardless, participatory collaboration means that local communities become more active in decision-making processes to achieve such pre-set goals. In this participation process, increased horizontal communication and a component of capacity-building between stakeholders are therefore integrated. Over time, this capacity-building means that the dependence on outside facilitation and expertise decreases and new power configurations occur.

As primary stakeholders, the beneficiaries of an intervention are capable and willing to initiate the process and participate in the development analysis. Project goals and the strategies required for their achievement are set via shared decision-making since all stakeholders are equal partners in the development effort. Within the local context, the decision-making process is situated in the empowerment of local communities, individuals and their relationships – both with one another and in different power configurations in the local context (Arnstein, 2019:29-33; Dutta,

2011:252). Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:7) emphasise, however, that the primary stakeholders are *primus inter parus*, meaning that they are equal partners and have agency (via dialogue) concerning their critical issues and the exchange of knowledge and real-lived experiences that could lead to solutions. In the end, empowerment participation means that ownership and control of development efforts should rest in the hands of the primary beneficiaries (White, 1996:145-146).

Although Arnstein's ladder is useful in analysing what constitutes meaningful participation, communities will not always be able to participate fully without development experts (Arnstein, 2019:25; Carpentier, 2016:76-77). Marginalised and subjugated communities are often powerless to give rise to participation exactly because they are powerless in the first instance. Carpentier (2016:76) notes that "participatory intensities can change over time", while different aspects of the same process can lead to different outcomes. For this reason, the influence and use of outsiders as social change facilitators – but with great humility and sensitivity – is needed to empower the powerless community to bring about participation. Arnstein (2019:25) acknowledges the limitations of the ladder in analysing the most significant impediments to reaching authentic levels of participation. She notes that paternalism, racism, and resistance to power-sharing should be examined in this regard (Arnstein, 2019:25-26).

Likewise, she cautions for an awareness of internal issues that could discourage local engagements and trust in the participatory process: inadequate political and socioeconomic infrastructure, knowledge bases, and issues of reliable citizen representation and accountability can all have a negative impact on meaningful participation. Arnstein further explains that the typology of the ladder simplifies the powerful and powerless into homogenous blocs that brush over pluralistic interests, competing views, and diversity in general (compare Carpentier, 2016). What is depicted as eight rungs might in fact be 150 rungs with very few distinctive features. What then counts as participation or non-participation again becomes a nebulous real-world situation wherein genuine participatory acts become hard to perceive and interrogate. The ladder remains useful in its normative description of participation, but as Waisbord (2001:22) cautions, different levels of participation might be more apposite in different situations and contexts.

White (1996) also offers a useful analytical framework for participation in relation to its uses and abuses. This analytic tool views participation as involving a mix of interests that can alter over time. These include 1) nominal, 2) instrumental, 3) representational, and 4) transformative interests as indicated in the table below (White, 1996:144). Cornwall (2008:271) believes White's typology is "used less as a ladder and more as a way of working out how people use participation, ...to identify conflicting ideas about why or how participation is being used at any particular stage in a process."

Table 3-1 Interests in participation

Form	Top-down	Bottom-up	Function
Nominal	Legitimation	Inclusion	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency	Cost	Means
Representative	Sustainability	Leverage	Voice
Transformative	Empowerment	Empowerment	Means/End

(Source: White, 1996)

White (1996:144-147) describes the framework as follows: in the nominal sense, people's participation in a development project is mainly concerned with legitimating their involvement therein. While it involves inclusion, it is mostly of symbolic display and hence of nominal or insignificant value. Instrumental participation agrees with a utilitarian approach where people's participation may be required but is merely used as a means to an end. For local communities, this often comes at a cost of some valuable resource such as time or labour. When the function of participation is to permit local communities to make their voices heard, it avoids the risk of establishing a top-down, unsustainable project. If community members can leverage participation to influence the shape a project can take, participation becomes representative of locally situated and culturally specific development concerns.

Lastly, transformative participation encompasses the empowerment aspect of participation. This form of participation is based on the collective, critical awareness and capacity of community members to address their concerns with confidence, as espoused by the Freirean dialogic pedagogy. The development agenda originates from below and can simultaneously be a means

and an end, since it breaks down the dichotomy of participation expressed in bottom-down, dominant development models. Instead, participation is a dynamic process that is expressed and owned by local communities.

Again, considering a more positive interpretation of an institutional understanding of participation, Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:5-6, 11) describe four different stages of a project or intervention life cycle during which the community can participate.

Firstly, during the *Research Stage*, a development problem is accurately diagnosed and defined through the involvement of all stakeholders. This means that the community's knowledge, past experiences, attitudes, as well as their existing policies are all figured into the problem analysis. Other relevant contextual information such as socio-economic conditions, culture, spirituality, and gender are all considered during this phase. In the next step, the *Design Stage*, the actual activities of the suggested intervention are defined. Working alongside other outside stakeholders, local communities combine their energy to enhance the quality and relevance of the suggested interventions. Thirdly, the *Implementation Stage* involves implementing the planned interventions. Participation increases the commitment that is made to these interventions, meaning that their relevance and sustainability are determined. In the final *Evaluation Stage*, the interventions are collectively assessed through participatory strategies. For this evaluation to be meaningful, the measures and indicators of evaluation should be defined right from the start of the intervention and with the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders. First and foremost, this includes representatives and members of the local community.

To the degree that participation involves people's direct engagement in development, these various stages signify a shift away from the dominant development theories in ontological, epistemic and methodological dimensions. Dutta (2014:250, 252-253) explains that access to the communicative spaces where development is conceptualised, its agendas are determined, and its strategies are settled gives new features to the notion of participation, as demonstrated in subaltern individualities. He reasons that, as opposed to non-participation and degrees of tokenism (depicted in Arnstein's ladder), a locally-situated and culture-centred approach to development and social change includes the re-entry of the marginalised "other" into the full life cycle of development initiatives. Additionally, this access is enhanced by emphasising listening to

the subaltern's voice in these spaces and actively using it to challenge hegemonic development discourse and praxis. Now, the subaltern and their alternative rationalities are mixed into the development fold, upending the previously monologic understanding of knowledge systems and their production and application (Dutta, 2011:252).

John Gaventa (2020, 2018) offers a valuable typology of participation by describing people's involvement in development in terms of spatiality and as bound to power dynamics. His "powercube" framework is discussed in more detail in Sections 6.3.1.2 and 6.3.2 to theorise empowerment. It describes people's participation in terms of *power participation* associated with three distinct spaces, namely *uninvited*, *invited*, and *claimed or emerged spaces*. In the latter spatiality, oppressed or marginalised people either claim back previously inaccessible spaces of articulation and participation or create entirely new ones in which their meaningful engagement can emerge from the bottom up.

Evidently, it is important to recognise that participation not only involves access to material infrastructure, resources and decision-making mechanisms that all are necessary for development, but that it can also take shape in more abstract or spiritual forms. Chapter 6 will return to this claim when the notion of empowerment is theorised in more detail. For the time being: As both a result and an expression of participation, empowerment can be expressed in manifold material and quantifiable measures while also finding articulation in individual self-discovery, expression of agency, and engagement with "the other" in the communicative and relational sense.

3.4 PARTICIPATION: METATHEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In Chapter 1 (see 1.7.2.1), metatheory was presented as a theoretical framework that examines a theory itself or the philosophical assumptions that underly a theory. As these discussions established, metatheory assists scholars in answering several critical questions about theory. These include defining what theory is, cognising its goals, understanding the practical nature of theory, and determining what the criteria are for theories of varying legitimacy and usefulness (Craig & Muller, 2007:55). When scholars answer such questions, they construct a

metatheoretical lens or a higher-level theory framework to comprehend better, evaluate and ultimately synthesise several theories within a particular discipline.

Section 3.4's three subsections aim to metatheorise participation in the participatory paradigm, as viewed via an integration of the theorisations that were discussed in this chapter's previous section. This metatheorising will present a framework to understand how different conceptualisations of participation relate to one another, especially concerning their intersections or commonalities. This will then assist in answering the general research question of this study: What should a framework for a South African community radio station, as participatory media, consist of? (See Chapter 1, section 1.3.1).

The scholars Dervin and Huesca (1999:170, 182-198) provided a particularly useful conceptual scaffolding from which the current chapter will theorise the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of participation. They presented six metatheoretical assumptions that underlie participation and participatory communication in the participatory paradigm: authority; naturalism; cultural relativity; constructivism; postmodernism; and communitarianism. These claims support to theorise participatory communication in a development context, as they frame how theorists can name and identify situations, conceive and strategise actions, generate and execute programmes, and assess the outcomes as related to the associated contexts (Dervin & Huesca, 1999:184).

The current thesis will expand on these claims by additionally theorising participation from two other metatheories: the phenomenological tradition of communication theory and critical theory (cf. Deetz, 1999; Jacobson & Kolluri, 1999, Einsiedel, 1990). Phenomenology underscores the subjective lived experiences of local communities and their meaning-making processes as related to participatory communication. This tradition focuses on how the critical consciousness, inspired by the Freirean critical pedagogy of individuals, facilitates their understanding of their subjective and objective worlds and how social interactions and participatory communication can extend such interpretations. This study argues that critical theory is necessary as it considers the power dynamics and inequalities that the participatory paradigm seeks to counter, as first expressed by the *dependistas* (Dervin & Huesca, 1999:171-179). It provides a lens of how participatory communication can be employed to secure emancipation from oppression and disrupt structures

and practices that perpetuate inequalities. The subsequent sections will discuss how these metatheories present a pathway to elaborate on the ontological, epistemological and methodological claims underlying participation (Craig, 2007:74, 79-81, 85-87).

3.4.1 Participation: an ontology of human-centred, transformative resistance

Metatheorising participation involves critically reflecting on the notion's origins, its fundamental nature, forms and features of communicative phenomena. The ontology of participation leads to several key questions that must be theorised. Firstly, it must be determined whether participation is a process, an event, or a structure and how communicative agents perceive the essence of existence or reality. Then it is imperative to contemplate the role of individuals as communicative agents in participation, including the relationships between these actors. Thirdly, it is also necessary to analyse the impact of the power dynamics between them, how these relations affect participation's operation, and in what contexts or under what circumstances this takes place.

In the phenomenological and critical traditions, Craig (2007:74) states that communication is theorised as "the experience of otherness" through "dialogue", although in the critical tradition it occurs via "discursive reflection". He asserts that these two traditions represent philosophical assumptions concerning communication, comprising authenticity, supportiveness and openness on the one hand and ideology, dialecticism, oppression, consciousness-raising, resistance and emancipation on the other. These conceptions align with the theorisations of the participatory paradigm that dictate several ontological assumptions of participation.

The ontology of participation signifies plurality and heterogeneity. Regardless of positioning their identity in their subjective selves or within some collective or community, every human has different experiences of reality. Social actors have varied development versions and notions of their participatory roles in a development setting. Furthermore, multiple experiences are individually and culturally relative and therefore not made in some universal, Western and ethnocentric ontology of existence (as intimated in section 3.3). This understanding frames participation as ontologically community-centred and rejects the externalisation of development discourse and practice at the hands of exogenous development experts. It aligns with Servaes's

(1999) insistence on multiplicity in contrast to the idea of order as epitomised in a single, modernist worldview. It also agrees with a postmodernist notion of participation, although postmodernism has a far stricter interpretation of reality as being chaotic and of humans as being chaotic, decentred, and unconscious (Dervin & Huesca, 1999:193). While this study agrees with the idea of participation being plural in nature, it cannot accept that humans are completely unable to problematise their realities and alter them. In a postmodernist view, this would be impossible. What postmodernism exposes, however, is that totalising views about reality are unacceptable in participatory settings.

Equally, participation is ontologically founded within a bottom-up perspective, thus suggesting that the generative basis of participation is derived from the capacity of human beings to reflect and act for social change. Participation is a social process of constructivism that occurs via communicative acts of dialogue between several different social actors or communicative agents. According to Dervin and Huesca (1999:190), this aligns with Freire's notion of praxis that allows the ordered notion of development to be challenged via dialogue (see chapter 4 for a full analysis of Freire's dialogic pedagogy). Participation then means that communicative actors are interconnected and that their differing backgrounds, environments and cultural contexts have a bearing on how participation functions in a development setting. Phenomenology and critical theory stress that the goal of participation is the liberation of the subaltern or marginalised from oppression and, eventually, the empowerment of development participants to self-manage meaningful social change.

According to Dervin and Huesca (1999:180, 182-183), modernist and dependency models of development necessitated a uniform, universalist understanding of reality and thus an ontology of an externally conceived and imposed "order". Conversely, in the participatory model, theorisations about participation support multiplicity and variation. Its ontological foundation is "chaos" or, to use a different term, perhaps a "bricolage" of meanings that emerge from within the community that needs development or social change. Analogous to general phenomenological and critical theory assumptions on communication, Dervin and Huesca (1999) describe participatory development discourse as being emblematic of contrasting concepts; for instance, structure versus agency, individual versus community, homogeneity in contrast to

diversity, global versus local, and contextual in comparison to universal. Nevertheless, instead of being antithetical, all of these notions are representative of an order-versus-chaos “faultline” or continuum.

This study maintains that this scale is ontologically analogous to the typologies of Arnstein (2019, 1969) and White (1996), which frame participation as something that operates along the lines of either minimalist or instrumental versions as opposed to maximalist, empowered engagement. These typologies and their different interests and levels interface with different ontological views of what participation essentially entails in construct and value. For example, in the more utilitarian, nominal views (cf. White 1996) of participation, reality is a fixed entity that is predefined by external development experts whose authority remains unchallenged. Here, the development beneficiary is a reactive recipient and hence disempowered from participating in their full, authentic human identity. In contrast, in the transformative view (cf. White, 1999), participation is ontologically fluid and open in both theory and practice. This optic emphasises the dynamic essence of human nature in development initiatives and, accordingly, implies that power dynamics can be contested. The transformative interpretation of participation aligns with ideas that encourage communities to shape their own development needs and solutions, aligned to their subjective and communal experiences as they are positioned in their perceived cultural realities. In a transformative ontology of participation, development actors can become deeply and meaningfully involved in social change, and hence, their engagement can evolve from passivity to active empowerment.

Mefalopulos (2018:9-10, 11) maintains that since participation can be conceived by different actors in different manners, development beneficiaries can be suspicious and become passive if they are not permitted to participate in projects fully and meaningfully. The opposite also applies; when participation and communication are employed to involve development actors on the grassroots level, both fully and from the onset of an initiative, their motivation and commitment to a project could increase. This is what Mefalopulos (2018:11) terms empowered participation, whereby “stakeholders” or development participants voluntarily and jointly participate in the entire lifecycle of a project. In such a situation, development outsiders and community members

become equal partners, and the outsiders have “a decisive say in decisions concerning” the lives of the insiders.

In Arnstein’s typology, the top three rungs (i.e., manipulation, therapy, and informing) are typical of such an instrumental view of power and participation (cf. Arnstein, 1969, 2019). As Cornwall 2009, para. 4) argues, these rungs are representative of degrees of citizen power (i.e., partnership, delegated power, and citizen control) and extend to more autonomous forms of actions and participation in development. In a development context, this represents an ontological view of human agency and power – or what Dervin and Huesca (1999:184) call authority – that can be contested and is open to multiple interpretations. Arnstein’s degrees of citizen power illustrate that there is a potential for communities to be empowered via their authentic participation in development. The typology is further based on an ontological presupposition that citizen participation is indefinite. Like White’s nominal versus transformative participation conceptions, the difference between the lowest rungs – namely informing, therapy and manipulation (and even the middle rungs of placation and consultation) – depends on the context, the social actors involved, and the objectives of a participatory development project. It must, however, also be recognised here that the “ladder of participation” and the nominal-transformative model flexibility mean that power can be interpreted as beneficial or detrimental, dependent on the interstress that is presented in the type of participation. In this view, participation is therefore embedded in power dynamics and different interests.

These assumptions also agree with Chitnis’ (2005:231) proposition of theorising participation through Anthony Giddens’s (1984) structuration theory (see 2.1). This Chitnis-Giddens ontological perspective contends that structure has constricting and enabling aspects that traditional binary views reject (Chitnis, 2005:131, 234). As Freire argues: Development beneficiaries can become cognisant of their imbalanced relations to a structure, which means that if you can name such imbalances then you can also alter them (Freire, 1970; Dervin & Huesca, 1999:192-193). In line with one of the main contentions of critical theory, an ontological view further assumes that oppression can also originate as an inherent characteristic of individuals or communities and not always simply be contingent on external forces (Freire, 1970:29-30). The ontology of participation in this view suggests that reality is never fixed.

According to Freire (1970:35), human subjectivity can transform reality via the communicative praxis of reflection and action. (Chapter 4 (see 4.4) discusses Freire's action-reflection thesis in more detail where the participatory paradigm's assumption of dialogue is theorised.)

Therefore, the duality of the development view underscores the social ontology of participatory communication in a development setting, which is accordingly ahistorical in nature. While structuration theory acknowledges objectivity, standards, and customs, Giddens (1984) explains that it also emphasises its connection with subjectivity in the context of a specific time and place. A humanist ontology does not outrightly reject claims about the physical and natural worlds, but instead accepts that reality is constituted through human subjectivity, specifically via a communicative rationality of participation and dialogue.

Such an ontology furthermore stresses that the ontological call of participation is not, as binary theories of development would contend, solely about materialistic human and social development. Instead, the focus on the humanisation aspect of participation indicates that development is also nonmaterial. Ontologically, participation is also concerned with social justice, recognition of cultural identities and rights, individual and collective consciousness-raising, development of problem-posing skills, and acceptance of the political rights of humans to partake in their own development. Considering that Freire's dialogic praxis encourages human connection to be realised in a development setting, participation furthermore involves nonmaterial values such as hope, humility, respect, reciprocity, and trust (Freire, 1970:71-73). Ontologically, participation also promotes the individual or collective psychological and social well-being of participants instead of only focusing on material indicators of development. These notions were already introduced in the multiplicity model from which the participatory paradigm emerged (reviewed in section 2.5 of the preceding chapter), which claims that development extends to the natural world where humans should strive to live in harmony with their natural ecosystems.

Contrary to the modernist, monologic interpretation of development, reality is clearly not fixed but a multiplicity of phenomena that can be experienced in a heterogeneity of lived human experiences. These lived experiences that shape a person's experience of reality can be problematised and transformed. Dervin and Huesca (1999:185, 188) describe the modernist

ontology as being embedded in authority, which is essentially a “noncommunicative” view. In such top-down theories of development and participation, the authoritative voice is externalised. As a result, grassroots communities are dehumanised and considered passive recipients of development ideas and strategies. Conversely, the participatory ontology accepts that reality is not solely contingent on either structure or community. It underscores that existence is mutually constitutive via social interactions between different social actors in a participatory development initiative. This also suggests that the agency-structure duality is, in essence, a negotiated intersubjective relationship of human actions. It emerges from the disruption of the status quo that occurs when human agency counters deterministic ideas about participation and about participation’s role and operation in meaningful social change.

The generative basis of transformation and social change is not located within authoritative, objective ideas about reality but is rather intersubjective and communicative (Dervin & Huesca, 1999:184-185). The authors explain that, while top-down development theories assume that participation must be enacted – for example, in linear or two-step flow models of communication or via traditional mass media – the participatory ontology emphasises that participatory communication can take on many different shapes and strategies depending on the unique development setting (cf. Mefalopulos, 2008:24). This view does, however, emphasise that the generative basis of participation originates first and foremost in the community.

The concept of “community” is also a contested, complex notion and will be explored in depth theoretically in Chapter 8, where community radio is theorised within community studies. For now, Dervin and Huesca’s (1999:198-201) concept of communitarianism will suffice to explain the ontological community-centredness of participation. According to them, communitarianism posits that while societies are made in communities, communities are said to be constructed (i.e., ordered) or deconstructed (i.e., disorganised) in communication. In this manner, the social ontology of participation and its associated communicative aspect is underscored. This insistence on describing communities as being embedded in communication dynamics also allows them to resist either individualistic or collectivistic interpretations (Dervin & Huesca, 1999:198-199). The ontology of participation as community-centred prompts discussions on the nature of knowledge in the development setting. If humans are interconnected social actors who are capable of

thought and action, it suggests that knowledge about development is co-constructed and that all development actors must participate during the entire life cycle of a development project for it to be meaningful and sustainable (Freire, 1970; Habito-Cadiz, 2006:427-428; Tufte *et al.*, 2020:53-56).

Discussions in section 3.4.1 have shown that the most advanced configuration of participation originates within a community that can manage its own development autonomously. This inference is drawn from the different frameworks and typologies of participation advocating that *who* participates in development initiatives is crucial to meaningful social change. These typologies also maintain that *how* and at *what* levels local communities participate are also crucial. For example, participation cannot be restricted to the implementation stages of participatory projects. It must occur during all stages and at all levels of decision-making (Arnstein, 2019; White, 1999:143). This highlights that the human agency of local communities is the driver of development rather than development discourse and practice that are external to the community.

An ontology of participation means that it must be deeply embedded in the community and generated via dialogic praxis with a transformative objective in mind. Ontologically, participation recentres the marginalised in the development setting and therefore the participatory approach is concerned with human-oriented ethics. Furthermore, the interests of community members are of primary concern in a development setting. Lastly, this ontology of participation indicates that development occurs in complex and holistic ways. Development and participation involve a plethora of social actors who could contribute to it. In this manner, a network or web is established that corresponds with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophical and metaphorical concept of the rhizome. They used a rhizome as a way to describe the duality of structures, knowledge, and power in an interconnected rather than a hierarchical manner (cf. Carpentier *et al.*, 2003). The current study reasons that participation as a rhizome is also an apt way to capture the heterogeneity, multiplicity, decentralised, dynamic, relational, and indefinite ontological nature that has been described in the discussions above.

3.4.2 Participation: a social constructivist and community-embedded epistemology

The notion of participation in epistemology also leads to several important questions that must be theorised in the current section. These questions include inquiry on how knowledge is produced and distributed and what kinds or forms of knowledge can be considered legitimate in particular contexts and under certain conditions. Lastly, it asks how knowledge is utilised in participatory development initiatives (see Craig, 2007:55).

As already discovered, the location and the generative basis of participation are within the community. For this reason, the community is also the domain in which knowledge about development and social change is produced. In the participatory paradigm, participation facilitates the co-creation of knowledge concerning human and social development for the very reason that participants engage authentically in their development. Participation during all stages of the development process evens out the imbalances that are prevalent in an agency-structure binary, meaning that the technocratic interventions of top-down models are ameliorated by community insights and perspectives (Hickey & Mohan, 2004:59). According to Cleaver (2004:271), the ontological social embeddedness of participation allows community members to present their views and insights in recognising their development needs and clarifying possible solutions that were previously overlooked or marginalised by conventional, monologic development models. Community members are not passive recipients of development authorities' preconceived knowledge. They are active contributors who conceptualise, implement, monitor and measure the outcomes of participatory development projects (cf. Freire, 1970). As White (1996:143) and Cornwall (2008:276) contend, this collaborative aspect of knowledge generation epistemically addresses serious concerns about which social actors are involved in development decision-making, on what level they are involved and in whose interest it all occurs.

Epistemologically, participation can be described as being communitarian and social constructivist. This is because communal participation in the production of development knowledge is stressed in this approach. However, this study argues for a form of communitarianism that takes cognisance of accepting diverse insights and perspectives, meaning

that the rights and ideas of individuals should be reviewed with sufficient attention during the social or communal production of knowledge. This argument will be discussed again in Chapter 8 where the notion of community is theorised further.

The social embeddedness of knowledge indicates that participation is more than just a means to an end. Producing knowledge via participatory processes generates value, as it enhances the critical-thinking abilities of community members. The problem-posing capabilities of local people were ignored in the top-down models, as they were viewed as they were seen as objects of development to be studied (cf. Chitnis, 2005:233, 236; Freire, 1970).

In the upcoming chapter more detailed discussions are given of Freire's ideas about banking education. For now, it is important to recognise that his approach challenges the view that students – in this context, development recipients – are mere “empty vessels” whose minds have to be filled with knowledge that is transferred from the teachers (i.e., the development “experts”) (Freire, 1970:52-53). The banking pedagogical model disregards local or indigenous knowledge as backwards. It maintains that it must be substituted with the epistemic order of instrumental reason and development agendas that are imposed from the top. Participation at the community level accepts that local development knowledge is a valuable resource that must be respected and employed in the participatory development process. Servaes and Malikhaio (2008:165-165) remark that, with “another development”, several shifts occurred in scientific thought, including shifts that emphasise more normative, qualitative and structural systems of knowledge and an indigenous view that is more polycentric and contextual. They agree with arguments made earlier that, instead of order, participation introduces an ontology of emergence. The epistemic implication of this is that pure positivistic knowledge is replaced or complemented with local knowledge systems.

Dervin and Huesca (1999:199-200) explain that “knowing” and the “standards of testing” knowledge are located communally and specifically, which is to say that they occur in a dialogic manner. This is so because communitarianism allows both the construction and deconstruction of knowledge as a contested process. The means through which this occurs is via the participation, dialogic and communicative exchange between different social actors. The further epistemic implication here is that the participation of different social actors means that

knowledge construction is not fixed and reformist but more revolutionary in nature and more problem and change-oriented (Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:165).

Participation renders knowledge about development as a mutual learning opportunity. It also bases this knowledge on the praxis of action-reflection instead of on the instrumental, monologic rationality of top-down approaches. The epistemology of authority is therefore replaced by autonomy that is expressed via participation. In the monologic epistemology, the purpose of communication is to inform, persuade and transfer knowledge to targeted, passive audiences (Mefalopulos, 2019:24). Conversely, when different social actors engage in dialogue in a development setting, their participation and communication can lead to a more comprehensive probing and assessment by including a plethora of experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, this collective participation and communication enables the sharing of a wider variety of possible ways to address development issues, leading to solutions that are more contextually and culturally suited to the concerns at hand. The object-subject paradigm of knowledge creation is then negated.

Taking inspiration from Freire, it was stated in Section 3.4.1 that human values (e.g., trust, humility, reciprocity, empathy, etc.) are ontologically crucial to participation (Suzina & Tufte, 2020:413-415). This applies to the epistemology of participation as well. Where bureaucratic and technicist models have always relied on positivistic, scientific values, an episteme of participation accepts that ordered thinking and discourse are not the only valid grounds for knowledge. Participation imbues the development theory and application with notions of inclusivity, respect and equality. In the Freirean view of participation, all social actors have the innate ability to raise and develop their cognitive ability to problematise and act on their development needs (Freire, 1970:61-63, 80). As opposed to an instrumental and monological rationality, the participatory paradigm's epistemology conceives of the development beneficiaries as individuals and communities that are not only self-aware but cognisant of the natural, physical and social worlds that surround them. As Chitnis (2005:236, 237) states, they can also engage in a dialectical relationship of negotiating the limitations of ordered knowledge. Participation respects and incorporates local knowledge in the development setting since members of the local community are allowed to enact their agency through discursive consciousness. In referring to Giddens's

ideas about structuration theory, Chitnis (2005:236) notes that “knowledgeability” lies in people’s ability to produce and reproduce knowledge in daily social encounters while they experience and cognise their unique development challenges firsthand.

Lastly, the epistemology of participation not only has a transformative aspect, but it also intends to close the gap between theory and practice. According to the participatory paradigm, participation in development is supposed to retain a reflective quality and have a real-world impact. As section 3.4.3 will demonstrate, this epistemic claim means that the outcomes of participatory projects must be monitored and measured through participatory methods as well. In the participatory approach, local people assess the success of participatory knowledge and value it. This means that participatory knowledge can only be considered valid if it is based on actionable knowledge and leads to real social change.

To summarise, an epistemology of participation in the participatory approach asserts that development knowledge is a co-creation process between different social actors. These social actors possess different knowledge systems, but in the participatory paradigm, local systems are prioritised over the epistemes of external development experts or agents. The humanist and culturally situated ontology of participation also means that knowledge is located in the lived experiences of individuals and collectives at the communal level. Contrary to top-down approaches, development is not preconceived and detached from the contexts in which it should occur. The epistemology of dialogue will be explored further in Chapter 6, but Section 3.4.2 already has already shown that knowledge in development is created through dialogic communication and participation. Through participation, knowledge is created with social change and empowerment goals in mind.

Participation in development efforts means that knowledge about development challenges and their possible solutions is a collaborative process. It is a mutual learning experience and is never fixed. It underscores the relational nature of knowledge and, as was expressed in the rhizomatic metaphor used earlier, it accepts that development knowledge is dualistic in nature and founded in human connections and varying contexts. Through participation, knowledge is a process of reflection, action and continued adaptation. Participation renders development knowledge as an open, transparent and fluid practice. Lastly, theory and practice cannot be separated in an

epistemological framework of participation. If participation is to result in meaningful, sustainable development and social change in a community, then its impact must be determined by those who are supposed to benefit from participatory development projects. The participatory assumption further means that the power imbalance in development is equalised when knowledge production is no longer the privilege of external development experts. As section 3.4.3 will discuss, the methods used to measure the influence of development projects should also be of a plural and participatory nature.

3.4.3 Participation: a community-embedded and action-oriented methodology

For the reasons stated above, several different methodological approaches have been developed in the participatory paradigm. Among these approaches, Molale (2021:46-54) identifies the following:

- Participatory Action Research (PAR);
- Community for Participatory Development Model (CFPDM);
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA);
- Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD);
- Lennie and Tacchi's Framework for Evaluating Communication for Development.

PAR is an inclusive research approach that engages community members and other social actors in the research process, aiming to address social issues and create positive change through collaboration and active participation (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006:124-127; Fals-Borda, 2006:322-331). It places high importance on collaboration, empowerment, and social transformation to produce knowledge that is relevant and helpful to the community. The CFPDM is a framework that aims to involve communities in their development processes. It underscores community participation and ownership of community members by involving them in different stages of participation, including in decision-making, planning, and implementation of development initiatives. This approach contends that the active involvement of communities empowers them, builds local capacity, and ensures sustainable development outcomes.

The PRA approach also engages local, but rural, communities when their development needs, priorities and existing resources are evaluated (cf. Chambers, 1994:953–969; cf. Narayansamy, 2009). A range of tools and strategies are used to help facilitate a community’s engagement in all the stages of a development project, aiming throughout to empower the communities while also relying on local knowledge to encourage sustainable projects (Du Plessis & Sundar, 2011:175-176). The ABCD approach aims to identify and employ existing community resources and strengths (Boyd *et al.*, 2008:189-193). This approach focuses on the constructive, inherent capacities of communities rather than on their shortcomings. Lastly, Lennie and Tacchi’s Framework for Evaluating Communication for Development provides a structured approach to assess the effectiveness of communication strategies in development initiatives (Molale, 2021:48). This framework helps evaluate how communication interventions contribute to social change, community empowerment, and sustainable development outcomes by considering factors such as participation, impact, and relevance.

All of these approaches evidently aim to involve and empower communities in decision-making processes and ensure that their knowledge and perspectives are valued. They offer practice-based frameworks and tools for collaborative problem-solving, building capacity, and promoting sustainable development. As Molale (2021:45) nevertheless cautions that, while these strategies each have their unique strengths and focus on different aspects of community involvement (thus making them adaptable to various situations and goals), they are ultimately not embedded in theory. He further argues that these methodologies also appear to be predominantly community-oriented as responses to the modernist, reformist methodologies in top-down development communication models. This specificity is helpful for communities with unique needs by enabling them to create appropriate local methods and tools.

3.5 SUMMARY REMARKS

This chapter sought to theorise participation from several different readings, typologies, and approaches. In the etymological analysis of “participation”, it became apparent that different vocabularies have historically existed for the notion, pointing this study in the direction of different disciplinary perspectives on the notion (see 3.2). Further discussions showed that

participation has, over the history of development communication, retained many different theoretical readings and varied applications (see 3.3.1). Its reading in the binary approaches viewed participation as instrumental (i.e. in modernist reading) and as a form of dissociation and resistance as contained in world systems theory (i.e. in the dependency model).

With the rise of the participatory model (see 3.3.2), participation came to mean creating a more enabling environment for people to participate in their own development by gaining more control over their lives and their ultimate well-being. Theorising participation is, however, complicated. Not only because it discusses differing intellectual traditions that still have a footing in discourse and practice but also because its contemporary readings remain nebulous and theoretically lacking (see 3.3.5). As this chapter's different sections argued, despite a clarion call for participation in the participatory paradigm, a more coherent theorisation of the notion is necessary.

Section 3.4 thus set out to theorise and metatheories participation. In an ontological optic (see 3.4.1), participation is a human-centred form of human resistance. Viewing it as such allows for a nuanced perspective that regards participation as dynamic and as associated with relationships between different social actors. Participation, from a phenomenological view, therefore represents diverse views and lived experiences. In a development setting, participation must be driven from the bottom up instead of being imposed externally. Participation also espouses a transformative view, suggesting that the agency at the grassroots level should drive decision-making in development processes. Epistemologically (see 3.4.2) this chapter grasps participation through a social constructivist perspective. Participation is community-embedded. Development knowledge production and utilisation happens through collaboration during all the decision-making stages of development processes. It, furthermore, emphasises local articulation over external narratives and solutions. In facilitating local individuals' and communities' participation during all the stages of development decision-making, the imbalanced power dynamics between them and so-called experts are also reset. Once this rebalance transpires, knowledge production becomes a mutual learning process. Methodologically, Section 3.4.3 determined that research methods used in cognising development concerns and implementing solutions should originate from within the community concerned. In this manner, participatory, inclusive methods and

strategies are foregrounded, which encourages the active participation of beneficiaries of development in conceptualising, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development strategies. Participation should, therefore, counteract top-down, positivistic methodologies by replacing them with more practical and context-specific practices.

The next chapter will argue that participation's place and influence in development will become more articulate if the notion is reframed within a dialogic process. Dialogue, it will be argued, is a particular conceptual feature of communication that further enhances the notion and operationalisation of participation in development and social change.

CHAPTER 4: THEORISING DIALOGUE IN THE CONTEXT OF A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

“If there is listening through a ‘listener,’ then we are not listening.”

— David Bohm (1996).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 continues theorising the concept of dialogue. The discussions will demonstrate that, in the participatory paradigm, dialogue is axiomatic to human communication and that a prescriptive, normative view of dialogue is fundamental to theorising community radio as participatory media. Like the approach taken in the preceding chapter when discussing the participatory notion, section 4.2 presents an initial review of dialogue framed in its etymological origins.

These excavations are followed by examining some key historical texts and contexts from which the theoretical inquiry and empirical enactment of dialogue evolved in communication studies and the subdiscipline of development communication (see section 4.3). This section prefigures in-depth discussions in section 4.4 on two influential social theorists, namely Paolo Freire and the Jürgen Habermas, who were explicitly selected to inform the current study’s conceptualisation of dialogue in communication for development and social change.

4.2 DIALOGUE THEORISED: ETYMOLOGICAL ORIGINS AND MEANINGS

The Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.) describes “dialogue” in common cultural language as a noun and a verb with manifold derivations, found in “subjects such as literature (Old English), theatre (later 1500s), music (later 1500s), politics (1890) and computing (1970s)”. In terms of being conceived as a noun, the OED describes dialogue as “a discussion between two or more people or groups, especially one directed towards exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem”. And conceived as a verb, engaging in dialogue indicates taking part in a conversation

or a discussion on something or resolving a problem (Oxford Dictionary, 2017; Merriam-Webster, 2023c). As can be seen in Figure 4-1 below, these definitions partly borrow from the Latin *dialogus*, French *dialogue*, and Greek *dialogos* (Harper, n.d. Dialogue). The Merriam-Webster (2023d) thesaurus details that, in its Latin and French roots, dialogue is a “conversation carried out between two or more people” or a “literary work in the form of a conversation” between interlocutors. The Latin etymology confirms these meanings, signifying dialogue as “discussion [and] dispute”, while the Greek means “conversation” or “dialogue”.

Exploring just a few of the cited dictionaries’ synonyms for dialogue, the following words are included: arguments, argumentation, back-and-forth, conferences, consult, debate, discussion, deliberation, and give-and-take. These dictionary meanings suggest that two or more interlocutors, groups or collectives of people partake in an exchange of ideas concerning some or other problematical issue or matter that requires resolution. At first glance, the latter description does not appear to be dissimilar from general ideas about dialogue in a development communication setting – undesirable circumstances can be transformed if all actors involved talk about troubling matters to discover some positive, meaningful remedy.

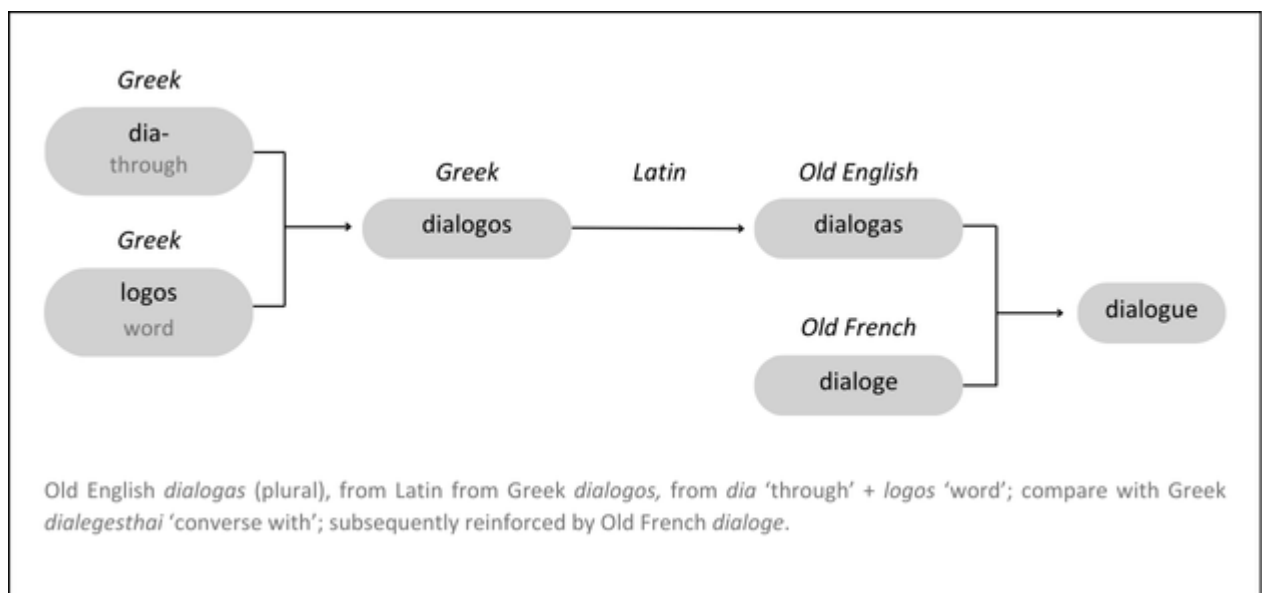


Figure 4-1 Google Search illustration of the linguistic origins of "dialogue"

Taking a closer look at the Greek *dialogos*, Bohm (1996:6) argues that a deeper meaning can be extracted. He states that the prefix *dia* usually implies “two”, while *logos* or *-logue* means “speech”, “word”, or “the word”. The prefix he clarifies can, however, also signify “through” or

“across”, implying some sort of movement (cf. Heller & Rao, 2015:12; Merriam-Webster, 2023c). The suffix *-logue* then means “discourse” or “talk” with an eye to the works of Plato and Socrates on dialogue, further interrogating the philosophical use of the term *dialectic*.

According to Bohm (1996:6), dialogue does not have to involve two or more individuals. He states, instead, that even individuals engage in self-dialogue as the derivation explained above signifies “a *stream of meaning*” [italics original author’s] rather than numbers. *Dialektos* (i.e., “conversation” or “dialect”), in turn, refers to the Greek *dialegesthai*. This term means “to converse” and is indeed embedded in the famous “Socratic method” of critical thinking. The ancient sophist devised this shared, continual question-and-answering strategy between teachers and learners for the purposes of instruction: using dialogue to examine the underlying positions of any person’s statements, arguments and assumptions about human existence. (Mautner, 2005a:579-581). In other words, an examination of human life via the method of dialogue and, as Bohm (1996:6) imagines, a more creative flow of meaning among and through people. Bohm argues that the creation and flow of meaning in larger groups involves a creative process. Dialogue, in this conception, then sharply contrasts with “discussion”; he reasons that, for example, takes place at the UN. But according to Bohm, such discussions are too limited, uncreative, too analytical, and typical of trade-offs and negotiations. For him, “discussions” are analogous to a game of ping-pong during which people are merely trying to score points for themselves by exchanging ideas, improving on their own situation via discussion with others, and therefore ultimately with a view of “winning a game” (Bohm, 1996:7).

Conversely, his conception of dialogue imagines a mutually beneficial scenario where people are not participating in discussions egoistically. The contention is that when mistakes are made, or disagreement between discussants prevails, it does not equate to a loss for one and a gain for the other. Instead, “a common participation” occurs wherein dialogue emerges not as an adversarial phenomenon, but rather as a moment of participation and dialogue *with* each other (Bohm, 1996:7). Bohm maintains that dialogue is not a competition, but a win-win moment that occasions possible collaboration.

Considering the antonyms of “dialogue”, there are several terms that emerge – none of which are simple, direct opposites of dialogue. The most apparent antonyms are “monologue”,

“soliloquy”, and “silence” (Harper, n.d. Dialogue). The first two of these terms have literary and dramaturgic connotations where monologue refers to a speech that is delivered by an individual, meaning that any exchange of ideas or conversation is absent. Etymologically, soliloquy has the Latin roots *solus* and *loqui*, meaning “alone” and “to speak”, though typically in the context of theatre where an actor expresses a character’s inner thoughts out loud (Harper, n.d. Soliloquy).

The next section steps away from these etymological interpretations of dialogue to examine the origins of the concept in communication studies. It reflects on some of the key influential historical and conceptual theories of dialogue in communication and development communication. This is done in preparation for further discussions on Freirean and Habermasian understandings of dialogue in communication and development communication in Section 4.4.

4.3 DIALOGUE: HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND THEORETICAL LOADSTONES

Similar to participation, Phillips (2011:1) explains that “dialogue” is a buzzword in different disciplines and fields of practice and is commonly associated with constructive value. Given the contemporary common use of the concept, it is normal to “engage in dialogue” with social actors from contrasting, diverse backgrounds on issues such as science, religion, politics, the environment and a plethora of other topics and concerns. She adds that these conversations happen in vastly different spaces and that new technological innovations (e.g., social media platforms and networks) have expanded the geospatial boundaries of dialogue.

Phillips (2011:1) suggests that the power of dialogue lies in its ability to bridge differences by treating diversity positively, thereby facilitating social processes of meaning-making. In planned communication, it has become widespread in discourse and practice in planned communication to substitute old paradigms and persuasive, linear theories of communication with “two-way or multidirectional interaction among participants”. It is hence appropriate to refer to this shift as the “dialogical turn” (Phillips, 2011:2). But as Stewart and Zediker (2000:224) explained more than two decades ago, like “communication”, the notion of dialogue has been defined so generally that it has become synonymous “with almost all human contact”. The two sections below attempt to present more focused theoretical lenses concerning dialogue in communication and the subdiscipline of development communication.

4.3.1 The dialogic turn in communication studies

Ganesh and Zoller (2012:67) highlight that contemporary communication research is focused on how dialogue can improve scholars' and practitioners' understandings of communication in different settings and with different purposes in mind. These concerns pertain, for example, to research interests about democratic and participatory practices in various subdomains of communication, such as interpersonal, health, and environmental communication (cf. Cissna & Anderson, 2004/1998; Dutta & Basnyat, 2008; Phillips, 2011; Wood, 2000). Dialogue and its employment also turn up in corporate communication management and its subfields, which are studied by a plethora of prominent scholars (cf. Bohm, 1996; Deetz, 2000; Grunig, 1992; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Pearce, W.B. & Pearce, K.A., 2004). Among other concerns, these subdomains cover dialogue's employment in strategic communications, integrated communication, stakeholder management, public relations, and crisis communication. Collectively, this scholarship is set in theoretical frames that emphasise the two-way symmetrical, mutual-relational and relational management aspects of communication between different stakeholders and social actors.

Likewise, journalism and media studies examine how theories on human dialogic communication can inform research about mediated public communication within civil society. The current thesis's concern over community media and related practices is an apt example of the topics that are investigated in this body of discourse (cf. Forde *et al.*, 2005; Forde & Meadows, 2012; Order, 2013; Van Vuuren, 2004). Dialogue is also a concern for political communication scholars who research deliberative models of democracy (i.e., public debate and dialogue in public spheres) as opposed to representational democratic models (cf. Jacobson & Storey, 2004). As is discussed in section 4.5, Habermas's work in deliberative democracy that is articulated via public, critical debate, is also often cited as influential in communication studies on dialogue (Habermas, 2001, 1989, 1987, 1984).

Anderson *et al.* (2003:2, 3-4) recount that communication research concerning dialogue flourished rapidly during the 1990s, resulting from an initial wave of interest in the preceding two decades. Numerous research programmes found their philosophical motivations within the larger human and social sciences. Within communication studies, Cissna and Anderson

(2003:195-196, 1998) gave one of the first and most influential dialogical scholarship records when plotting the burgeoning field. As centralist theorists of dialogical communication themselves, they list more than a dozen influential social theorists who gave much impetus to how dialogue was conceptualised and used in empirical settings. Among others catalogued are Hans-Georg Gadamer (1982), Jacques Ellul (1985), Jerome Bruner (1990), Cornell West (1993) and bell hooks (1994). All these scholars were concerned with some or other social, cultural, political, and ethical aspects relating to the dialogical notion and how it can serve some or other public or private interventions in different settings.

Apart from scholarly inquiry, professionals have employed dialogue to some or other extent in, for instance, public journalism, organisational learning and change settings. This research has focused on projects and programmes that facilitate public conversations or social dialogue – looking at dialogue as it is enacted through diverse kinds of communicative platforms and forums on national and local levels (Cissna & Anderson, 2003:195-196; Deetz & Simpson, 2003:149-151). Perhaps rather cynically, but not without merit, Deetz and Simpson (2003:142) claim that dialogue is native to everyday life, communication textbooks, and many personal improvement textbooks and to corporate, religious and community programmes.

Regardless of this setting or foci, all these domains have some or other optic and expectation that dialogic communication extends beyond earlier explanations and enactments of communication as a phenomenon that is univocal, unilinear, and as directed by external knowledge systems (Phillips, 2011:2-9). In their work *Dialogue: Theorising Differences in Communication Studies*, Stewart *et al.* (2003:1) report how during an international communication conference in 1999, one academic decided only to join sessions that contained the word “dialogue”. This resulted in her discovering as many meanings and uses of the concept as there were sessions (i.e., over 100 citations). In following these outlines, however, several widely influential names emerge recurrently. Special mention is often made of the dialogic theories as conceived by Martin Buber (1952, 1965), Paolo Freire (1970), Mikhael Bakhtin (1981, 1986), and Jürgen Habermas (1989, 1987, 1984) (Anderson & Cissna, 2008:1-2; Cissna & Anderson, 1998:65-67).

Stewart and Zediker (2000:224-229) offer a useful general topography of dialogue through either descriptive or prescriptive theoretical optics. Many communication scholars agree that irrespective of differing interpretations, dialogue is widely understood as a central idea and precondition in creating and upholding authentic, meaningful communication during social interactions (Arnett, 2019:181-187; Altamirano, 2020:309-327; Anderson & Cissna, 2008:1-4; Anderson, *et al.*, 2003:1-17; Stewart, *et al.*, 2003:21-38; Phillips, 2011:1-9).

4.3.2 The dialogic turn in communication for development and social change

Stewart and Zediker (2002) present a comparative analysis between different prominent theorists on dialogue, demonstrating the need for theoretical understandings of dialogue in favour of preceptive, multivocal accounts instead of descriptive, univocal ones. Their distinction offers the present study a valuable framework for understanding differing interpretations of dialogue that seek out mutual understanding or even consensus in the relational sense, in addition to those that include more tensional, situated praxis readings of dialogue that might lead to transformative participation and empowerment (Stewart & Zediker, 2002:228-229).

Nair and White (1993:51) describe participatory communication broadly as including “the opening of *dialogue* [emphasis added], source and receiver interacting continuously, thinking constructively about the situation, identifying developmental needs and problems, deciding what is needed to improve the situation, and acting upon it.” This definition clarifies that dialogue is essential for addressing development concerns in collaborative ways, which emphasises reciprocity and mutual understanding (Phillips, 2011:2, 4). Dialogue therefore must encompass individual and collective empowerment, which will give authority and autonomy to enhance the present and the future well-being of the individual and the community. Through discursive coordination, all involved social actors together contemplate and choose how to address development concerns. Kincaid and Figueroa (2009:510) state that embedded in such a dialogical practice is the desire and possibility that *all* [emphasis added] participants, however, also *listen* [emphasis added] to one another. Accordingly, problem-solving action arises when social actors from different backgrounds acknowledge and reflect on a range of ideas and information, meaning that dialogue is not a monological process but stresses multiperspectivity and

transposable communicative roles (Dutta, 2021; Dutta & Zapata, 2019; Carpentier, 2016; Dutta, 2011; Servaes, 2008:15; Cornwall, 2007; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006).

Dialogue, however, can also retain an antagonistic quality where power and agency are problematised during the dialogic communicative moment. Section 4.4.1 on Freire's dialogical pedagogy will indicate that dialogue is then concerned with facilitating social justice where the oppressed assume that power imbalances can be set right via dialogue. This view aligns with transformative or empowerment participation (see 3.3.5). If oppressed or marginalised people want to challenge oppressive power structures and relationships via empowered participation, they must do so via a specific kind of communication, namely, dialogic praxis. This countering of power could directly or indirectly threaten power elites, who, in turn, could respond either in overt or less visible reactionary ways (Servaes, 2020c:20, 27).

Ganesh and Zoller (2012:67-68) describe dialogue in relation to activism and scholarship about communication's role in transformative social change. They focus on three primary orientations concerning dialogue: namely, the collaborative, co-optive and agnostic. Similar to Stewart *et al.* (2003), they trace perspectives on dialogue as varying positions based on "the *pervasiveness* of dialogic phenomena, the constitutive power of *difference*, and the role of *conflict* and *power* relationships". Pervasiveness refers to the differentiation between descriptive and prescriptive approaches. Difference concerns examining whether or not certain dialogue theories are consensus-seeking. This perspective assumes *a priori* shared assumptions where social actors bracket difference or resolve conflict to meet consensus, as opposed to other theorists who view conflict and difference as essential and unavoidable features of emergent encounters and exchanges in dialogue (Ganesh & Zollers, 2012:68). Power obviously refers to the implicit or explicit views of theorists on the role and place of power as either something to be addressed, managed, overcome or as something that is irreversibly entangled. (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012:69).

Stewart and Zediker (2002:228-229) use the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas on dialogism and the relational nature of the subject and contrast them with Martin Buber's (1929) and Freire's (1970:52,68, 112, 116) more prescriptive ideas on dialogue. Section 4.4.1 defines Buber's description of the *I-Thou* relationship in more detail, but Stewart *et al.* (2003:21-22) relate that his existentialist ideas on dialogue articulate several ontological

assumptions about the notion that distinguishes between authentic versus technical dialogue. In authentic dialogue, real human relations are formed that reject objectification. Here, dialogue affirms the genuine human encounter and interactions between beings. In the latter, objectification occurs and the connection between different social actors is either superficial, absent, or instrumental.

Freire's radical interpretation of dialogue as activism (instead of alienating verbalism) is discussed in section 4.4.1. He employs dialogue to challenge domination. Section 4.4.1 explores Freire's ideas about dialogue further, but it should already be noted that dialogue is not simply a theoretical or cognitive process. His argument holds that human beings are cognitive, active beings or subjects that can enact social transformation through their critical cognition of themselves and their surroundings. Freire (1970:35, 106-107) describes dialogue as cultural action and cultural revolution, meaning that it is a unique human dialectical action of occupation and preoccupation or action and theory; hence praxis. The notions of cultural invasion, cultural (revolutionary) action, and cultural synthesis will resurface in Chapter 5, when Freire's dialogical pedagogy is used to theorise the participatory paradigm's assumption of culture.

In agreement with Stewart *et al.*, (2003:22) this descriptive-prescriptive distinction is valuable presently as it facilitates reflection on the epistemological and ethical considerations in discourse the and practice of dialogue. Likewise, Ganesh and Zoller's (2012) descriptions of collaborative, co-optive and agnostic dialogue are instructive too. When theorists view dialogue as collaboration, they stress consensus and this then further frames how activism is framed in three different ways (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012:84). Firstly, some may prefer dialogue by viewing it as the opposite of activism. Secondly, dialogic activist methods are privileged over contestation and conflict. And lastly, activist communication is polarised in terms of internal dialogue (within a group) and external confrontation with others. According to the Ganesh and Zoller, if dialogue is perceived as a form of co-option, it is regarded as a precarious and perilous undertaking for activists. It can be seen as a means of achieving public resonance, hence legitimising the private or state dominations. Alternatively, dialogue may be deemed entirely unattainable. In the context of agnosticism, dialogue is perceived to be multivocal. This means that dialogue and

contestation can be observed as separate forms, with a historical interconnection, or contestation itself can otherwise be regarded as synchronically dialogic.

Considering these nuanced views of dialogue, the next sections explore the philosophical and practical ideas of the scholars Paolo Freire and Jürgen Habermas to provide essential underpinnings for the dialogic turn in communication for social change and development. Habermas's perspectives on dialogue as intersubjective dialogue and communicative action in a public sphere intersect with the discussions on Freire's dialogic pedagogy and together, they reconstitute an improved theoretical reading of dialogue in the participatory paradigm. Granting that they diverge markedly regarding the metatheoretical discourse and practice of dialogue, they cohere to specifically reconceptualise a type of dialogic, emancipatory communication that can generate positive social change in a post-foundationalist framework (i.e., against Western positivism, essentialism, realism etc.) (Barranquerro, 2006/2005:920, 922; Morrow & Torres, 2002:2-4; 11-13). They both present a more comprehensive theoretical framework of dialogue as a complexity of notions that can encompass activist *and* consensus-seeking assumptions.

A discussion on the convergences between these two philosophers will navigate along Morrow and Torres's (2002:14-16) "framework for comparison", which argues that Freire's texts can be read "in the larger framework of a contemporary critical social theory" *à la* Habermas. At the same time, the latter's critical theory of society can be read from a pedagogical praxis framework wherein dialogue facilitates social change. This study reasons that both Freire's and Habermas's work seek to harness the transformative power of dialogic communication in society with a view to encourage meaningful social change that is embedded in collective interpretations and attempts at communicating dialogically.

4.4 FREIRE'S CRITICAL DIALOGICAL PEDAGOGY OF EDUCATION FOR EMANCIPATION

Freire is widely considered as one of the most significant philosophers of dialogics; hence, his legacy of ideas resonates not only its native education studies, but also in, for example, environmental sciences, information and technology studies, and of course in communication studies in both the North and the South (Altamirano, 2020; Kohan, 2021; Morrow & Torres, 2002;

Singh, 2008). Barranquero (2006/2005:920-922) states that Freire is frequently referred to as the "father of dialogue" as his work about critical pedagogy offers a view of communication as dialogical strategy that promises to deliver emancipation for those demanding development and social change.

Altamirano (2020:310-311, 325) captures Freire's contribution to the paradigm when she states that his dialogic praxis model encourages the interrogation of "who", "why" and "how" "experts" are engaged in development processes. Freire's critical pedagogy, in her view, offers a nuanced framework to examine culture, power, and dialogical structures that either limit or encourage an individual's or community's meaningful social change wants and efforts. His theory similarly is also reminiscent of the transformative typology of White (1995:145-146), which functions as both means and ends and privileges the interests of the oppressed over the nominal, instrumental and even representative voices in development settings (see section 3.3.5).

As the metatheoretical discussions below will show, the Freirean view interrogates not only the "expert" view in development, but emphasises the views and engagement the supposed beneficiaries, who are often the oppressed. Freire's philosophy argues for a particular kind of praxis of reflection-action in communication for social change as derived from *within* or *of* the marginalised, oppressed and not simply in a framework that is *for* the oppressed as established and narrated to them by external actors and systems (Altamirano, 2020:311; Freire, 1970:15,140-142; Singh, 2008:700).

Freire's dialogical model is thus permeated with the ideas¹³ of liberation from internal or external limitations that hamper the social change process. His take on dialogue, as presented later,

¹³ Freire's philosophy was further infused with his interdisciplinary – if not always academically synthesised – readings of Marxist theories (including Karl Marx, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse of the Frankfurt School), structuralism, linguistics, and existential philosophers (counting Martin Buber, Paul Sartre and Karl Jaspers), while also drawing inspirations from radical African political leaders such as Samora Machel, Léopold Senghor and Julius Nyerere (Barranquero, 2006/2005:921; Jones, 2012:17-18, 20-21; Melkote & Steeves, 2001:297; Morrow & Torres, 2002:5-6). Consequently, Freire's viewpoints were influenced by transformative discourses and practices from real-world circumstances and academic traditions from the North and the South. It is important to note all of these influences on Freire's work because, as a theoretician and development practitioner, these individuals and their viewpoints facilitated his thoughts in formulating a radicalised praxis against human oppression that could help improve the human condition both materially and mentally.

underscores the notions “alternativity” and a primary concern with the eradication of poverty among oppressed communities (Morrow & Torres, 2002; Barranquero, 2006/2005:920; Thomas, 2006:476-479; Melkote & Steeves, 2015:397). Freire’s philosophy elucidates some of the central ontological, epistemic and methodological motivations for communication, namely, its radical or antagonistic nature and its power to engender positive social change when human communication is used in a dialogical and pedagogical manner (Waisbord, 2001; Jacobson, 2003:3-5; Huesca, 2008:183; Servaes, 1995:46, 1996:79; Barranquero, 2006/2005:920-922).

4.4.1 Communication as dialogical pedagogy: metatheoretical assumptions

The next three subsections will examine the above claims in more detail by discussing the critical dialogical pedagogy's metatheoretical assumptions. These examinations will also reflect on their particular implications for communication as dialogue in a participatory paradigm to development and social change.

4.4.1.1 Freirean ontological assumptions

As gleaned from the literature, several assumptions of Freire's critical theory emerge that could inform the notion of dialogue in the participatory paradigm (Altamirano, 2020:311, 316-317; Dutta, 2020a:101-102; Morrow & Torres, 2002:33-39, 42,62-63; Freire, 1970:25-30).

Firstly, Freire follows a historical realist interpretation of human existence wherein the central intention or vocation of human beings is to become fully humanised by rejecting naïve realism in favour of critical realism as realised through praxis (Freire, 1970:25-36; Melkote & Steeves, 2001:297-298; Thomas, 2006:476). This ontological position claims that reality is contingent upon various persons’ experiences and interpretations thereof. A critical realist ontology claims that “truth” does not exist external to persons but of and within them as intersubjectively communicated between social actors in a dialectical relationship. This viewpoint affirms the community-centred ontology of participation that was reviewed in Chapter 3’s section 3.4.1. There it was argued that participation includes a heterogeneity of social actors and experiences, and that no single, imposing worldview exists in a development setting.

According to Morrow and Torres (2002:34-35) Freire's social ontology, although humanist and Marxist in its subject-object views, precludes reducing human beings to the notions of labour and production. This is because he argues in favour of praxis based on dialogical communication. This should be expected, as Freire's initial occupation as a language teacher in a developing country, certainly had a bearing on his conceptions of the pragmatics of language as an instrument to liberate persons from oppressive conditions and social relations. Freirean dialogue encompasses reflexivity and performative aspects of communication for development and social change.

Furthermore, the purpose of social change and development ultimately is empowerment, which is only attainable when emancipation from oppression through a critical pedagogy happens (See Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion on empowerment as a core assumption of the participatory approach.). The section on his epistemic positions will explore these claims further, but for the interim, it must be noted that Freire (1970:68-76, 106-111) attempts to unbind the traditional subject-object paradigm by arguing that human beings' liberating praxis is based on a process of reflection-action during which the critical awakening or consciousness of subjects – but first and most importantly, the oppressed – is raised. In the preceding chapter (section 3.4.1), participation was defined as generatively from within the reflexive and human action capabilities of individuals and communities.

Freire (1970:58) writes that only in communication does human life hold meaning. His critique of educational and rural development extension programmes insists that a social ontology and inquiry of reality can never be based on persuasion, manipulation or, put differently, a false narration of consciousness created by the external subject or structure on behalf of the others. (In section 3.3.3, the distinction between nominal and transformative forms of participation was described). Likewise, dialogue must ensure that the transformative participation of marginalised people takes place.

A Freirean ontology of dialogue also resists participation as "order" and as being emblematic of the hierarchal model of education (see section 3.4.1). Analogous to the participatory paradigm's view that participation is continually emergent, Freire (1970:65) argues that "men and women [are] beings in the process of *becoming...*". Whereas a banking ontology of dialogue privileges permanence, the dialogical version as a "problem-posing" model rejects order, control, rules, and

“predetermined future”. Instead, Freire (1970:65-66), states human beings become aware of their incompleteness through their cognition of and dialogue about their situated presence in certain contexts. From this cognition people can realise that all historical situations or realities are impermanent and open for transformation.

For Freire, the ontological motives and practical ideas for dialogue in communication began to manifest as a central feature of his critical pedagogy from around 1959 (Morrow & Torres, 2002:11; Singh, 2008:700-701). His writings introduced the notion of a combination of communicative reflection and action as a real-world solution to ensure the emancipation of the individual from all sorts of domination and marginalisation (Barranquero, 2006/2005:920; Freire, 1970:33, 68-69). Via conscientisation, people can become aware of their social realities and use a dialogic and emancipatory education model to encourage individual autonomy and desired change within their larger social setting. His dialogic praxis criticises monological subjects that impose their worldviews, knowledge and skills onto others. Instead, he argues that:

“[D]ialogue is thus an existential necessity. And since dialogue is the encounter in which the reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanised, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person’s ‘depositing’ ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be ‘consumed’ by the discussants.” (Freire, 1970:69-70).

Freire's (1970:70-72) ontology of praxis is grounded in concepts such as *faith* in humankind that necessitates *love* for the world and people, *unity* in *solidarity*, *trust* among dialoguers. As Altamirano (2020:317) states, these values underscore that human beings must be willing to make themselves vulnerable when dialoguing with others about different interpretations of reality. Altamirano affirms that Freire's ontology of vulnerability consequently arranges the bedrock on which he further rests his epistemology concerning power and knowledge and – particularly pertinent to the current chapter's focus – his philosophy and methodology of dialogue in communication as a critical praxis.

Freire evidently views human beings not merely as rational beings, but as emotional beings as well. Accordingly, his epistemological model, is based on a “cogno-emotional cycle” (Altamirano, 2020:319; Suzina *et al.*, 2020:411-41) (see 4.4.1.2). These views on dialogue affirm the

metatheoretical ideas about participation that were introduced in sections 3.4.1 to 0. There it was argued that participation in development settings is not value-free and purely rational but instead involves human values. For participation to be transformative, dialogue allows rationalist exchange of ideas, opinions, or knowledge, but insists on including the affective aspects of being a vulnerable human being *in* and *of* the world.

Before moving on to Freire's epistemic positions, it must also be restated that while he provides a dialogic ontological framework for persons to transform their oppressive situations, he also describes what antidialogic theories of the world and monological praxis entails. Freire (1970:106-164) dedicates the last chapter in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to what these two opposing frameworks entail and how antidialogic actions reproduce oppression actions, endure in structures and relations of dependency, and continue the ontological project of dehumanisation. In contrast, an ontology of vulnerability suggests that oppressive action can be countered, not individualistically but via intersubjective dialogic praxis (Sefasta, 2020:8-9). Freire moreover argues that humanisation is never fixed but an ongoing open-ended project. This is because dialogic praxis assumes that, to become fully human and transform oppressive situations – in other words: to become free of oppression – “it must be pursued constantly and responsibly” (Freire, 1970:26, 29). Freire's ideas about humanisation then offer the chance to confront any given reality, knowledge system, structure or social relation that is presented as if it constitutes the only immutable “truth” or unchangeable status quo. Morrow and Torres (2002:39, 62) state that Freire's ontology can be summarised as follows:

- a) a philosophy of praxis accentuated by reflective and dialogic features of action (i.e., it is decidedly communicative);
- b) offering a framework to critically diagnose antidialogic and oppressive actions that dehumanise people and hence limit or halt authentic transformation;
- c) that human existence and nature is an incomplete project of humanisation that rejects a subject-object binary of reality in favour of a dialectical and intersubjective view.

These ontological reflections provide a firm structure of ideas to now theorise Freire's critical pedagogy. The following two subsections present such a theorisation by specifically exploring his epistemology of communication as dialogue.

4.4.1.2 Freirean dialogical pedagogy: epistemological assumptions

Given Freire's contention that objective reality is a fallacy (see 4.4.1.1), humans produce and reproduce it through a phenomenological epistemology instead (Freire, 1970:32-35). Each person's unique subjectivities and orientation towards others are in continual flux. For Freire (1970:32), human existence must be grounded in and understood as where a dialectical relationship exists between subjectivity and objectivity. These epistemological assumptions underpin the current study's argument that dialogue in the participatory communication approach must be theorised via dialogic praxis. This view asserts that dialogue is not merely two-way communication between different social actors; rather, it entails a problematising communication practice between different subjectivities.

These views correspond with the social embeddedness of participation (see 3.4.1 to 0). In the participatory paradigm, people's meaningful engagement in development decision-making permits knowledge co-creation between various social actors and not simply as conceived by supposed experts. Freire's dialogic praxis underscores that development knowledge can only be generated via people's participation as facilitated through dialogue. For him, knowledge generation and application are a social inquiry that specifically transpires in the *tensional* dialogue between the oppressed and the oppressor (Freire, 1970:68-74).

Freire (1970:36-38) states that dialogic praxis occurs in two stages. Firstly, the oppressed become aware via conscientisation of their mental and material subjugation and, thus, having cognised it, must commit through action to transform it. When the latter occurs, a critical pedagogy becomes a problem-posing mechanism available to all people involved in the transformation process, not simply dominant or powerful groups (Singh, 2008:706). Instead, *conscientização* guides social actors to identify existential, social, political, and economic contradictions constraining their meaningful transformation (Freire, 1970:17, 29).

In the first stage, the oppressed's perception of reality is altered via contestation. The second stage involves rejecting what Freire calls the "myths" that were established and maintained by the old social order (Altamirano, 2020:317-319; Freire, 1970:74-80; Morrow & Torres, 2002:45-46). In this dialectical moment, the following fundamental questions are asked: Who produces

knowledge; What is the role of power knowledge generation; and How is knowledge generated? In other words: What is the relationship between the “knower” or expert and the “knowable” or knowledge?

To answer these questions, Freire (1970:29-31) presents two important epistemic assumptions about human relations. Firstly, three types of interrelations exist among people, including the radical person, the oppressor and the oppressed. Secondly, these dynamics must be interrogated to grasp who generates and utilises knowledge to what ends. In Altamirano’s (2020:315) view, this frames Freire’s conception of dialogue as entailing communication *of* and not *for* the oppressed, hence a “systematisation” of their interrelation and the power dynamics between them. She states that through this systematisation, it is possible to understand further how communication for development and social change can be conceived in participatory communication settings. Freire's praxis is intellectual and political. However, given its humanist ontology and educational epistemes, it permits this study to view dialogue as a critical conceptual element *and* practical strategy to facilitate people’s autonomous participation in decision-making that affects their well-being and development circumstances. This nuanced view of dialogue additionally allows the current research to grasp that development actions or solutions cannot arise before critical awareness is raised.

Freire presents this framework as a critical pedagogy by contrasting “banking education” with dialogical education (Freire, 1970:62). In the former, content and knowledge supposedly convey in a linear process of diffusion between the knowledgeable, active teacher (or sender) and the uneducated, passive learner (or receiver) (Freire, 1970:52-67). Such a traditional or arboreal pedagogy resists dialogical communication, thus opposing the self-awakening and eventual liberation of the oppressed (Freire, 1970:64). The critical pedagogy, however, escapes an essentialist subject-object paradigm as it does not regard human beings merely as “working animals” that adapt to their surroundings but view them as capable in cognising the world socially, communicatively and linguistically (Morrow and Torre, 2002:34-39).

Herein, one can already detect Freire’s methodological views on dialogue, which entail that the scientific method is not the only way to problematise, known and rectify a situation (see 4.4.1.3). Instead, social actors learn to “read” the world or, to be more precise, discover how to decode

the oppressive conditions of perceived and lived realities and thwart the encoded limitations placed on them by a traditional or extension pedagogy (Altamirano, 2020:320; Freire, 1970:69). If this model is enacted in participatory development communication settings, it will prevent the transference of instrumental development ideas from one “knowledgeable” social actor to another.

In the diagram below (Figure 4-2), Altamirano (2020:316) demonstrates how Freire's ideas about knowledge are expressed in the knowledge flows that occur in different power dynamics. In the “pedagogy for the oppressed”, people move from the so-called naïve zone to the critical zone, which requires a curiosity of learning and analysis (Altamirano, 2020:319). Whereas experience is the foundation of naïve awareness, and its curiosity is set in common sense, critical cognisance is transitive, and its action is based on praxis and critical thinking skills. However, for Freire, dialogue extends beyond being relational in approach; he views dialogue as the process through which humans become historical subjects that not only emerge from the world, but can continuously alter it (Freire, 1970:109-111). In this view, people are not merely *things* but are “*actors of intercommunication*”¹⁴ that can transform their worlds for the better (Freire, 1996/1970:109). Therefore, Freire’s epistemic ideas about dialogue also present the current research to employ dialogue as a systematised mechanism of intercommunication to raise people’s consciousness and encourage their empowerment (see Chapter 6).

¹⁴ Thomas (2006:475) relates that much of Freire's ideas about dialogue stem from Martin Buber's philosophy on dialogue in his book, *I and Thou* (1958). Buber, articulates his philosophy of humanity and authentic interpersonal relationships and as centred on a special kind of communication, namely dialogue. His analysis considers how individuals make sense of their life experiences, over and above how they reflect on their own, internal and conscious personhoods (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005/8:214). Buber makes a distinction between two types of interpersonal relationships, i.e. the relational *I-Thou* and the objective *I-It* word-pair (Holtzhausen, 2015:162; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005/8:216). In the *I-Thou* interpersonal relationship, equality, openness, presence, and mutual respect endure not only in a conversation between dissimilar “subjects” or participants, but also exist during action (Melkote & Steeves, 2001:299). Buber's *I-It* relationship describes these oppositions as monologue, inequality, and a detachment from others, nature and in his religious interpretation, God (Melkote & Steeves, 2001:299; Thomas, 1994:62).

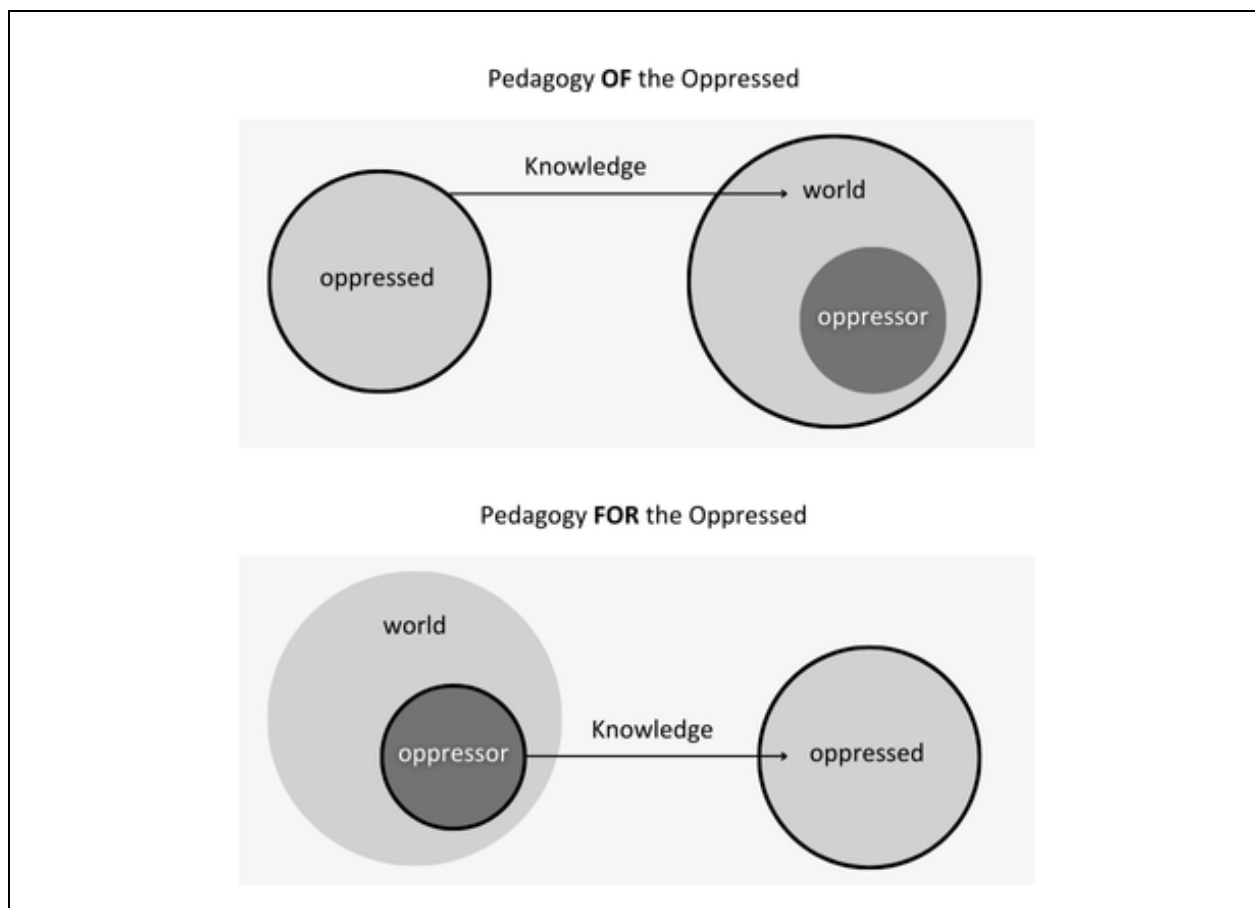


Figure 4-2 Pedagogy OF and not FOR the oppressed.

(Source: Altamirano, 2020:316).

Furthermore, Altamirano (2020:315-316) states that systemisation underlies all Freirean notions about dialogical communication. She describes oppression as a relation in which a group employs “its power to pressure, coerce, or prevent another group from doing something.” This agrees with the nominal and lowest rung of participation described in section 3.3.5. Conversely, liberation can be obtained via dialogic praxis as the Freirean view of human communication encompasses both reflexivity and performative aspects. This nuanced view then allows the current chapter to understand dialogue as complex and essential to the liberation of people from oppressive or marginalising circumstances. Dialogue is not simply about problematising and understanding but is a strategy *for* empowering people (see Chapter 6 for discussions on empowerment in participatory communication).

The process of awareness must be further explained, as it is also a sophisticated process that transpires on three intersecting levels as seen in Figure 4-3 (Altamirano, 2020:320). It involves

subjects becoming aware of their cultural context through dialogic consciousness. In this moment, power structures can also be interrogated.

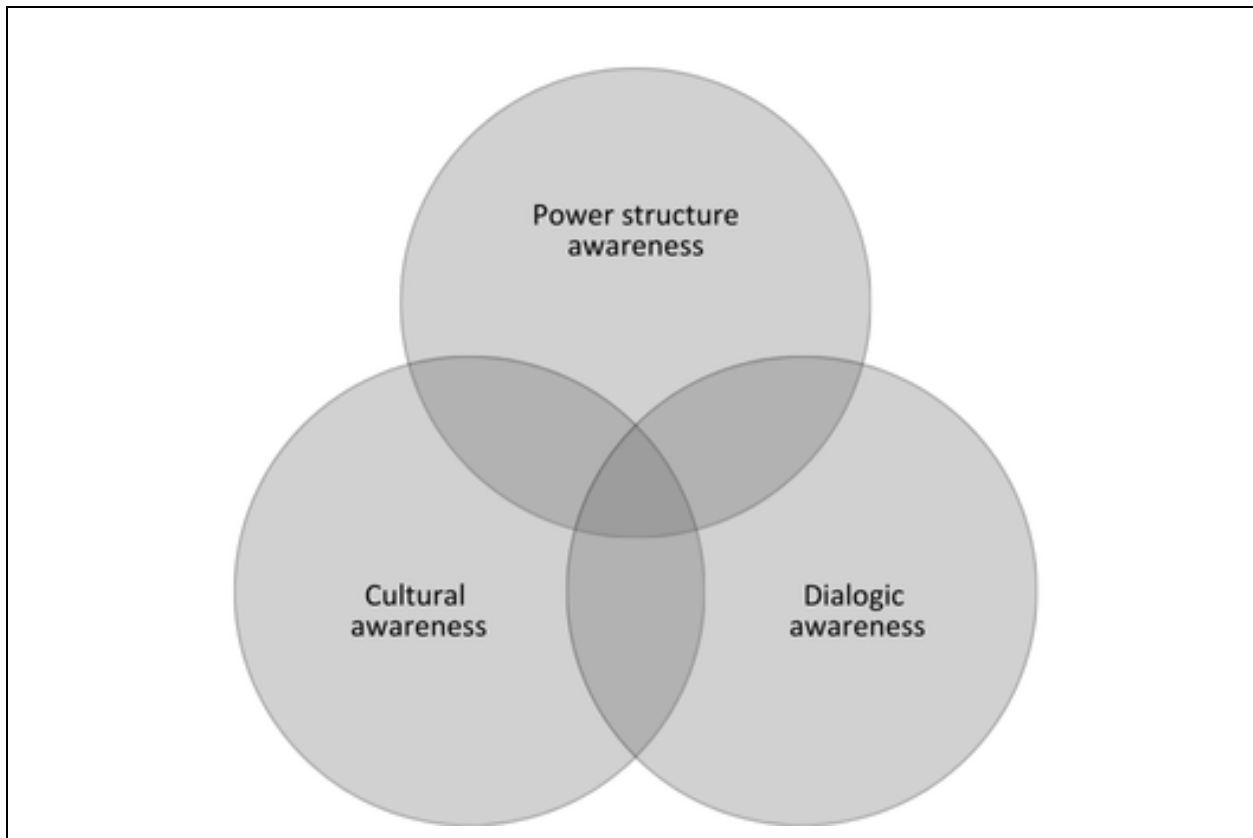


Figure 4-3 Levels of Conscientization (Source: Altamirano, 2020:320).

In the Freirean framework, dialogue signifies a type of interpersonal communication between two disparate sites – the abovementioned oppressed and their oppressors or likewise – as an internal struggle where the individual needs to delimit themselves from internalised oppression. (Freire, 1970:73-76). According to Freire (1970:27):

“Conscientisation refers to the process in which men (sic), not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform reality.”

It follows that persons can develop cognisance of their specific sociohistorical and cultural contexts and grow to understand how these relate to larger systems and social relations that establish, reproduce and ultimately reify conditions of oppression and underdevelopment. This is what Freire calls the historical project of humanity. As seen in Figure 4-3 above, awareness transpires not only on the dialogical level concerning power structures but also in the context of

cultural awareness. Chapter 5 discusses culture as constitutive of the participatory paradigm. For now, Freire's take on culture can be summarised as unity in diversity, which he argues is the opposite of cultural invasion. Cultural awareness is understood as gaining the awareness of and, ultimately, the capacity to use action against dominating cultures that alienate the oppressed and marginalised (Freire, 1970:133-148). For Freire (1970:140), cultural awareness is a type of cultural revolution and action that allows persons to interpret culture as a superstructure that can be transformed instead of being externally imposed and fixed.

Freire views "culture" from a double-sided view, namely, where culture is unproblematically inherited versus one where it is viewed as invasive to the oppressed authentic cultural framework and experiences. Via dialogue, people can, however, counter dominant cultures. Dutta (2011:246) explains that at the core of this Freirean cultural interpretation is that dialogic communication allows for individuals' personhoods to be respected and actively used in any meaning-making activity that challenges or wants to disrupt hegemonic ideas about development. Freire (1970:69) maintains that: "To exist, humanly, is to *name* [original author's emphasis] the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming* [original author's emphasis]." Freire states that it is the right of every human being, not just a few privileged people, to be able to participate meaningfully in the world, its transformation, and their emancipation from limiting conditions (Chasi, 2011b:14; Freire, 1970:69:5; Thomas, 2006:475). The present study regards dialogue as a means to challenge the cultural frameworks of external development experts and instead foreground local social and cultural realities and contexts.

The Freirean dialogic philosophy aligns with how meaningful participation was described in Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2; namely, that participation ought to facilitate individual sociopsychological and material self-sufficiency to resolve development challenges while, in the same way, expanding the capacities of individuals to better deal with these. More to the point, its purpose is to assist them in transforming the larger structures that have a bearing on the desired change. In Chapter 3, it was also maintained that participation, as Dutta (2011:248) describes it, offers the conceptualisation of a discursive space in which participants can articulate what development entails. This aligns with the definition of participation as transformative

instead of limited to nominal, consultative or representative forms. Altamirano (2020:317) explains that Freirean dialogue's transformative and critical intent is particularly relevant for development communication settings, as dialogic reasoning allows questioning "about how, why, for what, and who benefits from a particular communicative action or program".

Freire (1970:34-35, 49) is careful to avoid a complete rejection of objectivism in favour of a purely subjectivistic interpretation of the world, as he describes the latter as a false perception if understood in the absence of the external world. Human action cannot exist in the absence of an objective reality. Still, action is based on dialogue in an interdependent manner with other subjects and, of course, objective knowledge as well. Therefore, Dutta (2011:248) asserts that participation can be operationalised as various dialogical and participatory practices, as evident on the continuum of Arnstein's ladder of participation (section 3.3.3).

Freire posits that transformative action is only likely through a methodology of communication, which he judges as a defining feature of human beings. As discussed in his ontological framework, Freire (1970:69) reasons that the "reading" and the "naming" of the world should be facilitated via a specific kind of act of talking or communication, namely, a *dialogue* among subjects. Without this praxis, communication does not exist, and without human communication, life is devoid of meaning, and any transformation would be improbable (Freire, 1970:47). Dialogue is hence defined as "the encounter in which the *united* [emphasis added] reflection and actions of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanised..." (Freire, 197:69-70).

Dialogue thus encompasses a combined creative praxis of critical reflection and creative action by once naïve persons transformed into cognisant individuals who want, and have the right, to change their individual lives, their communities, and the larger social systems that encompass them. (Altamirano, 2020:321). Dutta (2011:250), in his subalterns' studies project, describes this as allowing for the establishment of postcolonial, alternative agendas, as the oppressed voices are now immersed into the discursive space in which development narratives and systems are interrogated.

It is necessary to reiterate that the process of knowledge generation emerges through a cognitive-emotional circular process that moves through interrelated, contextualised and continuous processes, which, as Altamirano (2020:319) describes as involving phases of ignoring-wanting to know-know-knowing and comprising an epistemology of collective knowledge. In recounting Freire's framework, she explains that the naïve zone constitutes an intransitive and semi-transitive zone of awareness, while the critical zone involves a transitive one. This means that in the naïve zone or frame of awareness, one is still unaware of the dialectical relation between oneself and the system/problem, while simultaneously remaining uncritical and unreflective of the past. Reality, in this zone, remains absolute and the power of oppressor or expert is overestimated and status quo, while the agency of the "uneducated" is underestimated and lacking.

The critical zone requires a curiosity for learning and analysis of the limiting or problematic conditions that those who lack access to power experience. In this frame of consciousness, there is also the additional mindfulness of the lacking tools or resources the "uneducated" need to transform reality. Therefore, there is at once a moment of knowledge and recognition of ignorance and, thus, the need to problematise and revise reality continuously via dialogic praxis. Hence, the critical zone is a transitive type of consciousness that reality can always change in conversation with others *and* the objectified world (Altamirano, 2020:319). Altamirano characterises critical consciousness as a meta-skill of self-awareness of one's ability to change and flow from the naïve state or zone of awareness to a cognitive, critical one. Whereas experience is the foundation of naïve awareness, and its curiosity is set in common sense, critical cognisance is transitive and its action is based on praxis and critical thinking skills. However, for Freire, dialogue extends beyond being relational in approach; he views dialogue as the process through which humans become historical subjects that not only emerge from the world, but can also alter it (Freire, 1970:109-111). In this view, people are not merely *things* but are "*actors of intercommunication*" that can transform their worlds for the better (Freire, 1970:109).

This agrees with Dutta's (2011:250) view that listening to the subaltern's voice in the development circumstance is vital if dominant systems and practices are to be transformed. Not only is listening vital though. The full immersion of local communities' voices into the

development discourse and its employment is also necessary (Dutta, 2011:248). This also suggests, as we learn when considering Habermas's public sphere theory, that alternative spaces for discussion or dialogue should be established (see 4.5.2). As Dutta (2011:250) states, hegemonic systems and practices can only be challenged if an alternative entry point to full participation can be secured for those who are oppressed or marginalised. He suggests that these discursive places should be established through the involvement of local communities in the change process happening on global, national, and local scales. Dialogue is a horizontal or decidedly intersubjective communication process whereby dominated individuals and communities become critically conscious of their repression and the desire for change. Dutta (2011:248, 252) thus describes this type of participation, reminding us of the Arnstein ladder of participation as community-centred and the greatest form of community involvement in development narratives and praxis (see 3.3.5). He explains that dialogue thus framed identifies the local community as the locus of decision-making otherwise silenced by dominant discourses.

Only when attentive listening and trying to understand what the other articulates a so-called inter-human domain unfolds can genuine dialogue occur (Dutta, 2011:249-250). Listening to the "other" is as vital as voicing your subjective narrative, knowledge, and experiences. "[T]o dialogue with the people about their views and ours" and concerning others and the external world, social change is possible (Freire, 1970:77, 79). Therefore, this study argues that dialogue in participatory communication is a form of active listening to marginalised people and their specific articulations about their development challenges and needs.

As Altamirano (2020:320) summarises, Freire's epistemology is characterised as being *of* the oppressed and not *for*, based on the ontological roots of vulnerability and formed via collective knowledge; a circular, dynamic and contextualised process, and finally, as being phenomenological in nature.

4.4.1.3 Freirean dialogical pedagogy: methodological assumptions

What these positions reveal about Freire's methodological views should now become clearer. Firstly, Freire's viewpoints suggest that knowledge can be formed in the agency-structure dialectic, that a focus on participatory methods within a conception of methodology concerning

practice exists, and that there is an interplay between facts and values concerning each autonomous but social inquirer (Morrow & Torres, 2002:39, 42, 47, 54, 57-58, 61). He does not reject science and scientific methods in knowing and effecting transformation, but instead argues for critical science based on people's direct, authentic participation in knowledge creation. For this reason, scholars report that he had a huge impact on the establishment of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which strives to involve communities in the process of research by promoting conscientisation and the acquisition of basic techniques in problematising and researching their own lived and perceived experiences (Altamirano, 2016:5-6; Dutta, 2011:246-247; Dyll-Myklebust, 2011:13; Tufte *et al.*, 2020:54-55).

Freire calls the theory-practice binary false and instead, according to Morrow and Torres (2002:54-56), calls for a scientific humanism that does not reject the objectively verifiable world but that recognises that – through cultural invasion and so-called value-neutral methods – the marginalised and oppressed individuals in society have been conditioned to adhere to externally produced knowledge and methods of evaluation and transformation. Instead, Freire argues for a methodological and political pluralism that allows that diverse forms of knowledge that are needed to reflect critically on reality. Likewise, he does not reduce inquiry to merely a political or ideological action, but also rejects any kind of knowledge as value-free (discussed in the previous section about his epistemic views). In this sense, one can describe his methodology as being constructivist in nature. He concedes that even though knowledge is always historically and socially situated, it does not mean that rigour and method are left behind in analysing and addressing a perceived problematic situation.

Through his concerns with adult literacy and popular education models, Freire provides a method of knowing and transforming reality beyond merely learning to read and write. As demonstrated from the previous discussions on this ontology and epistemology, Freire's dialogic praxis offers a useful communication approach where local communities can become directly involved in the social change process. Scholars recount that, following from his epistemological position, Freire contends that participatory dialogue could become a regulative ideal for a problematising and changing reality, not an overly normative one (Altamirano, 2020:314-315; Morrow & Torres, 2012:53; Tufte *et al.*, 2020:56-57). Freire (1970:105) puts it best when stating that the oppressed

themselves, as critical thinkers, can discuss and think about lived experiences and suggestions about how to transform it. As he suggests via his dialogic pedagogy:

“Because this view of education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own program but must search for this program dialogically with the people, it serves to introduce the pedagogy of the oppressed, in the elaboration of which the oppressed must participate.”

With reference to the difference between the banking educational model and Freire’s dialogic interpretation of education, he introduces the concept of “generative themes” to his methodological understanding of knowing and transforming reality (Freire, 1970:77-78). These concepts remind us of the political, humanistic, pedagogical and scientific dimensions of his epistemology discussed earlier and underlay his interpretation of how communication should occur during dialogic praxis. Freire discusses these concepts at length in Chapter 3 of his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Still, for present purposes, we accept his suggestion that the thought-language with which people refer to the world, perceives reality, and views the objective world, are found in “generative themes”, which are indispensable to the regulative method that dialogue provides in the moment of problem-posing and transformation (Freire, 1970:78).

At the risk of oversimplification, Freire’s generative theme is understood as being located in the human-world relationship, meaning that people’s thinking about reality is both situated in their thinking *about* reality and their action *upon* reality *upon* reality – that is to say, in their reflection and praxis (Freire, 1970:87). The pedagogue conceives of humans not simply as objects of social inquiry, but as “co-investigators” of reality. He suggests that no understanding or investigation of reality can exist objectively outside of humans and their thinking, perception and action in reality. In a development setting, development agents do not merely talk to the community members but talk with them to determine what information and knowledge are needed, or available, to drive desired change (Servaes, 1995:46). During an engaged process of dialogue, community members gain the confidence to reflect on problems and generate community-driven solutions critically.

4.5 HABERMAS: THEORISING PUBLIC SPHERE AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION FOR DIALOGUE

As already indicated (see 4.1), this study maintains that Jürgen Habermas's public sphere and communicative action theories are potentially useful in establishing an analytical framework for understanding the dialogic assumption of the participatory approach. Morrow and Torres (2002:4, 13) contend that Habermas offers the opportunity to theoretically authenticate, ground, reframe and extend some of Freire's more practical critical pedagogical views, while the Freire's dialogic praxis might in turn afford some of the Habermas's more abstract, esoteric philosophies, real-world expressions and more political functionality. The present section introduces the most useful theoretical notions of the abovementioned Habermasian theories concisely. This is done to establish a broader framework by which to conceptualise dialogue in communication for social change and development. The next section briefly traces the origins and then the applicability of the public sphere theory for the current study.

4.5.1 The public sphere as mediated dialogue

As one of the leading contemporary social theorists of the Frankfurt School's neo-Marxist tradition, Habermas presented his public sphere theory in his foundational book, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (1962). The scholar attempted to trace the creation and expansion of public opinion formation practices during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, while also studying how these practices were ultimately impeded and collapsed by social pressures during the early part of the twentieth century (Habermas, 1989/1962:xxx; Otto, 2004:63).

Notwithstanding its eventual failure¹⁵, some scholars are still interested in operating the Habermasian normative conceptions of a "public sphere", where citizens can congregate to

¹⁵ Habermas also argued that, during the 1800s and 1900s, this category of debate became increasingly encumbered or "refeudalised" by commercial and state imperatives, thereby "recolonising" as it were the previously unfettered zone of citizenry debate and consequently transforming it into a space of "manufactured publicity and nonpublic opinion" (Habermas, 1962/1989:211-216).

deliberate matters of public opinion in a manner of so-called intersubjective communication (cf. Barranquero, 2006/2005; Bezuidenhout, 2018; Chang & Jacobson, 2010; Curran, 1991; Gaynor & O'Brien, 2017; Jacobson, 1999; Jacobson & Storey, 2004; Otto & Fourie, 2016; Order, 2013; Van Vuuren, 2004;). Although Habermas has attracted volumes of criticism Kellner, 2000:266-267; Fraser, 1990; Van Vuuren, 2004; Van Zoonen, 1992) about the historical, normative, gendered, literate and other idealistic qualities of his original theoretical conceptions, the historical public sphere category offers compelling conceptual departure points to further establish a more comprehensive analytic frame of *dialogue* that can be applied in a setting of communication for social change and development setting; and more specifically, within a plurality of different larger or smaller public spheres. Van Zoonen (1992:458), for example, coined the term “sphericules” to describe how contemporary public spheres are far more inclusive and diverse than their historical category, permitting previously ignored or oppressed social identities to access smaller, representative mediated spaces for communication.

The discussions below introduce Habermas's original conceptualisation of the public sphere, after which some aspects of its decline or transformation will be outlined briefly. This sets the scene for argumentation in later chapters on why and how a contemporary public sphere could perhaps find expression in a new social realm in the form of community radio. Chapter 7 will argue that the public sphere contains theoretical values that resonate well with community radio's place and role in society, particularly within a development communication context.

As has already been suggested above, the historical origin of the *bourgeois public sphere* defines it as a zone where ordinary citizens can establish an accessible, public forum in which they discuss and debate affairs of economic and social concern, as well as reflect critically on the governing institutions and rules that direct their daily lives (Habermas, 1962/1989:27). Louw (2001:93) recounts that the public sphere (*bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*) was imagined as emerging approximately in 1700 as a communicative fulcrum where a small radical minority of citizens (*bürgers*) surfaced against the dominant, oppressive feudal class. Johannes Gutenberg's printing press encouraged these citizens to employ printed media to spread revolutionary socio-economic and political viewpoints and contest the feudal elite's rule (Habermas, 1962/1989:29-34, 74, 85). With urbanisation, the rise of a new capitalist class and the growth of a more literate citizenry,

the latter lower classes employed their newfound leisure time and improved economic status to their benefit by spreading revolutionary ideas about the structuring of society by circulating newsletters, journals, books and eventually newspapers (Habermas, 1962/1989).

In the Habermasian conceptualisation, a *literary public sphere* or world of ideas eventually manifested as physical spaces (i.e., the eighteenth-century coffee houses in England and, especially later on in France and Germany, more matured political public spheres in which “rational-critical debate” on public matters occurred) (Habermas, 1989/1962:74). Copies of the newsletters would circulate in saloons and coffee houses, further solidifying the formation of a public space of opinions that would counter the repressive aristocracy and required them to legitimate their rule before critical public opinion (Habermas, 1989:85, 170). The Habermasian public sphere thus offered an opportunity for public participation for citizens to dialogue matters of concern collectively.

By challenging the self-interested priorities of hegemonic elites, the historical Habermasian *public sphere* essentially articulated how citizens or collective publics could attend to their own political and socio-economic welfare in a free, open forum of public debate and decision-making. In the public sphere, a particular type of participation is suggested. The public sphere held the potential to facilitate emancipatory debate and politics by sufficing as a space where civil society, or a rising middle class and the ruling classes, could finally engage in structuring their society and interrogate how the economy could be structured. Habermas’s theory presented a critical diagnosis of society – pointing to its need for social transformation. The public sphere was articulated for the first time in European history, thereby creating a new democratic social theory and suggesting a society in which ordinary citizens could participate in a more just, politically representative manner (Order, 2003: 28; Habermas, 1974:49; 1989:XXX). The conceptualisation of a public sphere intimated a new democratic model of society by allowing *private* citizens to oppose the elite in an open, public manner. Cohen and Arato (1992:ix) point out that this historic public sphere category essentially was the precursor to modern-day institutions such as democratic parliaments and a free press.

For this notion to fully emerge, Habermas conceives of potentially emancipatory norms that must inform the public opinion praxis of the middle classes. Apart from its singular historic character,

the public sphere operates according to certain ideological, institutional, and relational dimensions as well (Habermas, 1989/1961:36). The normative design supposes that the: a) suspension of pre-existing privileges, b) problematisation of issues, and c) general accessibility or inclusiveness of the public sphere must be ensured (Habermas, 1989/1962:33, 36-37; 1964:49). Considering the kinds of social interaction between public sphere participants, the scholar presumes that social hierarchy, economic status, and other influences should be rejected during discussions and that only the “force of the better argument” should prevail during deliberations (Habermas, 1989:23, 36 27, 54). In Habermas’s view, the “common humanity” of discussants should set the scene for debate that is free from subjective demographics.

Concerning the formation of public opinion, the public sphere then provides a space to discuss issues or matters that have been previously safeguarded from debate and have not been problematised beforehand. According to Habermas (1989/1962:36), the ruling classes and the church formerly monopolised public interpretation, even in the realms of philosophy, literature and art. With the rise of capitalism, new matters of public concern that were once only verbalised and given meaning by the elite now had to be argued and debated by ordinary people. In the Habermasian interpretation, public opinion is defined as “the enlightened outcome of common and public reflection” that results from general public reflection and debate (Habermas, 1964:49). Elsewhere, Habermas defines it as “the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally – and, in periodic elections, formerly, as well as – practice vis-à-vis the ruling organised in the form of a state” (Habermas, 1964:49).

Following this definition, the critical judgement of ordinary people transforms into public opinion by communicating and dialoguing about previously ignored matters of general concern. The public sphere is a mediated space of communication and debate. Inherent in its institutional and ideological character is the notion of “publicity”, which Habermas imagines as meaning that any subject matter must be put up for public deliberation. However, this “publicity” can only transpire if a rational dialogical exchange occurs. Concerning the inclusiveness of the public sphere, Habermas envisions it as universally accessible to all private citizens as “readers, listeners, and spectators” (Habermas, 1989/19962:37). One of the many points of critique against Habermas's supposed “accessibility” is that educated and propertied men were described as

participants of the historical public sphere. Despite these obvious conceptual limitations, the normative mandate of the public sphere demands that it operates as a realm of new middle-class representation, suggesting that even if certain individuals could not participate, the new public sphere could stand in for a larger public or discussants that were beforehand completely ignored by the elite (Habermas, *ibid.*). The public sphere's inclusiveness feature, therefore, imagines an ideal forum where the values of freedom of speech and equality among participants guide the dialogical exchanges. In the next subsection (see section 4.5.2.2) on Habermas's communicative action theory, these values and procedural norms will be discussed in more detail.

Over time, Habermas's public sphere conceptualisation did not entirely escape the controls and reach of state and commercial structures and imperatives. He regrets the so-called re-feudalisation of the public sphere and the resultant decline of its democratic potential (Habermas, 1989:171). Whereas the public sphere previously signified diverse interests and radical worker-class ambitions, these interests and aspirations eventually congealed into a new hegemonic control that ignored a multiplicity of welfares. Once the bourgeoisie came into power, the dialectical tension between the public and the private spheres dissolved, which in turn weakened the rational-critical publicity or political function of the liberal public sphere (Habermas, 1989:140, 164, 206).

Habermas explains that the critical publicity of the bourgeoisie public sphere is replaced by "manipulative publicity" in which "staged displays" of deliberation occur, only to garner support for particular interests and collectives while also limiting the topography of issues that can be problematised and are open to debate (Habermas, 1989:178). In this frame, public opinion becomes a "consumer commodity" that holds transactional value instead of preserving its original political function. Habermas (1989:181) notices this transformation of the public sphere as transpiring in its "preeminent institution, the press". He clarifies that the distinction between the press's communicative roles – either as an agent of information exchange or a commercialised institution that is focussed on maximising profits – is flattened to the extent that the original intent of publicising public opinion declines into a type of "advertising" and "public relations". In other words, while the rise of capitalism once secured the establishment of a public sphere with a political meaning, the further commercialisation of the press causes a

decomposition of the latter political purpose. The steering mechanisms of the state and commercial corporations hence increasingly exercise control over the original democratic intent of the media.

Consequently, Habermas (1989:171, 236) argues that the ideal public sphere finally evolved into an era of “state capitalism and mass democracy” wherein the normative values of universality and rational-critical debate disintegrated and reversed. This then meant that the “mass media” only became democratic in appearance. Calhoun (1992) explains that whereas the state and society were previously separated, this distinction became vague in the era of democracy and neoliberalism, leaving the public sphere open to manipulation and instrumental use instead of dialogic employment. The Habermasian public sphere thus became a domain of the state and money instead of a space of public representation and opinion.

In Chapter 8, Habermas’s historical public sphere will again be interrogated for its potential in informing community radio as an alternative space where a participatory approach to development could take hold. Chapter 8 will argue that, despite its many theoretical drawbacks and exclusionary nature, the public sphere shares many principles of access, participation and representation (as embedded in community radio) that aim to empower local communities (see 8.4.3). In the Habermasian conception, the public sphere offers an avenue to reclaim the *lifeworld* that Habermas envisions as a counter to state and capital imperatives. These notions will be revisited in Section 8.3.2, where community radio is discussed more closely as alternative media. For now, the focus turns to a discussion of his communicative action theory. This theory is the beginning of Habermasian attempts to reclaim the potential of the public sphere as a domain in which human communication can retain its interpersonal dimension instead of being instrumentally employed by governments or capitalists to their own ends.

4.5.2 Habermasian communication action theory: metatheoretical assumptions

Freire’s dialogic communication conception differs from Habermas’s insofar as it primarily attempts to explain the ontological reasons for dialogic communication and the subsequent methodological implications of social change. While both theorists are considered widely from within the so-called participative communication approach, Habermas’s theoretical contribution

is far less practical than Freirean thinking because of its philosophical complexity regarding social change efforts (Jacobson, 2003; De Souza, Sobral & Cardoso, 2018). To be certain, Habermas's theoretical contributions necessitate far more empirical application.

Servaes (2020:287) describes communicative action theory as a general theory of social evolution. Habermas explains the communicative action theory as having three interrelated interests (Habermas, 1984: xl; McCarthy, 1994:vi). Firstly, it represents a critique of reason that repudiates the totalising, Cartesian interpretation of the world in favour of intersubjective premises of rationality. Next, Habermas's theoretical contribution develops into a two-level concept of society, integrating the constructs of the *lifeworld* (i.e. *Lebenswelt*) and the *system*; and lastly, he investigates a theory of modernity that accounts for its social pathologies and paradoxes. According to Servaes (2020:288), communicative action theory is fundamentally best understood in the frameworks of rationality and modernity, specifically in its systematic differences from the modernisation theory's views. The German's communicative action theory links back to the "unfinished project of modernity" and defence of Enlightenment rationality (Dews, 1999:90; Goode, 2005:56-57; Kompridis, 1999:118-119; McCarthy, 1984:vi;). Therefore, Habermas has been described (Morrow & Torres, 2002:2; Weigård & Eriksen, 2003:1) as an epistemologist, moral and social philosopher, sociologist, and political theorist in the strict sense, and indirectly as a hermeneutical, an educational and communication theorist.

By mixing reconstructive analytic and pragmatist approaches to critical theory from various metatheoretical revisions, Habermas attempts to situate his critical theory in the critique of scientism, positivistic knowledge, and the philosophy of consciousness. Although the emancipatory agenda features prominently in these theorisations (i.e. the public sphere theory as a dialogic space), Habermas's intentions are far more abstract than Freire's dialogic pedagogy (cf. Habermas, 1984, 1987). As evident from his ontological views, Habermas's preoccupation with critical theory is distinctly Western-based, echoing among other Weber's theory about the rationalisation of society, the critical Marxist tradition, the analytics and language philosophy of Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle, in addition to normative theories of society by Durkheim, Parsons, and Mead (Edgar, 2005:1,5; Eriksen & Weigård, 2004:9-10; McCarthy, 1984:v-vii; Morrow & Torres, 2002:2-4).

4.5.2.1 Habermasian views on dialogue: ontological assumptions

Habermas views the nature of praxis as *symbolic interaction*. He moves beyond the Marxian view that reality can be reduced to human labour and drawn in deterministic economic lines (Jacobson, 2020:291-292, Morrow & Torres, 2002:39-40). Habermas advocates for a communicative, critical realist ontology that acknowledges that human beings can know and transform reality via a structure of human communication that allows for authentic, meaningful understanding and coordination (Jacobson, 2020:288; Morrow & Torres, 2002:62-63). In this frame, communicative action speaks to an ontology of human life that is neither neutral or ahistorical. Human beings are communicative beings. Communication is fundamental to human beings' relations to the world, oneself and one another (i.e. the objective, subjective and social worlds).

This ontological view prefigures Habermas's epistemological beliefs, which argue for a discourse theory of knowledge with an emancipatory interest based on his ideal speech situation (ISS) oriented toward mutual understanding. Secondly, the communicative action theory makes a sharp distinction between human action that is strategic or instrumental as opposed to one that is communicative (Habermas, 1984:94-95; Morrow & Torres, 2002:41). The Habermasian epistemic beliefs rest his critique of functional reason and his alternative conception of communicative reason. Instrumental reasons belong to the modernistic interpretation, which relies on a one-sided interpretation of human action, that is, an understanding that all human social actions aim at control and success per a Weberian interpretation of functional enlightenment and reality. Habermas (19984:323-334) argues against instrumentality because it results in strategic actions of manipulation that systematically distort dialogue and mutual understanding. This analysis provided him with his first theoretical understandings of self-criticism and self-transformation through communicative reason. Termed his "linguistic turn", he deals with the problematic of rationality, arguing for a knowledge paradigm and resultant type of social action as opposed to decisionism, and teleological and individualistic expressions of rationality (Habermas, 1984:10-11; 13; 50; 59).

These emphases on communities of communication and action coordination suggest a communicatively rationalised *lifeworld* or *public sphere* in which social actors can deliberate on

matters of general concern (Habermas, 1994:70). Habermas locates government and capitalism as the sites of strategic action in the “system”. Reality is thus (communicatively) mediated. Strategic action is manipulative. Habermas’s attempt to recover the rationality belief in an intersubjective manner indicates new categories in which participatory communication practice could be understood as dialogue (Barranquero, 2006/20055:921; Jacobson, 2020:292). Although Habermas’s theory follows a procedural model, and Freire’s a more revolutionary and radical one, it offers a methodology by which knowledge on development can be generated discursively and as socially embedded. Habermas’s communicative action theory presents “validity claims” of universal pragmatics as the ontological basis of action-coordination among people.

Validity claims form the foundations of how one can organise dialogue about reality. If people dialogue with one another, they raise these three claims to determine whether or not they agree on their different claims about reality and “truth” (Habermas, 1984:99, 1987). They coordinate their messages and actions according to a) truth (about facts), b) sincerity (about our intentions and mutual trust), and c) normative rightness (about mutually recognised principles and practical reason). These claims are theoretical constructions that allow for a pragmatic interest – i.e., action coordination and mutual understanding – or, put differently, they comprise the act of dialogue among intersubjective subjects (Morrow & Torres, 2002:41). Habermas (1984:258-286) states that “I shall speak of *communicative* action whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding.” If people in dialogue cannot uphold each claim as correct, then one should thematise or discuss those rejected claims until agreement is reached. These three reciprocal assumptions, as Jacobson (2020:292, 239) terms them, cast human life as a linguistic experience beyond mere instrumental rationality, thus casting it as a type of logic based on consensual action. Habermas proposes that these validity claims occur in a specific ideal speech situation, which is discussed further when examining communicative action theory’s epistemological claims.

To summarise: The Habermasian ontology critiques the Marxian theory of praxis as work favouring symbolic interaction and contained in the universal pragmatics of language as communicative rather than strategic action. Validity claims are implicit in communicative action.

They allow humans to know and transform their reality instead of relying on the monological communicative paradigm and the instrumental logic and strategic actions it espouses. Each claim coincides with a specific cultural sphere or world relation. Habermas (1984:19-22, 308) explains that any claim to the social world must deal with the validity claim of rightness. In contrast, any claim concerning objective reality is treated via the claim of truth, whereas any claim concerning the subjective world is negotiated via truthfulness or sincerity. The objective world corresponds to what Habermas calls the cultural sphere of science and technology. In turn, the social world claims normative discussion of an ethical, moral or political nature (i.e. such is evident in the legal sphere). Lastly, the subjective world relates more to the spheres or “world relations” of art and literature.

4.5.2.2 Habermasian views on dialogue: epistemological assumptions

Following this ontological backdrop, Habermas builds an epistemology that moves beyond the positivistic paradigm, which advocates the scientific method as the only true method of social inquiry and knowledge about human experience and the objective world. Morrow and Torres (2002:43) explain that Habermas underscores the priority of knowledge as a communicative process and not as monological. This viewpoint is known as the critical hermeneutic view of knowledge – that is, knowledge is based on dialogue among competing views. In the communicative action theory, knowledge is seen as historical and social (i.e. constructivist) and always only provisionally true, as all knowledge is fallible. In other words, as is clearly contained in Habermas’s ontological views on validity claims, knowledge is founded in argumentation and debate – so that it is always procedural and communicative. Jacobson (2020:293) explains that the communicative approach to knowledge treats knowledge about the external world as a process in which subjects interact with one another to coordinate action about the world. Morrow and Torres (2002:48) agree, stating that knowledge, in short, is always grounded in intersubjective communication among subjects and that is tested in communication action.

In Habermas’s view, knowledge is dialogic. This dialogic theory emerged originally in his historicist analysis of the bourgeois public sphere category, which guided his initial thought on normatively designed social and political action (Edgar, 2005; Goode, 2005:4-14; Habermas, 1962/1989). Here, Habermas’s democratic project reflects on the nature of the democratic

process and public deliberation in an institutional form (Goode, 2005:3; Habermas, 1974:49; Holub, 1991: 3). Communicative action theory covers a vast interdisciplinary theoretical terrain, particularly from the already alluded Hegelian subject-object dialectics and Marxist theory of praxis favouring intersubjective conceptions. As was stated earlier, Habermas modifies a range of developments in the twentieth century social sciences and philosophy, attempting to reconstruct a reflective and self-aware critical theory of society.

To be sure, communicative action has an epistemic interest in emancipation. The theory allows for a critical-emancipatory cognitive interest that is contained in validity claims. This interest is distinct from the empirical-analytical interest in natural sciences and the historical-hermeneutic interest in the interpretation of meanings. In his communicative action theory, Habermas argues that knowledge should be critical; that the theory is concerned with revealing knowledge as being dominant in nature and as something that can actually be interrogated instead of accepted as “natural laws” (Morrow & Torres, 2002:43). Knowledge is not positivistic and does not provide universal, natural and absolute laws. Communicative action should reveal structures of domination, non-participatory communication, and distorted communication and must potentially change them.

This critical-emancipatory interest reveals another one of Habermas’s epistemic claims: that knowledge can only be understood if we understand the conditions under which it is produced. Knowledge has social origins in discursive communities. It must not be imagined in the utopian sense but rather seen as a strategy to reconstruct rationality (as already argued) in a communicative and dialogic approach rather than an instrumental one.

This then prefigures the ideal speech situation, which Habermas (1979) proposes not as an actual empirical situation of social practice but rather as a discourse theory of “truth”. From this viewpoint, the ISS should be employed within the discourse of knowledge as a strategy to interrogate theoretical knowledge about reality. Knowledge can only be understood once we understand the conditions under which it is produced. It has social origins in discursive communities. Therefore, it must not be imagined in the utopian sense, but rather seen as a strategy that uses dialogue to reconstruct rationality as something that is communicative and hence always open to interrogation. In the last instance, Habermas’s ontological assumptions

understand communicative action theory as a framework stating that rationality is communicative and not instrumental. As a normative kind of rationality, communicate logic can only be established via dialogue since Habermas (1984:10) maintains that, among competing arguments, only the force of the better argument can overcome merely subjective views while also giving assurance of the external world's objectivity and the intersubjectivity of the social word.

To summarise the epistemological claims of Habermas's communicative action theory: Knowledge is a kind of discourse that cannot exist objectively outside human beings. It must be created discursively within particular communities and through provisional agreement (i.e., the lifeworld). Knowledge is fallible and procedural given validity claims that must be met. It is also a product of argument rather than merely an empirical correspondence with reality. Moreover, it is historically situated. Only the force of the better argument can lead to agreement and coordination.

4.5.2.3 Habermasian views on dialogue: methodology assumptions

Habermas's methodological thoughts on dialogue revolve around communicative action theory and his ideal speech situation (Morrow & Torres, 2002). As the preceding discussions on his metatheory of dialogue have shown, human beings can attain mutual understanding and consensus through non-coercive methods without relying on manipulation or the use of force – as is expressed in strategic communication. Communicative action supposes the collaborative effort of individuals who are involved in an intersubjective conversation (Habermas, 1984:10). This stands in opposition to strategic action that is expressed through monologic reason wherein conversation is employed as a method to achieve a specific, predetermined objective, with one person endeavouring to exercise influence or dominance over the other. Habermas proposes a hermeneutical and analytical methodology of knowledge via dialogue. While scientific methods can and should produce knowledge, communicative action argues that dialogue allows for the generation of knowledge that is socially embedded (Barranquero, 2006/2005).

This has empirical implications. In the Habermasian view, communicative action must be generated from within social actors' understandings of their development situation. It also

supposes methodological pluralism in that it does not reject science but leaves room for problem-posing from within the community (Jacobson & Kolluri, 1999:269-272).

The secondary theoretical construct that Habermas employs is the notion of the ideal speech situation. Within the present framework, it is to be understood that all participants who are involved in a discourse are equal. The power differentials are absent. The notion of equal opportunity for initiating and sustaining debate is fundamental to academic discourse. The principle of universality asserts that in an ideal discourse scenario, all participants would achieve a consensus on a particular claim if they possessed extensive knowledge of all relevant information and could evaluate it impartially. This agreement is established based on the compelling strength of a more effective argument, rather than through manipulation or coercion.

4.6 SUMMARY REMARKS

The aim of Chapter 4 was to theorise the participatory paradigm through one of its foundational principles, which is the notion of dialogue. Discussions commenced with a brief overview of the notion's word history and extended conceptual meaning (see 4.2). After that, the dialogical turn in communication studies was briefly presented to emphasise that dialogue is axiomatic to several subfields, theories and contexts about human communication and interaction (see 4.3.1). This section underlined the paradigmatic shift from monological, linear communication theories and practices to dialogical communication that entails two-way and bottom-up approaches.

In Section 4.3.2, discussions outlined that in communication for development and social change, there are two broad approaches to dialogue: descriptive and prescriptive. In an explanatory framework, dialogue's mutuality and consensus-seeking aspects are accentuated. The collaborative practice of different social actors engaging as equal partners in decision-making processes is stressed with the goal of creating shared meaning. Participatory communication theorists, in contrast, view dialogue in more normative or prescriptive terms – that is to say, dialogical communication must ideally empower social actors and encourage broader, positive social transformation. The prescriptive optic focuses on problematising oppressive social statutes and relations that marginalise certain groups in society from meaningfully participating in their own development.

This study has chosen to examine and employ the metatheoretical theoretical contributions of Freire and Habermas, both normative thinkers, concerning human communication to conduct a more coherent theorisation of dialogue (see 4.4 and 4.5). Both set very specific guidelines for how dialogue should be practised for ideals such as empowerment and democratic decision-making to transpire during human interaction and communication. These contributions align well with a participatory communication perspective on dialogue. Freire's dialogic praxis offers a far more perspective, radical positionality and function of dialogue than Habermas's theories that emphasise communicative rationality and consensus. Together, they offer a more coherent framework to understand and practice dialogue in participatory communication.

Freire provides a cognitive and existential understanding of transformation. His *ontology of vulnerability and action-reflection*, his *dialogic theory of knowledge*, and his ideas about *methodological pluralism* informed this chapter's more nuanced grasp of dialogue. to further theorise the participatory approach to development and social change in a more theoretically sound manner. Altamirano (2020:325) summarises it well, stating that Freire's dialogic praxis comprises a meta-approach that interrogates what is "truth" and what communicative processes encircle it. In her view, Freire allows for truth to be founded in asking questions, not in providing answers, and in questioning *how* questions are posed. Freire's dialogic praxis contributes to theorising dialogue in the participatory approach to development communication in his:

- *Ontological assumptions* that suggest that all dialogue participants are subjects instead of objects of knowledge and, hence, transformation. Dialogue implies collective, interpersonal relations among subjects, as well as between subjects and the objective world. Dialogic praxis, ontologically, emphasises intersubjective human relations and communication and rejects monolithic and monological ideas about how to encourage positive social change. Moreover, critical reflection and action originate from within the local community and not from an endogenous, macro-level site (see 4.4.1.1).
- *Epistemological views* that propose that knowledge construction and utilisation are never fixed and are continuously open for interrogation via the critical awareness of those oppressed and wanting transformation or development. Therefore, dialogue is an interrogative human activity about who generates knowledge, why, and for whom. It is

aimed at dismantling oppressive knowledge convictions and practices. Dialogue takes place in situated awareness and knowledge systems. It cannot be ahistorical and hence never value-free. Dialogic praxis underscores that transformation does not occur *for* people, but *with* them: their direct, authentic participation in problem-posing and solution formulation is essential and must transpire through dialogic communication among the marginalised *and* between them and dominant groups. This means that dialogue examines power relations and challenges the status quo (see 4.4.1.2).

- *Methodological assumptions* that present dialogue as a philosophy and strategy of social inquiry. Given its ontological and epistemic foundation, dialogic praxis extends development methodologies beyond rigid, scientific interrogations on how to study and address development challenges to a plurality of approaches and strategies. Freire's views suggest a participatory methodology permitting problem identification, interrogation, and identification of solutions conceived from the viewpoint of those who desire transformation the most—that is, the oppressed or subaltern (see 4.4.1.3).

From Habermas's viewpoint, dialogue can be viewed in a more nuanced manner from the theoretical lenses of the public sphere and the communicative action theories. From this chapter's metatheoretical interrogations, an improved understanding of dialogue in participatory communication can be posited.

Ontologically, participatory communication occurs in a public sphere where human existence and matters of public concern can be collectively interrogated in a mediated fashion. The public sphere does not have to be a physical space, but presents a communicative opportunity for social actors to work towards a common goal through rational, open debate (see 4.5.1). Communicative action allows for a problematisation of supposed fixed constructions of reality. Reality can only be grasped and transformed when human action is viewed as coordinated, communicative action, rather than simply strategic action aimed at success and control and externally conceptualised agendas (see 4.5.2.1). The communicative action theory is cognisant of the lifeworld and the system, where the former is based on dialogue and the latter on instrumental logic. For participatory communication scholars, the theory thus becomes a useful analytical tool to compare these two different worlds and their interactions.

Epistemologically, the public sphere and communicative action theories underscore that dialogue in participatory communication involves intersubjectivity. This assumption is based on critical theory. Development knowledge must be generated and applied by ensuring that all social actors collectively validate and interrogate possible concerns and solutions dialogically (see 4.5.1 and 4.5.2.2). Following this view, human experience and knowledge are framed in linguistic terms; that is, rational comprehension of reality is based on a theory of communication, which supposes a dialogic epistemology. It is possible to identify strategic action (open or concealed) as antidialogic (deliberate or unconscious deception) from communication action based on dialogue, which is aimed at mutual understanding and hence intersubjective knowledge of reality and plural methods of change. For participatory communication, this suggests that development knowledge and action are open to examination and alteration via validity claims of sincerity, veracity and rightness. Knowledge must not be imposed.

Methodologically, both theories permit social actors in development settings to interrogate power structures and dynamics through dialogue (see 4.4 and 4.5). Habermas's proposition is more abstract than Freire's dialogic praxis but does encourage development actors, especially the marginalised, to examine their sociopolitical concepts and lived realities by interrogating development discourse and practice in a public spatiality via dialogue. A dialogical approach rejects positivism as the only framework for analysing development challenges. Dialogue allows different kinds of methods to arise from within the community with which to research development matters (i.e. participatory strategies such as PAR or PRA discussed in 3.4.3).

CHAPTER 5: THEORISING CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

“Cultural action is always a systematic and deliberate form of action which operates upon the social structure, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it.”

— Paolo Freire (1970:170).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As was determined in the preceding chapters on participation and dialogue, culture is also a multifaceted notion. Like its interfacing concepts, it displays a multidisciplinary nature that informs development communication theorists and practitioners and, indeed, as currently the case, participatory communication scholarship’s understanding and application thereof. Section 5.2 commences this study’s examination of “culture” with an etymological overview, followed by discussions appraising its multidisciplinary nature in Section 5.3.

This chapter employs Freire’s notions of cultural invasion and cultural action, as available in this critical pedagogy, to theorise culture (see 5.4). These notions inform this study of how culture can be regarded as a site of struggle against the development of hegemonic narratives and applications. This chapter’s main line of argumentation follows that in a Freirean reading, culture is a process of humanisation that requires dialogue between structure and agency. Cultural action can, however, also establish a space where diversity is observed, and cooperation towards common goals via participation and dialogical communication is possible. Freire terms this process “cultural synthesis”, arguing that the dynamic merging between different cultural ideas, narratives and identities is possible in the structure-agency bind.

The cultural-centred approach (CCA) clarifies theorising culture in this study. It underscores the recognition of the oppressed, or as Dutta (2020b) terms them, the “subaltern” in imagining and actualising meaningful social change. Comparable to Freire’s, Dutta’s approach underlines a shift away from modernist, neo-liberal readings of cultural identities by insisting on the importance of the subaltern as the locus of meaning-making to counter dominant interpretations of knowledge

about reality, hence, about social transformation or development. The CCA centres locally situated “*cultural contexts*” as essential to transformative change efforts (Dutta, 2018:87-104-317). Chapter 5 will demonstrate that the CCA provides the present study with metatheoretical underpinnings of culture within a participatory communication optic. The chapter concludes in Section 5.5 with synthesised summary remarks of what culture in the participatory paradigm must entail.

5.2 CULTURE THEORISED: ETYMOLOGICAL ORIGINS AND CONCEPTUAL MEANINGS

Hammersley (2019:1-3) observes that while “culture” is one of the most prevalent words in the social sciences, it has historically signified complexity, ambiguity and, often, disagreement concerning its meaning and application. This is true for the humanities and the participatory paradigm as well. It is similarly true for culture’s place and use in everyday language.

Before the rest of the section explores the notion’s etymology, mention must be made of discussions in Chapter 2 that have already observed culture’s compound meanings. “Culture” was evident in modernistic discourse and practice, was pervasive in the multiplicity framework proposed by Servaes (1999), and subsequently found firm footing in the participatory paradigm (see 2.5 and 2.6.) In the dominant paradigm, it was illustrated that human culture was perceived through the optics of essentialism, objectivity, universality and unavoidable linear growth and development (see 2.4.1). Its Western-centric bias was patent. Conversely, the multiplicity framework described culture in pluralistic, intersectional, dynamic, and emergent terms and gave impetus to the emergence of problematising culture within participatory communication (see 2.5 and 2.6). These discussions will resurface in Section 5.3 when culture is brought into a sharper conceptual view in the participatory development communication context.

An etymological analysis of culture is challenging due to its contemporary association with other terms in everyday language and academic discourse. In everyday conversation or social settings, culture is believed to encompass a polyphony of ideas and human activities, such as art, music, food, fashion, sports, entertainment, language, beliefs and values, as well as traditions and customs in varying forms of enjoyment, expression, and use.

Hammersley (2019:1-2) notes that culture is linked to terms such as “‘tradition’, ‘civilisation’, ‘custom’, ‘myth’, ‘perspective’, ‘worldview’, ‘ideology’, ‘discourse’, and ‘habitus’”. He remarks that these words are not simple synonyms of culture but that they draw attention to the notion's complexity in social scientific discourse. He clarifies that “ideology” is, for example, often equated with “worldview”, which in turn is associated with culture. Whereas the latter serves descriptive or analytical functions, the former corresponds to ideas about false consciousness described in the Marxian sense, where individuals lack an accurate, critical understanding of their socioeconomic circumstances, as is demonstrated in class struggles. Culture is hard to describe because it contains overlapping and conflicting ideas that have been pervasive in historical and contemporary terms.

As shown in Figure 5-1 below, the genesis of *culture* has its roots in agricultural practice. The word is a derivative of the Latin term *colere*, which refers to the human activity or labour of tending, cultivating, or caring for a piece of land (Harper, n.d. Culture). The term gradually evolved into Medieval Latin as *culturare*, and later *cultura* in Latin, *cultivate* in Middle English, and finally in both French and Middle English as *culture* (Google Search, 2023c). All these terms retain the early core meaning of caring and tending to the natural growth and development of living things. According to the Merriam-Webster (n.d. Culture: Etymology) dictionary entry, the noun and verb *culture* were already used in the early and mid-fifteenth century.

Muller (2005:1) relates that the first contemporary English usage of the word culture is traceable to the end of the nineteenth century. However, he shares that its conceptual roots reach as far back as John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), and the work of the Arab historian, Ibn Khaldûn during the fourteenth century about the histories of Herodotus and Tacitus. Muller (2005:1) remarks that references to a range of human activities beyond cultivation to include “...protecting, or worshipping...” with the latter term referring to more figurative aspects as embedded in the influential Roman orator Cicero's notion of *cultura animi* or “cultivation of the soul”. This type of veneration, derived from *colere*, was also used in more diverse settings of worshipping such as in the veneration of or devotion towards deities, which then gave rise to the term “cult”. In these meanings, the moral and personal development of human beings was therefore signified. Over time, the term's semantic scope widened beyond agricultural and ritual practice to include more conceptual meanings associated with improving

the human spirit, intellect, manners, and capacities (Harper, n.d. Culture; Merriam-Webster, n.d. Culture). These extended meanings became evident, especially during the Renaissance, which was a period characterised by interests in classical scholarship and humanistic thinking – as evidenced by *cultura animi*. Below Figure 5-1 demonstrates the etymology of “culture” (Source: Google Search, 2023c).

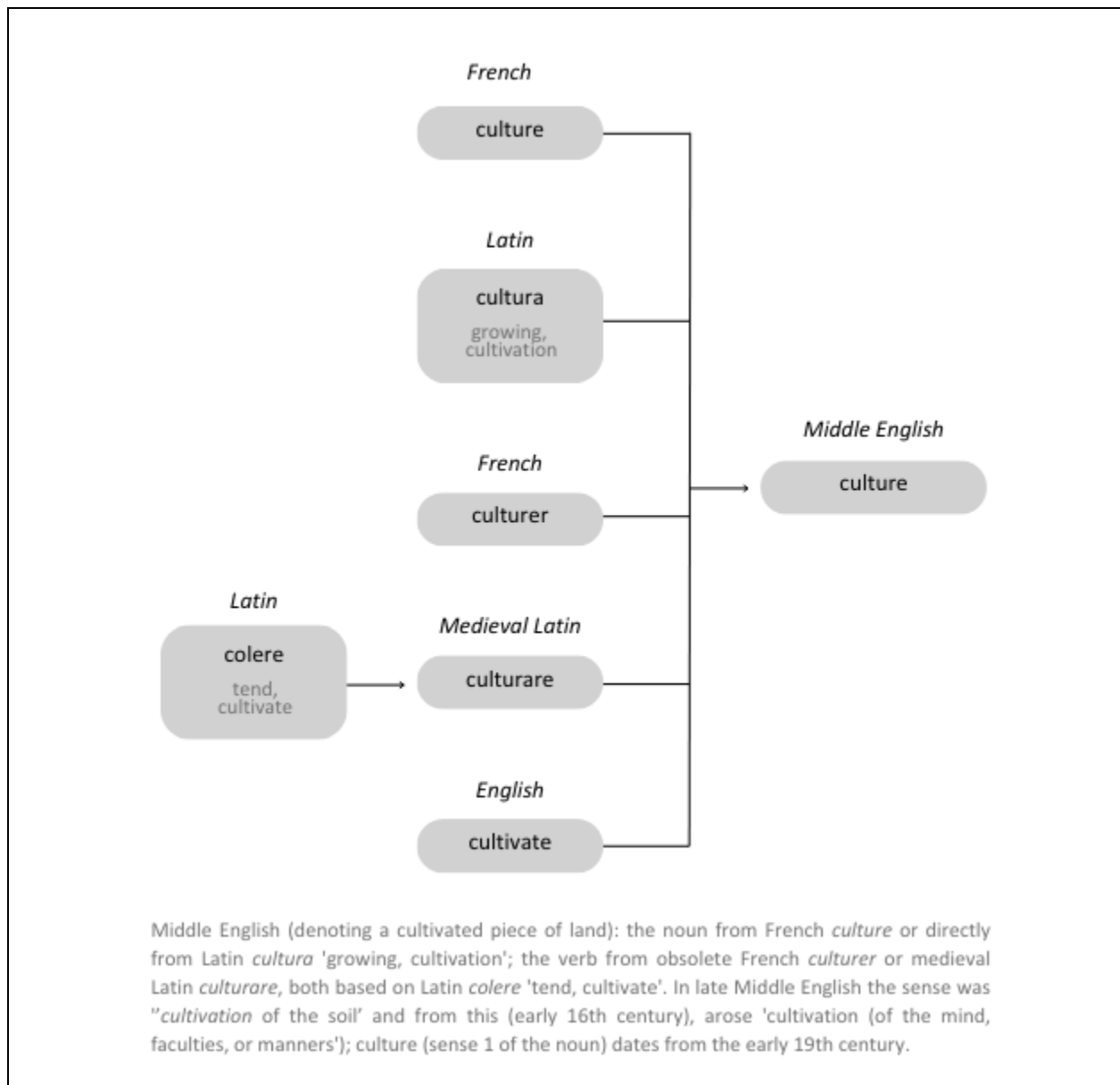


Figure 5-1 Google Search illustration of the linguistic origins of “culture”

According to the Merriam-Webster (n.d. Culture) dictionary, culture has six noun entries and two verb entries. The first set of four noun definitions refers to a) human beings’ shared “customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group”, b) the shared sets

of values, conventions, and practices that are characteristic of an institution or organisation, c) sets of values or social practices that are related to a specific field, activity or social characteristic, and d) “the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations”.

Culture has several other definitions. The second set of dictionary entries denotes “enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training” on the one hand, and on the other, denotes “a person of culture” as pertains to their taste in “fine arts, humanities, and broad aspects of science” that are discernible from vocational instruction and technical competencies (Merriam-Webster, 2023e). The third description refers to cultivating living materials such as microorganisms. In contrast, the remaining three definitions all refer in some manner to the process of developing, cultivating or expert care and training. As a transitive verb, culture connotes growing something or a culture in soil. For this reason, Hammersley (2005:2-3) explains that the “nature and scope of the culture concept” cannot be understood without its various evolutions – evident in scientific progress and the “communities of experts” throughout history, as well as in those who sought to systematise human knowledge in multiple forms and disciplines.

The present-day meaning of culture, which refers to the shared practices, tangible artefacts, and beliefs of certain groups or societies, can be traced back to ideas about culture evident in the humanities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and as later as emergent from the 1960s onwards.

5.3 CULTURE: MULTIDISCIPLINARY THEORETICAL LOADSTONES FOR DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Hammersley's (2019:13-19) reappraisal of culture represents a conceptual historical journey through several key historical time frames, transitioning from aesthetic readings to more specific meanings in sociology and anthropology. Using his assessment in the current study facilitates an understanding of culture as having undergone many ideological and theoretical shifts to include a more nuanced view of its contemporary meaning in development communication. The latter subdiscipline did not develop its understanding of the notion in a vacuum but relied heavily on

disciplines outside of communication studies to inform its theories of culture (Stephenson, 2023:24). In this study, Figure 5-2 abridges Hammersley's (2019) recount of culture's theoretic development as evident in five early phases (see 5.3.1). Each of these stages provides the current chapter with a view of culture as set in specific frames. Communication studies only developed their own theories of culture until much later, when the Birmingham School in the UK began exploring, through cultural studies, the role of communication and media in society. Later discussions will return to the latter's influence on theorising culture when it and four additional theoretical historical stages are introduced.

5.3.1 The multiple meanings of culture: historical and contemporary views

Hammersley's (2019) review of culture details the theorisation of culture firstly from the anthropological view, secondly as viewed in the social sciences, and thirdly as represented in cultural studies. He writes that what is regarded as "culture" is deeply dependent on what phenomena are being described or clarified, in addition to the reasons behind such explanations (Hammersley, 2019:96). Therefore, Stephenson (2023:24-25) rightfully claims that any academic study that intends to grasp the notion in its specific disciplinary framework and contextual application, must first take stock of its multiple meanings in historical terms. She adds that its continuing conceptual-linguistic expansion in contemporary terms also presents a complexity of what "culture" means and what it "does".

Hammersley's (2019:13-19) reappraisal of culture as related to aesthetic cultivation focuses on Matthew Arnold's definition of culture, describing it as "the best that has been known and said in the world". This view corresponds with the etymological evolution of culture described as a humanistic endeavour (see 5.2). In this assessment, art, literature, and ideas were regarded aesthetically and spiritually as having a positive moral charge: culture encourages and cultivates virtuousness against the materiality of human progress evident in science, industrialism, and urbanisation (Hammersley, 2019:18-19; Stephenson, 2023:29). In this view, culture was, however, viewed as a singular and elitist concept (compare Servaes, 1999; Mefalopulos, 2008). Moreover, Stephenson (2023:29) relates that his optic invites a view of culture as a product.

Aestheticism	• Time frame: 18th to 19th centuries. • Theoretical influences: Romanticism and classical humanism. • Key ideas: Culture signified the ideal of a good life through the literary sphere and the world of ideas against materialism. Culture is Western-centric and comprises a singular notion.
Anthropology	• Time frame: 19th century. • Theoretical influences: Culture is not a biological phenomenon, but comprises a set of learned behaviours, beliefs, and practices that can vary across societies. Lévi-Strauss inspired the notion of culture-as-meaning-making as theorised by cognitive anthropologists. • Key ideas: The beginning of integrating idea of "cultural diversity" and complexity into theorising culture, albeit still from a Western optic about evolutionary ideas about "primitive" versus "civilised" cultures.
Sociology	• Time frame: 19th century. • Theoretical influences: Ideas about culture were influenced by several key French and German sociologists (e.g., Comte, Durkheim, Tönnies, and Simmel), who focussed on notions related to culture, such as social order, community vs. society, and subjective versus objective cultures. • Key ideas: Culture comprises human practices, has psycho-social dimensions and is accordingly symbolic.
Diffusion & Functionalism	• Time frame: Early part of the 20th century. • Theoretical influences: Notions about diffusion and functionalism, meaning culture (i.e. cultural traits and systems with differentiated functions) is transferrable from one culture to the next. • Key ideas: Culture is not a biological phenomenon, but comprise human practices, has psycho-social dimensions and is accordingly also symbolic.
Marxist influence	• Time frame: Early part of the 20th century. • Theoretical influences: Marxism provided the impetus to the idea that culture should be viewed via the optic of capitalism. Key thinkers are Lukacs and theorists from the Frankfurt School (e.g. Horkheimer and Adorno) • Key ideas: Culture reflects class struggles. Culture can be used by dominant groups to subjugate others. It is also a site of struggle and eventually people's empowerment.

Figure 5-2 Google Search illustration of the linguistic origins of "culture". (Source: as adapted from Hammersley, 2019).

At the start of the nineteenth century, the aesthetic understanding shifted to an anthropological view. Hammersley (2019:19-25) relates that this perspective was associated with evolutionary characteristics (cf. Tufte, 2017). While these theories cleared culture from its singular biological optic, Hammersley (2019) relates, they also arose during the emergence of European colonialism when Western culture was thought to be superior and imitated by non-Western societies (see Stephenson, 2023:28-29).

The founding anthropological theorists of culture and their subsequent critics also located the study of culture in the humanities instead of the natural sciences (Hammersley, 2019:23-25; Servaes, 1999). Consequently, many other variations in how culture was theorised followed. These interpretations of theories of culture foregrounded the negative impacts of “cultural contact” (e.g. colonialism, nation-building, neocolonialism, globalisation) while also accepting that cultural variations were possible even within societies. In this view, culture is seen as a way of life (Stephenson, 2023:31).

Hammersley (2019:25) concludes his anthropological recount of culture by relating Claude Lévi-Strauss’s ideas. Culture entails “linguistics distinctions that enable a person to act competently within the relevant group and the social situations that members of this group encounter” (Hammersley, 2019:25-26; Mefalopulos, 2008). Later, Hammersley (2016:26) reports that culture was theorised from an interpretive optic as symbolic, but as far more fluid and emergent as the cognitive theories suggested. Hammersley's (2019:13-19) reappraisal of culture as related to aesthetic cultivation focuses on Matthew Arnold's definition of culture, describing it as “the best that has been known and said in the world”. This view corresponds with the etymological evolution of culture described as a humanistic endeavour (see 5.2). In this assessment, art, literature, and ideas were regarded aesthetically and spiritually as having a positive moral charge: culture encourages and cultivates virtuousness against the materiality of human progress evident in science, industrialism, and urbanisation (Hammersley, 2019:18-19). In this view, culture was, however, viewed as a singular concept (compare Servaes, 1999; Mefalopulos, 2008).

The founding anthropological theorists of culture and their subsequent critics also located the study of culture in the humanities instead of the natural sciences (Hammersley, 2019:23-25; Servaes, 1999). Consequently, many other variations in how culture was theorised followed.

These interpretations of theories of culture foregrounded the negative impacts of “cultural contact” (e.g. colonialism, nation-building, neocolonialism, globalisation) while also accepting that cultural variations were possible even within societies. In this optic, culture is seen as lifeways, and early thinkers included Franz Boas, who, along with his peers, also started to study the more tangible aspects of culture, for example, as expressed in clothing, food, in addition to less material aspects that included practices and rituals and knowledge and belief systems within groups (Stephenson, 2023:31).

The last two sections of Hammersley's (2019:27-58) book narrate how culture was understood in nineteenth-century sociology in different forms, and several as inspired by varieties of Marxism. French sociology (i.e. specifically in the work of Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim and their respective ideas of positivism and “conscience collective”) secured the idea of “cultural phenomena” in creating social order (Hammersley, 2019:28, 41). Comte, while not using the term culture, conceived of the idea of forming a new secular religion that could replace the declining religion of Christianity and institutionalised in new social organisations that would steer social relations. Essentially Comte sought to establish a notion of culture as a way of life. In this theory of culture, France and other Western nations could then close the gap between the material development of society and the supposed social beliefs, roots, and attitudes that were considered prerequisites (Hammersley, 2019:28-29, 41). His ideas encouraged Durkheim to develop his ideas about culture and social organisation.

During the same period, German sociology ascended. German sociologists’ ideas of culture resembled the anthropological aesthetic view and were employed to grasp the opposite of the materialism of civilisation, especially in studying law and economics (Hammersley, 2019:29-30, 41). These views were heavily infused with nascent German nationalism and the notion that the material development of the nation could be undermined by the very processes from which it emerged (Servaes, 1999:9-12, 59-63). Hammersley (2019:30) further argues that Ferdinand Tönnies (1887), via his book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, has significantly impacted German sociological views, albeit ambivalent ones, about modernity. Tönnies grappled with how culture in Germany could be preserved despite the negative impact of modern capitalism and bureaucratic social organisations. *Gemeinschaft* refers to the idea of a group or a collective characterised by close, tangible human ties, a recognisable collective identity and collective

action, while *Gesellschaft* indicates the lack of such interconnections (Bosch, 2003:109; Day, 2003:35).

Georg Simmel also inspired the interpretation of culture as patterns of belief and human behaviours that emerge out of ordinary life and as differentiated between subjective (i.e. individual knowledge) and objective culture (i.e. the collective domains of arts, music, scholarship etc.) This social differentiation (or the move toward a more complete society) was identified as the driver of social development, leading to culturally diverse and independent spheres, as well as making people unique. However, it causes tensions insofar as people feel, in their subjectivity, alienated from their cultures despite being dependent on them for their individual and social development and flourishing (Hammersley, 2019:30).

Max Weber (Hammersley, 2019:31-32) regards humans as cultural beings that can perceive and shape their world. Weber's work incorporated human ideas and values as a central feature to social life, always directing and redirecting the material life and most patently in his work that explores the interrelationship between culture and the types of societies they produce (Servaes, 1995:56). The most famous example of this theory is Weber's analysis of Protestantism as a work ethic associated with the rise of modern capitalism and social development. Weber's theory explains how rationalisation, cultural values, religious beliefs, and social structures (i.e. capitalism) intersect and affect human action and, ultimately, the development of an increasingly rational society.

The ideology of culture as evolutionary was replaced with notions about diffusion and functionalism (see Geertz, 1975; Servaes, 1999, Tufte, 2017). As stated by Hammersley (2019:22-23), growing concerns with the single, evolutionary framework of culture found a foothold in the English anthropologist Edward Tylor's (1871) description of culture as a "way of life" and a complexity that encompasses a more holistic view. Culture thus came to include knowledge, beliefs, the arts, morals, laws, and other human practices, rituals, and practices that people as members of society attain (Morris, 2003:225-248). Accordingly, culture indicates differences between individual members of society regarding their "abilities, skills, temper, personality, and so on." This affirmed the viewpoint that culture is not a biological phenomenon but has psycho-social dimensions and is accordingly symbolic (Servaes, 1999). As this holistic view of culture

clarifies in functional anthropologists' theories, culture includes multiplicity (e.g. Boas, Malinowski and Radcliff-Browne) (Hammersley, 2019:23-25; Malan, 1998:53-56).

Weber's and Simmel's work consequently hugely influenced several Marxist scholars¹⁶ in the early twentieth century, notably George Lukacs, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory (Bronner, 2011:80-83). These theorists studied aesthetic culture as signifying a meaningful life, while "mass culture" as a product of capitalism and instrumental reason indicated a loss of individual autonomy and a disillusionment with modern life (Hammersley, 2019:31-34).

More recently, culture has been theorised as evident in five additional stages. Firstly, anthropologists studied culture contained in the ideas of subcultures and counter-cultures evident in Western societies in either positive or negative interpretations (Hammersley, 2019:34-35; Servaes, 1999:56-59). Some research studied marginalised groups (i.e. lower classes and ethnic and religious minorities) and their autonomous beliefs, values, and activities. Other theorists studied subordinated cultures as reactionary phenomena from several different vantage points and themes. This included research on subcultures' relation to generating law-breaking, how subcultures' social participation and mobility in society were restricted, and how they could be regarded as countering dominant cultures and prevalent inequalities.

Sociological research that was conducted in Europe and the US focused on culture within the framework of the elite members of the dominant classes (Hammersley, 2019:35-36). In this instance, the primary concern was with how these cultures produced and perpetuated class divisions in society, which then created further inequalities and injustices. These researchers paralleled Arnold's aesthetic view of culture to the extent that "high culture" equals the "dominant ideology" imposed on subcultures or marginalised cultures. Hammersley (2019:35-36) specifically relates Pierre Bourdieu's (1987) contention that values are arbitrary and caused by a dominant group's exertion of power. In Chapter 6, which discusses empowerment in the

¹⁶ For more information, refer to Hammersley (2019:31-34) for a full account of these critical theorists' work on culture, and to other Marxist theorists such as Ogburn (1922) and American sociologists who were interested in the idea of "cultural lag" and its relation to functionalism.

participatory paradigm, this study will return to Bourdieu's ideas of culture concerning the relations between power and empowerment (see 6.3.1.2).

Hammersley's (2019:37-38) sociological analysis of culture then considers how the concept was framed in research about organisational and occupational cultures. Without presently delving into the details, his appraisal highlights how formal and informal organisational structures produce different patterns of power. As forms of authority and resistance, these interpretations of culture remind one of Arnstein's "ladder of participation" and White's theory of participation (see 3.3.5) that differentiate how people's participation in development settings can range between minimalist and maximalist versions that are absorbed in different interests. Likewise, these views on culture already point to discussions in Section 6.3.1.2 that are engaged with how power analysis could intersect with interpretations of empowerment about the agency-structure binary.

Recent sociology, Hammersley (2019:38-39) recounts, has shifted in examining culture as applicable to whole societies instead of individual groups. A distinction is made between "sociology of culture" and "cultural sociology"; culture is either viewed as being part of society (sociology of culture) or as being about the role of culture in human life (cultural sociology). The argument is that cultural sociology presents the scaffolding of social meaning via code, narrative, and symbolic action so that culture can assume its rightful place as a social structuring force. Culture is both an enabling and restraining phenomenon and a nuanced way in which human meaning-making occurs, and "cultural sociology" acknowledges that culture operates in highly contradictory social contexts.

According to Hammersley (2019:39-40), cultural sociology recently also rejects the idea, as indicated by Talcott Parsons, that culture determines the ends of action. The alternative view holds that culture is a resource through which people make sense of the world and decide on actions that specific circumstances require. This view then departs from a macro or meso level consideration towards a micro level focus on the contextualised actions of individuals that could be either more or less institutionalised. Likewise, Hammersley (2019:40) explains that the field has also studied how people shape their values based on learned behaviour rather than

predetermined ends. He states that cultural sociology examines how culture is condensed in material objects, which serve as symbols, or as either affordances or limits to human action.

Lastly, the sociocultural approach to culture considers how the sociology of scientific knowledge introduced new views on culture in the 1970s (Hammersley, 2019:40-41). Referring to the work of Thomas Kuhn (1970) on scientific norms and of knowledge and the isolation of knowledge from social variables and influences thereon, critics later insisted that scientific knowledge must also be regarded as a sociocultural phenomenon just like any other. These views argued that knowledge claims and (Kuhnian) paradigms draw on available ideas that permeate societies and, meaning that they must be seen as cultural phenomena and that are also open to sociological assessment.

Hammersley's (2019:41-58) review of culture then reflects on the concept from the optic of transdisciplinary cultural studies that emerged in the 1960s onwards. He says that seen through this optic, culture examines the complexity of how people make sense and give meaning to their lived experiences. Many cultural studies are preoccupied with these interests as they relate to the mass media, advertising, and narratives. Furthermore, other cultural studies theorists study the interconnection between, among other things, culture, power, technology, popular culture, and the economy. While cultural studies emerged as an interdisciplinary field in Britain¹⁷ in the 1960s from anthropological and sociological views of culture, also as influenced by Marxist theory, structuralism and post-structuralism, it also counters many of the theories in these discipline and approaches by employing analytical strategies borrowed from literary studies and media studies. What several analysts in this field have in common is a concern with dominant ideologies and how to counter them.

¹⁷ The research conducted by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall under the auspices of University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies is well-known, and Hammersley (2019:42) goes into great detail in his appraisal of the how conceptual trajectory of culture was signified by its development in the UK.

In a hugely simplified version of Hammersley's concluding appraisal, the British cultural studies turn can be abridged as follows:

- Cultural studies in the UK shifted its focus from a traditional high-culture notion (think Arnold's aesthetic view) to low-culture, as evident in the working classes, popular culture, the mass media, and other everyday practices. Hoggart, Williams and Stuart Hall are some of the theorists that encouraged this shift. Hall particularly facilitates a view of culture that underscores how cultural artefacts reflect and shape social identities and power relations in society. Culture was not seen as either elitist or populist, but as available to all as "a way of life" and as functional to help all lead improved lives.
- Many of these cultural critics drew heavily on not only a very conflicted, heterogeneous Western Marxism (e.g., Critical Theory) but also on British Marxism and Continental forms available in the work of Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser. The result of these infusions in cultural studies was a focus on the role of culture in reproducing existing social order, and hence what Hall famously terms inquiry as "politics by other means" (Hall, 1990:12 as cited by Hammersley, 2019:48d).
- Markedly different in their approaches, Gramsci and Althusser signified the difference between culturalism and structuralism. Gramsci's view about power will come into view again in Chapter 6 (see 6.3.2.1) when his notions about power are outlined. But here it suffices to explain that Gramsci influenced culture studies insofar as he defined the concept of hegemony, referring to it as the cultural means through which social classes can control society. His ideas also underscored the interaction between mass-produced culture and the cultural practices of subordinate classes and furthermore portrayed history as a process of teleological development (Hammersley, 2019:47-48).
- Conversely, Hammersley (2019:49-50) identifies Althusser's view as one that works against this teleology by focusing on a structuralist approach and by rejecting the humanistic Marxian epistemology of socio-cultural development. He investigated on the ideological role of culture without presenting any specific methodologies of analysis, which caused cultural studies to employ the work of Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan for suitable approaches. Althusser did, however, encourage culture studies to explore the interplay between socioeconomic process, culture and agency.

- Cultural studies also turned to Ferdinand Saussure's theory of semiology to analyse the ideological role of mass culture – for example, in the scholarship of Levi-Strauss and Barthes. These theorists researched how dominant culture can be reinforced by popular culture (i.e. via text and images). Others employed structuralism in psychoanalytic theories (e.g., Lacan) to examine how consumers are subjectively formed by cultural texts and products that perpetuate dominant ideologies such as capitalism (Hammersley, 2019:49-50).
- However, structuralism was critiqued for the assumptions it made about people as passive recipients of cultural products. Hall challenged communication the deterministic views of theorists and Marxists by, for example, proposing three types of audience responses: acceptance of the preferred reading of media texts, selective agreement, and outright rejection theory. Oversimplified here, this approach encouraged the acceptance of varied receiver receptions and highlighted the potential of political resistance (think of Gramsci's work) against dominant cultures and social order. In this manner, the idea was refuted that the media could directly and deterministically imprint ideologies on receivers (Hammersley, 2019:49-50, 51). The media could then become a site of resistance against the dominant culture.
- According to Hammersley (2019:50-51), the 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of social movements that were epitomised in feminism. These movements represented the political scope of cultural studies and, along with postcolonial studies, extended cultural studies critique against Eurocentrism, patriarchy and colonial legacies. This furtherance of critical perspectives paved the way to include marginalised voices and experiences in cultural analyses. These movements furthermore shifted an understanding of culture to include the politics of difference and recognition, introduced in the notion of intersectionality, of the multiple identities that reached beyond traditional class categories. Research proliferated to include analysis of gendered media products and women's active responses to them in film, magazines, romantic fiction and so on. This caused a shift in understanding culture as developmental (i.e., where the impact of cultural phenomena on sociopolitical change is studied) to views that valued such products for the pleasure consumers derived from them. Hammersley (2019:51) notes however that these theories also underscored the tensions between developmental and

pluralist ideas of culture. Postcolonial studies accepted the globalised nature of societies and called the fabrication of cultures into question – particularly the fabrication that occurred, as Said documented, from the Western gaze and through processes of exotic “othering” (Hammersley, 2019:51). The idea of culture as hybridity, as a result of cultural contact, borrowing, imposition and communication, was also presented via the feminist and postcolonial movements and especially from the optic of resisting cultural dominance.

- Hammersley (2019:51-58) then traces various of the shifts and tensions that occurred in cultural studies. Of significance for the current study are those cultural analyses that drew on Michel Foucault’s ideas of governmentality to study institutionalised forms of culture. Section 6.3.1.2 reviews Foucauldian ideas about power more closely. For now, it must be noted that the cultural optic moved towards a view of culture as in the purview of policymaking to effect a tool for social change and transformation. As Chapter 6’s discussions elaborate, the cultural turn encouraged development communication theorists to study how institutionalised culture regulated everyday human behaviour and how dominant cultures should be resisted if empowerment is to occur. Hammersley’s (2019) appraisal of the shifts and tensions in cultural studies also brings into view questions in this field that treat culture as discourse analysis as evident in different contexts. In its most recent development, cultural studies find expression in new materialism that challenges the importance of culture and discourse, instead proposing a dissolution between the biological and social, and thus abandoning the concept of culture altogether.

Why should development communication, particularly the participatory approach, analyse the notion of culture? This is a question we turn to in the following section, which traces the theoretical descriptions of culture in development communication.

5.3.2 Culture: a development communication theoretical trajectory

Writing about culture and development in social theory more than a decade ago, the sociologist John Clammer (2012:3-5) lamented the fact that even after decades of generating development policies and practices, academic theories, and practitioner best practices, the rising scale of

human inequality and suffering, and ecological disaster persisted in the form an unprecedented crisis. Among merely a handful of the challenges that development paradigms and other formalised efforts had failed to alleviate, he notes growing inequalities *between* and *within* nations, regional and local conflicts, terrorism, corruption, social and gender inequality, lack of access to basic infrastructures and services, globalised crime, various health epidemics, changing climate patterns and disasters as just a handful of the plethora of challenges that development paradigms and other formalised efforts had failed to alleviate.

McAnany (2012:3, 7) raises a similar question: How is it possible that despite global efforts since President Truman envisioned it in his Four Point Program in 1949, development remains incomplete or sometimes elusive? The ongoing debate about development's meaning and its attainment is further underscored by several development indices, programmes and goals that were developed over the years by international development and aid agencies (Al-Zo'by, 2019:560; Clammer, 2012:4, 5, 9;). According to Gumuçio-Dagron (2008:69), all efforts reveal the following stark fact: Despite nearly eighty years of development communication studies, human society has not progressed as imagined by various paradigms, approaches, theories or models (see 2.2 to 2.6 for outlines on the field's evolution). Servaes (2020a:7-8) remarks that despite the passing of older ideas, development communication still approaches culture with very narrow definitions and the field still with how to effect positive social change. Clammer (2012:3) notes that "decades of technocratic, economistic and managerial 'development' policies and practices" have not addressed most of humankind's development needs and wants. He correctly states:

"For while the whole concept of 'development' has become rightly suspect, as its destructive, environmentally unfriendly and socially marginalising effects have become apparent, the problems that the concept was designed to address are still not only present, but on the whole worsening."

Much of this disappointment stems from academic discourse's failure to critically appraise what is understood as "development", specifically in debates on development within a

multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary framework¹⁸ (see Chitnis, 2005). McAnany (2012:6) contends that, whereas academic discourse is essential in theorising development, its practical application fails due to its enactment by individuals who have little theoretical concern. Similarly, Clammer (2012:3-4) states that narrowly focused specialisation fields within development studies have created a hybrid understanding of what development means, thereby neglecting potentially valuable interpretations of development in, for example, philosophy, ecology and religious studies.

A vast field of uncritical and nebulous theory remains concerning development's definition and application. Moreover, this failure arises partly due to a break between theory and practice, which often results in unsuitable academic concepts being adopted in real-world settings. To reiterate this section's opening question: Why interrogate the meaning and application of development in the context of the notion of *culture*, especially through the lens of the participatory approach?

Most previous development communication paradigms have disappointed in driving social change and transformation, largely because they were rooted in the grand narratives of Western philosophies and strategies that were focused narrowly on economic progress (see Section 2.2 concerning the modernist approach). The paradigms preceding the participatory approach neglected what development meant to communities they were meant to serve or, as Gumuçio-Dagron (2008:69) observes, failed "to identify what people need, let alone what they really needed (which often is not the same thing)" (cf. Dutta, 2021). Al-Zo'by (2019:560) explains that dominant development paradigms did not completely ignore culture in development. In fact, he notes that the establishment of UNESCO in 1945 was based on the centrality of culture in development, but while viewing instrumentality itself as becoming a development objective. In both academic discourse and development practice, culture has therefore often been interpreted deterministically – culture is therefore disconnected from local realities or obstacles to development. Such readings also neglected to grasp how culture could "promote human fulfilment, happiness, creativity, satisfaction and harmonious relationship with nature" in a

¹⁸ These disciplines have involved anything from economics, anthropology, sociology, and environmental studies to communication and media studies, and all of their narrower subfields that have engaged with the meaning and enactment of development (Clammer, 2012:3-4).

developmental and nonmaterial way, which should all suffice as indices of development and social change (Clammer, 2012:6; Servaes, 2002c:7-8).

5.3.3 Culture: a new paradigm for development communication

Like its interfacing concepts, culture is a buzzword intrinsic to the development of communication discourse and praxis. Reflection on the notion almost instantly suggests rich, multifaceted ideas about its existence, but equally of its miscellaneous manifestations. For that reason, some critics now regard it as a problematic trope that many have employed for instrumental or co-opted ends (Al-Zo'by, 2019:560-561; Clammer, 2017:2-4; Dutta, 2018:88-89). Dutta (2018:87-104) gives an incisive assessment of the global rise of “culturalist logics” in development which has co-opted culture as an instrument of neoliberalism and (therefore) a source of profiteering. He is especially critical of how market imperatives have infiltrated the development industry, international aid and finance institutions and their narratives, thus decentring the social change that the subaltern requires. His critique points to Al-Zo'by's (2019:559-569) denunciation of global sustainable policies by the UN that often accord culture centrality in development but then “largely and ambiguously” stay within the limits of neutralist globalisation discourse.

As outlined in section 5.3.2, Clammer (2012:6,7,9) emphasises that development should depart from essentialist anthropological and sociological interpretations of culture (e.g., as exemplified in modernist, neoliberal and co-opted development industry views) by interrogating its underlying philosophical, ethical and even political notions – which he refers to as cultural politics (cf. Dutta, 2018). He contends for a reappraisal of the meaning of culture in development discourse and practice as both a historical and a contemporary charge, proposing fresh perspectives on culture that are especially relevant in contemporary terms and inform the participatory approach's analysis thereof. Relating culture and development closely should however not simply suggest a connection between culture *and* development. As Clammer (2012:15, 22, 24) contends, it should rather include an analysis of development *as* culture. He claims that social change (whether economic or social) that is devoid of cultural content risks exacerbating the inherent challenges and problems in a local community's idiosyncratic development context. Therefore, Clammer argues that paying attention to the complicated but

requisite links between *culture* and *development* can facilitate a fuller, more authentic expression of social change through the participatory paradigm and strengthen its strategic use in development. Consequently, Clammer (*ibid.*) views the development of culture as a process, which is to say not merely as the reinsertion of culture into the analysis.

This alludes to arguments made in Chapter 3, section 3.3.5 of the place or role of people's participation in the development process. Clammer (2012:43) writes that a new cultural approach to development requires the view that people's "participation" in development is not only an efficient methodology for effecting development but lies at the core of a new view of how culture can foster transformation and social change. His argument states that people's participation in their own lives requires autonomous decision-making, along with individual and communal empowerment that necessitates new practical strategies and theoretical understandings of culture's value and use. This aligns with the CCA, is examined when Freire's metatheoretical assumptions of culture are discussed in section 5.4 (Dutta, 2018; Zapata, 2019).

The Belgian scholar Jan Servaes, (1983, 1999) pioneered the introduction of culture into development communication discourse and its empirical settings. Servaes (2020:7) cites research by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) as one of the first-ever critical reviews of culture in the field, identifying 164 concepts and definitions of the notion at the time. He also references Thompson *et al.* (1990), who proposed that contemporary culture can either be understood from a broad or narrow view. Broadly, culture entails "values, beliefs, norms, rationalisations, symbols and ideologies", whereas, in the narrow view, it is defined as "the total way of life as a person", which includes their interpersonal and attitudes aspects (Servaes, 2020a:7). This agrees with the discussions in section 5.2 concerning the anthropological and social meanings of culture as a way or pattern of life.

Servaes and his colleagues critique past development paradigms for assuming that the identities and local *cultures* had to be subsumed within exogenous cultural systems, ideals, and values for progress and change to occur (Melkote & Steeves, 2015: 386-387; Servaes & Lie, 2008:158-179, Servaes & Malikhao, 2008:159; Servaes, 2005:49-50). They note that while cultures were sometimes recognised as barriers to development, they were also perceived as being detrimental to Western development ideals. Against modernisation, a new cultural approach to development

emerged that rejected views of culture as backwardness (i.e., characterised by traditionalism, bad taste, superstitions, fatalism, etc.). These critics also rejected the Western, positivistic interpretation of what culture and development entails. The central idea of modernisation as evolution meant that, in developing nation states, development could happen in a cumulative, predetermined, irreversible, progressive and immanent manner and through the adoption of the sociopolitical culture and technology of developed Western nations (Servaes & Malikha, 2008:159; Waisbord, 2020; Servaes, 2005:49-50). In these outmoded versions of development theory, culture was seen in an evolutionary manner and as an end goal to be reached.

As the literature above also indicates, development recipients in developing nations – in this study referred to as ‘beneficiaries’ – frequently did not transfigure their core cultural identities to fit external development views and applications. Consequently, development or meaningful social change did not transpire as had been envisioned in these earlier paradigms and their specific readings of culture’s place and role in social change. Servaes (2005:50) proposes that in the new age of globalisation, the connection between culture and (development) communication should comprise a continual negotiation process and not simply be a process of convergence or a situation where a non-Western culture is replaced with a Westernised version (cf. Dutta, 2018).

Over two decades ago, Steeves (2000:11-12) wrote from a feminist scholarship standpoint akin to cultural studies, claiming that to challenge gendered power and hegemonic agendas, it was crucial to foster and centralising dialogue within the development context. Her research describes dialogue as the talking, listening and sharing of information, as well as negotiations on development strategies and initiatives in the form of feminist social movements, events, alliances and conferences. She cites the 1995 Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing as a notable instance where dialogue as development occurred. This event typified how various interest groups (i.e. intellectuals, policy-makers, politicians and activists) could together reflect or “trialogue” on women’s issues in the development setting with the hope to not only discourse on but also of effect meaningful social change in real-world settings.

In Chapter 4, it was explained that dialogue serves as a communicative platform and moment where diverse social actors – but especially the marginalised and oppressed – can voice and exchange their development ideas (see 4.4.2). As the previous chapter established, dialogue can

only occur provided that it is inherently linked to the cultural context of local communities and is respected and incorporated into dialogical communication. It was argued that dialogic praxis requires cultural respect and could reinforce culture and its potential transformation by reflecting and interesting the hegemonic groups of a particular society. Although discussions on dialogue did not delve into the explicit links between culture and dialogue, they nevertheless did intimate that Freirean dialogic praxis and its key dimensions guide the interactions between diverse social actors in the development situation

Nonetheless, Steeves (*ibid.*) also bemoans the fact that many elements, such as lagging timelines and lacking dialogic initiative occasions, limit the employment of dialogue in development discourse and its eventual enactment. As Servaes and Lie (2008:69) describe it, institutions and minds who have predetermined, vertical ideas about development (e.g., modernist approaches) tend to neglect cultural perspectives that call for horizontal interpretations and practices. As an answer to these challenges, Steeves focuses on one obstacle that requires serious concern and has a bearing on the current research's understanding of the participatory approach:

"In my view; the most fundamental reality that links ideas of gender, development, and communication is culture. Culture is crucial to dialogue, yet exceedingly complex" (Steeves, 2000:12).

She contends that culture is inseparable from communication. In this regard, she cites Stuart Hall (Hall, 1976:16 as quoted by Steeves, 2000:12), who delineated three basic characteristics of culture: culture is *shared by members of a group* and this, in turn, helps *define them*; culture is also not a natural or innate human quality, *but is learned*; and in learning a culture, everything else is interrelated in the process (refer to 5.3.1 concerning Hall's cultural analysis). Steeves (*ibid.*) also references the scholar James Carey as someone who conceptualised communication as a process of shared meaning (in 1989), not merely as the linear information transmission that was indicative of outmoded development communication models. In a new cultural approach to development, Clammer (2012:7-8) also argues for a distinctive methodology in the form of *listening* to foster authentic, relevant social change. He defines *listening* as an act where development agents and experts hear the stories of the local communities while respecting their unique, indigenous narratives and understandings of past and present realities, as well as any

future aspirations. These views correspond to earlier discussions on culture from within the “cultural studies turn”.

These views correspond to earlier discussions on culture as viewed in the cultural studies turn (see 5.2 as well as with how dialogue was defined in Chapter 4 as an intersubjective communicative interaction instead of a monological and objectifying one (see 4.4).

This dialogic methodology furthermore introduces the recovery of suppressed voices in modes and expressions that have previously been marginalised, ignored or actively suppressed: that is to say, music, art, religions, local spirituality, local ecological models, as well as what Clammer (2012:8) terms the most ignored source of protest and expression of future aspirations, namely, indigenous literature. A new cultural approach does not differentiate between the so-called vertical and horizontal minds. As will be discussed in section 5.4 on the CCA (Dutta 2020a:102), it emphasises human agency from the bottom up, resisting exogenous control while making sense of historical circumstances. Dutta (2018:98) argues that, through understanding culture as resistance and imagination, new paths become possible for people’s meaningful participation in bringing about desired social change from the bottom up. In this cultural analysis, development is not predetermined or static but is dynamic and open to challenge, justification and renegotiation. This happens because local people’s individual and collective voices finally take centrality in the larger process (Dutta, 2020a:102-103; Clammer, 2012:17).

As discussions on the Freirean interpretation of culture will argue, the indigenous knowledge related to development is another crucial concept in the participatory approach. Briefly defined here, indigenous knowledge emphasises recognising and applying previously neglected or suppressed local knowledge systems, beliefs, values, and practices into the development context (Unesco, 2020).

The academic, Jan Servaes, introduced the idea of culture and communication to the development communication subfield in 1989 when he published *Communication for development: one world, multiple cultures*. As discussed in previous chapters, in following the principles of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation’s “Another Development” model, Servaes introduced the notion of *multiplicity* into post-modernisation and dependency development models by drawing attention to the diversity and distinct historical contexts of different nations

(Hemer & Tufte, 2005:15-15). These renewed foci formed the foundations for the idea of postcolonial thinking, the practice of participation, and the participatory approach that would follow the philosophy of multiplicity. Via this philosophy, the idea of multiple cultures and modes of thinking – other than only a modernist interpretation – were introduced into development communication (Serveas & Malikhao, 2008:93). These notions were however already identified in 1980 in the UNESCO “MacBride Report”, known officially as “Many Voices, One World” and published by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems.

The report foregrounded preserving and promoting cultural diversity in the face of globalisation and homogenisation (MacBride, 1980:40-41, 159-162). The link between communication and culture was also highlighted, showing that mass media systems can foster dialogue between cultures and societies (MacBride, 1980:40-41, 162-163). Furthermore, it raised concerns about the dominance of Western media and its cultural imperialism that had to be counteracted (MacBride, 1980:141-149). Closely related to this concern, the MacBride report therefore called for more diverse media ownership and representation of global cultures while underscoring the cultural rights and needs of all individuals and communities worldwide (MacBride, 1980:96-104, 172-173, 265).

Returning to Steeves (2000:13-17), culture must be described – still in the context of women and development – as exhibiting two dimensions, namely the material and the nonmaterial aspects. This study reasons that these two dimensions reach beyond women’s issues and are applicable to any marginalised or subjugated individual or group of individuals in a development setting. This is even more true in *passé* development thinking, where local cultures of developing countries were suppressed, transformed or removed by Western “experts” of social change to make way for the modernist, materialist idea of development. These views correspond to the cultural theories discussed in section 5.3.1, which focuses on how culture has material, spiritual and symbolic meanings.

In the material sense, culture is described as being economically deterministic – in the sense constructs such as class, urbanisation, literacy, and increased media use. In line with Steeves’s (2000:13) gendered perspective, those at the margins lack resources and privileges such as education and access to economic mobility, which in turn limits them from transforming their

unwanted lived experiences – as discussions about “the subaltern” in the CCA will show, Steeves (*ibid.*) view is that the Western consumer culture, especially in the current globalised world, dominates so-called traditional culture and values to the extent that the latter never enters the discourse or practice of development efforts.

This status quo already originated in the modernity paradigm. In this lens, human needs, suffering and possible solutions are thus framed in the economic system. While some might claim that the economic frame should be removed altogether, Clammer (2012:39) proposes a fresh approach to culture’s role in development when referring to contemporary anthropological ideas about the connection between culture and political economy (see 5.2). Culture is hence not removed from the economy. Still, the economy is embedded in culture and viewed from a constructivist viewpoint as “a system of values, evaluations, processes of production, consumption and exchange” and social arrangements that are established on “particular patterns of organisation”. The former UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuéllar (1996:15) writes in the “World Commission on Culture and Development Report” that governments cannot determine a people’s culture, but that the opposite is true. It suggests that governments who manage a nation-state’s economy must be in dialogue with local people. This is to ensure that cultural interpretations, values and belief systems of the people are incorporated into how a government manages the production and consumption of goods and services, the distribution of money, and the management of resources within a country. Dialogue between a society’s macro, meso, and micro levels and institutions is necessary for this to occur.

Access to communications, discretionary time, and education (e.g., Bourdieu’s habitus) also come into play here. These are the three variables that Steeves (2000:13) links to the lack of dialogue about social change on a grassroots level that are inherent in local people’s interpretation of development and cultural approach: Among other variables, marginalised economic status coheres with foreign language proficiency, education, professional employment, and travel opportunities as possible challenges to accessing dialogic spaces. The argument holds that very few people willingly give up their attachment to material possessions and status when they enter a dialogic setting (Moyo, 2014:5997-5999; Steeves, 2000:14). Steeves’s argument holds that an extraordinary level of energy, intelligence, sensitivity, self-awareness and reflexivity come into play when a development communicator’s dialogues about

materialist culture. This statement highlights the importance of considering culture as a part of the political economy. As was indicated earlier, the concepts of culture and economy are interdependent and they directly influence one another's meanings. This has significant implications for how development is perceived and reflected upon in modern human society. Therefore, it is essential to avoid separating culture and economy and acknowledge their intertwined nature. These arguments support the current study's thesis that, in the participatory communication approach, culture must retain a critical and dialectic nature that puts the humanity of development beneficiaries front and centre.

De Cuéllar (1995:15) observes that any development devoid of cultural context or content is growth without soul. Referencing the scholarship of Rist (1997:230), Schech (2019:293) describes such development discourse and practice as virtual and synthetic. This argument claims that development cannot simply be physical and quantifiable but that the economic argument for development cannot be disregarded either when debating the meaning of development in a new cultural approach. Via a report, titled "Our Creative Diversity", the United Nations introduced the notion of *cultural diversity* as an important lodestone for a cultural development framework, advocating for key concepts such as voice, empowerment and participation of all peoples (Dutta, 2020:a143). Servaes's (2005:65) remarks refer to the notion of cultural freedom as contained in the cited report. In contrast to individual freedom, cultural freedom refers to collective freedom as a condition for individual freedom to flourish. The report states that "of the most basic needs is to be left free to define our own basic needs" (De Cuéllar, 1996:15).

These arguments reference Freire's discussion of human values when discussing the prerequisites for his dialogic praxis –development is not simply built on mechanistic, technical foundations but established on shared values of trust, love, communion, and solidarity that are not only prerequisites for dialogue about development but also continually emerge from it (see section 4.4). These values affirm a cultural approach to development that comprises ethical and philosophical enterprises, not political or economic ones (Clammer, 2012:7; Schech, 2018-291). Culture then becomes a truly humane conception of development in which the notions of human rights, needs, freedoms and entitlements, and other abstract categories such as the hopes and future memories of human beings are included. De Cuéllar (1995:15) already highlighted similar and other values in the "World Commission on Culture and Development Report". The former

UN Secretary-General writes that respect for all cultures and those whose values are tolerant of others should inform development discourse and practice. De Cuéllar (*ibid.*) explains that social peace between diverse cultures is a requisite for human development and that alienation and hate are unacceptable values. In contrast, experiments in cultural harmony and pluralism are vital.

All of these interpretations point toward a nonmaterial interpretation of the notion of culture, which moves beyond one-dimensional economic interpretations of development. Steeves (2000:14) mentions religion and spirituality as part and parcel of culture, arguing that these realms are usually problematised from the Western point of view in a binary manner. As has already been made apparent in previous arguments, Clammer (2012:40) argues for elaborating an existential paradigm for development theory that encompasses abstract dimensions of human society and experiences. He argues that such a cultural approach to development should incorporate existential issues since it is essential to confront the nature, causes and dimensions of human suffering. This then makes it possible to build models to alleviate suffering as a philosophical question. He also reaffirms the idea of cultural politics in section 5.2, which involves, among other things, analysing knowledge itself in the form of a kind of social epistemology that is not confined to the cognitive category alone but also includes the senses and emotions and – very important – the relationship between humans and nature. This interpretation of culture ties in with a Freirean dialogic praxis that acknowledges the cognitive capabilities of human agency while also prefiguring and reinforcing human values (see 4.4).

Scholars agree that a secular orientation that splits the material world from the spiritual one often debases spiritual values by seeing them as obstacles to development and social change; for example, when religious values are understood to debase or dehumanise women and their development rights (Dutta, 2020a:123-125; Steeves, 2000:15). In such circumstances, nonmaterial culture is read as being in direct confrontation with development communication and in finding shared dialogic possibilities about development. Steeves (*ibid.*) states that religion (or spirituality), culture and dialogue are inextricable, especially since religion affords the framework in which other material and symbolic expressions of culture transpire (e.g., including food traditions, traditional dress styles, friendship networks, work and study concerns, and behaviours and values concerning familial life). Clammer (2012:17, 24, 41, 184) agrees, observing

that everyday human suffering – and its possible solutions – are embedded in rational, concrete structures while also being tied to the more abstract dimensions of human existence. This is reflected in various subjective experiences, self-conceptions and agencies (in the personal empowerment sense) that extend beyond a purely rational interpretation of human life and development.

A similar philosophy was encountered in Chapter 4's discussion of Freirean liberation theology as it pertains to participation and dialogue: Religion should not be viewed as an obstacle to transformation, but in fact as an important "cultural tool" in development communication (Steeves, 2000:16). Unsurprisingly, mention is then also made of other religious practices such as storytelling, song, drama and the use of various media as cultural utterances that bond culture and the concept of dialogue together. This supports the current study's stance that nonmaterial culture – in the form of religion or more secular spiritualities – is of great importance when working to effect change-oriented initiatives, meaning that it should not be neglected when doing such work.

In summary, the above section established that culture cannot be ignored in the development context. Furthermore, culture is not a static or monologic category but encompasses multiplicity or plurality. It is therefore embedded in a wide variety of institutions, systems and practices that interconnect dialectically and intersectionally with the everyday patterns of human life in society. The discussions above have demonstrated how, in any development setting, culture must be interrogated through dialogic praxis to ensure that the manner in which development and its strategies are conceived is not only culturally cognisant but also culturally specific. A dialogic view of culture that is embedded in human values emphasises that human consciousness and lived experiences are inextricably linked to development circumstances, whether it be in materiality or more abstract form. Additionally, these discussions highlight that culture is not a monolithic conception. Instead, it emerges from within local communities and is prevalent in the subaltern's lived realities.

Culture is therefore not a universal phenomenon but finds meaning and purpose in multiple and pluralist contexts on the macro, meso and (most notably) micro levels. As Schech (2018:291-292) observes, culture is circulatory and its significance and forms vary across societies, between

groups in society and within cultures – both in the form of subcultures and as negotiated by a diversity of social actors. As is the case with the current study, Schech’s contention is clear: Examining culture stresses the importance of conceptualising the development of ideas and solutions that are more effective and beneficial to those who are to benefit. Additionally, culture is both a means and an end. It shapes people’s participation in development, which is itself of value in participatory communication while also facilitating particular development objectives.

The following section builds on these arguments and offers a cultural interpretation of the participatory approach by specifically reviewing Paolo Freire’s ideas about culture and clarifying their metatheoretical assumptions. The aim of this section is to show that Freirean notions of culture could provide the participatory approach with a theoretically rich context to grasp the transformative role of culture in development and social change. Freire’s ideas of *cultural invasion*, contrasted with *cultural action and synthesis*, follow the arguments made above that culture must be understood from differing, competing vantage points. A more locally appropriate and culture-centred meaning of culture can be derived from a better formulated theoretical understanding of these competing phenomena. These frameworks would in turn empower people and promote authentic development.

Freire’s theory on culture will be examined through the additional layer of Dutta’s (2018) culture-centred approach and its underlying metatheoretical positions. In this manner, Freire’s theory is contextualised in a critical, contemporary development communication reality and theoretical framework. The following section aims to demonstrate that such a critical understanding of culture – in relation to the participatory approach to development – will not only problematise the idea of development but also show ways to better effect it by valuing and embracing local meanings of culture within the development context. Freire’s ideas could provide alternative ontologies and epistemologies for culture and open up entirely new methodologies with which to foster development through new meanings of culture.

5.4 FREIRE’S CULTURAL THEORY

Paolo Freire was introduced in the previous chapter as a development practitioner, critical educator and humanist (see 4.4). His dialogic theory was described as a process that enables

individuals or collectives to gain a critical awareness of their oppressive material living conditions and their existential experiences. This “dialogic pedagogy” is a teaching approach that encourages persons, both individually and collectively, to engage in critical reflection and action through dialogic communication so that they can bring about transformation and social change (see 4.4 for an in-depth examination of the critical pedagogy and its metatheoretical assumptions).

5.4.1 Cultural action and synthesis: metatheoretical assumptions

In the final chapter of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire introduced his ideas of cultural action within an anti-dialogic and dialogic framework (Freire, 1970:106-164). The next three subsections discuss these notions through an investigation of their metatheoretical assumptions to inform the theorisation of culture in the participatory paradigm that follows.

5.4.1.1 Communication as cultural action and synthesis: ontological assumptions

One of the most informative ontological statements of critical pedagogy concerns human society: Its perception of human existence entails that humans make sense of their experiences of the so-called objective world and assign meanings to those experiences and perceptions (cf. Schech, 2018:292). The “objective world” thus does not exist externally to human perception and interpretation but, as Freire (1970:106) reaffirms in his theory about cultural action, is contingent upon humans as beings of *praxis*. The notion of *praxis* underscores that humans are capable of both understanding and altering perceived and lived experiences through their labours or actions – and to do so in a manner that is liberated from external experts, facilitators or oppressors who present a dislocated or false reading of the world.

Freire posits that humans are not simply immersed in the world but that they actually emerge from it. In line with what was shown in the previous chapter, as meaning-making beings, humans do not simply use *praxis* for transformation on an individual basis. Through dialogic, intersubjective communication, they can read and take action to transform their existence by overcoming the object-subject binary interpretation. Here, we already have important inroads into Freire’s (1970:107) understanding of cultural action and its opposite, cultural invasion: To

transform oppressive structures, people must exercise their cognitive abilities and employ their agency to confront repressive institutions, relations and practices. Cultural invasion entails the phenomenon where “invaders” or dominant cultures impose their ontology on the invaded or oppressed cultures, further suppressing the latter’s creativity in cognising and altering such innovation (Freire, 1970:133). Inherently, this moment is also anti-dialogic since the invaded or oppressed are prohibited from verbalising or “naming their world” to change it. In other words: Ontologically, cultural invasion involves erasing local cultures, languages and identities. Additionally, only the invaders act while the invaded local cultures only have the illusion of action as expressed by the oppressors.

This agrees with Dutta’s (2018:89-92) CCA, which critiques development discourse and practices that negate local communities and their existential realities and needs in favour of economic rationalities. His CCA is particularly incisive concerning how large multinational development and finance agencies oppress subaltern cultures in development efforts. In his view, the subaltern¹⁹ is not simply marginalised but silenced, which then leads to monologic and often neoliberal worldviews of culture’s role in development. The CCA emphasises that local cultures are invaded or – rather – that cultural values are extracted from local community life by invaders that commodify culture. Local values are extracted, commodified and replaced by external values or what Dutta (2018:91) calls cultural tropes and narratives that whitewash local communities while subsuming them under neoliberal or other veiled oppressive systems.

This corresponds to Al-Zo’by’s (2019) assessment of how the role of culture in sustainable development policies and politics remains stuck in a reductive neoliberal ontology. Writing in the specific context of evaluating how development policy of cultural museums, urban revitalisation projects and heritage sites are conducive to cultural sustainability, Al’Zoby concludes that there is a massive chasm between global and local meanings of culture in development. He also notes that questions about the resilience, capacity building, agency and empower of local cultures are not only declared but also subsumed by neoliberal interpretations. Dutta (2018:91) explains that culture is treated ontologically as creative products for circulation and consumption in a global

¹⁹ Writing about the CCA in a health communication context, Dutta (2007:310) describes the subaltern as referring “to the condition of ‘being under’”.

network, thereby removing them from the lived realities of local communities and furthering the oppression of the subaltern. He calls this cultural invasion “the logic of extraction”.

As was discussed in section 4.3.2, Freire claims that the most fundamental ontological human vocation is to become more fully humanised and not to remain as a mere “‘savage’ or ‘native’ or ‘subversive’” or even a “thing” – specifically viewed from an oppressive Westernised gaze and modernist notion of culture (Freire, 1970:38). In this perspective and the context of emancipatory ideals, Freire then assigns “marginals” or local people a fundamental, central role in the transformation process. He purposefully does this instead of pushing them to the periphery and making them the mere recipients of external cultural views and practices. He describes his theory of cultural action as one that requires revolutionary praxis, which is a process of unification between so-called leaders and “the people” and is facilitated through dialogic action between these interlocutors (Freire, 1970:107-109). Drawing on Gramsci and on subaltern studies – such as the work of Spivak (2000, 2005) – Dutta (2018:94) calls for the disruption of development by the subaltern communities. In this regard, he makes the following statement:

“The work of cultural centering (sic) is intertwined with cultivating an ethic of solidarity that works hand-in-hand with subaltern communities, aware of the relationships of power that constitute subalternity, and committed to deconstructing the power of academic knowledge production toward serving the goal of ‘bringing the subaltern into hegemony’.” (Dutta, 2018:94).

In Freire’s (1970:40) formulation of the argument: Without dialogue, humans are mere “things” that the consciousness of the oppressors can manipulate and transform into their subjugated object. As discussed in Section 4.3.2, in an antidialogic situation, the natural world, property, production, the creations of people, people themselves, and even time, are reduced to objects at the disposal of the external oppressor (Freire, 1970:40). This oppressor views money and its pursuit as the only measure of existence and development (Freire, 1970:40). The CCA also centres the voice of the subaltern in development by calling on them to use storytelling and imagination as creative cultural tools of resistance. With these tools they can fight against being subsumed into the modernist and neoliberal logic. Freire and Dutta agree that the ontology of dialogic praxis as critical consciousness is a vital disruption of grand, hegemonic and monologic narratives about development (Dutta, 2018:96, 98). Both of them also recognise culture as a site of struggle and

resistance that is ontologically committed to transformative processes and outcomes. Both of their approaches accordingly underline the centrality of culture as a phenomenon that is important to individual liberation and social justice, all of which makes it an indispensable form of cultural empowerment.

In an anti-dialogic setting, any revolutionary praxis that is aimed at social or structural transformation will remain meaningless and futile if it is removed from the cultural reality of the oppressed or marginalised. In dialogic praxis and the CCA, the ontological belief in the cultural agency of the oppressed local individual and community is underscored. In the revolutionary praxis view, Freire invokes the humanistic Marxian project – described by Frantz Fanon – as involving the liberation of the “wretched of the earth” from being simply beings for others; instead, they should become “beings for themselves” and their social or self-transformation wants and needs (Aronowitz, 1993:13). The ontological call of revolutionary praxis and agency of the subaltern is then for transformation to occur by changing the material conditions of human existence, ownership and control patterns. Moreover, this includes transforming the control of labour and any other existential or socio-psychological relations of oppression that might exist between the external agents or oppressors and the local community (Aronowitz, 1993:13; Freire, 1970:110). It must be emphasised though that Freire (1970:111) does not view revolutionary praxis as occurring solely through the isolated praxis of the oppressed classes but instead through dialogue between the oppressors and the elites.

While Dutta (2019:98, 101) agrees that culture is resistance, he concedes that a “critically constructed solidarity as opposition” must emerge from within and with the subalternity. Freire’s (1970:25-127) view is that no individual can liberate themselves. Liberation is only possible through an ethic of care (i.e., solidarity) with the oppressed and not for them or on behalf of them. Aronowitz (1993:13) clarifies that the Freirean ontological vocation then means that liberatory praxis is not reduced to the revolutionary action of self-liberation. It requires that the oppressors (i.e., teachers, experts, external change agents, leaders, elites, etc.) also become liberated from their oppressive characteristics, views and practices. Both of these views then emphasise the ontological belief that people are capable of advocating for social change from within their cultural consciousness and competence to articulate their wishes.

Freire (1970:110, 112) calls for solidarity – achieved through dialogue – between the oppressors and the oppressed and further states that human values such as humbleness, love and courage must be included in a theory of cultural action for authentic transformation and liberation to occur. He also maintains that science and technology cannot simply be in service of the oppressors but must be used to humanise subjects, lest they become mere subjects of scientific interest (Freire, 1970:114). Following this view, culture then is not something that merely has to be replaced (either by the oppressors or the oppressed) but instead becomes an intersubjective concept of shared meaning, learning and relearning. Put differently, reality cannot be imposed upon people through a banking method of development or mechanistic, essentialist view of reality. It must instead originate from within the historical realities as perceived, experienced, made and remade by local people, as well as through dialogue and revolutionary action – occurring not simply between “actors” but via “actors in intercommunication” (Aronowitz, 1993:13-14; Freire, 1970:110, 111). Freire’s (1970:108, 114) theory of cultural action declares that human liberation can only transpire in communion with one another.

Furthermore, this view of revolutionary action agrees with the intersubjectivity stressed in the CCA. Dutta (2007:311) states:

“Culture is articulated in the meanings coconstructed by the cultural participants, and these meanings are located within the local context of the culture. Culture includes a continuous component that flows through the history of the culture, and a dynamic component that continually shifts as the culture responds to statewide, national, and global shifts in politics, economics, and communication flow. The interactions between the continuous and dynamic elements of culture provide the context for cultural meanings that are in flux.”

Ontologically, the subaltern is therefore deeply embedded within their cultural contexts, values and norms. This makes them best positioned to articulate and communicate the varying meanings of culture, which can then further shape the intersection of culture, communication and development. The abovementioned stance also cements the CCA’s view that culture is ontologically concerned with power relations: It recognises how power dynamics in a development situation can shape its narratives and strategies. At the risk of reiteration, Dutta (2007:311) argues that culture is the optic through which power and marginalisation must be interrogated and ultimately displaced.

In section 4.4.1.1, it was explained that a critical dialogic pedagogy views humans ontologically as emotional beings. A Freirean theory of cultural action recognises the cognitive and affective dimensions of human existence in transformation processes by actively seeking them out as requisites during the dialogic process (Altamirano, 2020:319; Altamirano, 2016:679; Freire, 1970:115). In this interpretation, Freire claims that – in contrast with purely monological empirical knowledge – a revolutionary epistemology is made possible by using his theory of cultural action.

5.4.1.2 Communication as cultural action and synthesis: epistemological assumptions

In the Freirean view, cultural action prepares the way for cultural revolution. That is to say, if anti-dialogic communication occurs between the oppressor (i.e., expert, outside agent, political leaders, government officials, etc.) and the oppressed, the latter's emancipatory moment will only be realised if the oppressed takes power from the oppressor through *cultural revolution* that is facilitated by dialogue (Freire, 1970:117-118). This is another key epistemological concept in Freire's cultural action theory – revolutionary action can only occur when it is embedded in the social entity it is supposed to transform. This concern is clearly also tied to his ontological views (discussed above).

Freire explains that if the oppressed are to generate self and social transformation, they must confront the structures in which they are immersed. This includes both the old oppressive order and their own subjective reality (Freire, 1970:117-119). Cultural praxis is based upon intersubjective dialogue as praxis that never ceases. There can never be a true word alone. This means that knowledge about human existence and transformation is not monologic but framed in a social epistemology, which allows for many different kinds of knowledge and methods to foster transformation. Dutta (2018:94) agrees, stating that academic or dominant knowledge should be resisted and that importance should instead be attached to the relativity of the knowledge that emerges from within varying cultural communities. He argues that in the CCA, the subaltern must disrupt the "culturalist logics of mainstream development" by laying claim to the centrality of the subaltern's "forms of knowledge". These disruptive "processes of knowledge production" are culturally embedded. His epistemological resolve is that subaltern articulations

must reorganise hegemonic development knowledge and practices. This ties in well with the notion that indigenous knowledge varies because the different epistemologies about development and lived realities in distinct cultures – precisely because these cultures have access to unique ways of knowing and navigating their surroundings.

As was already established in the previous section, Freire's ontology about culture are firmly placed in critical consciousness. Epistemologically, it follows that truly authentic and culturally centred development knowledge and action must sprout from the oppressed and the subaltern's critical awareness that hegemonic cultural approaches must be disrupted.

Aronowitz (1993:15-16) writes about how Freire grasps cultural action as constituting economic, political, and spiritual liberation, which is “a kind of permanent revolution” and hence always an educational praxis. A dialogic theory of cultural action implies that humans are, as Torres (2019:20) describes them, a pedagogic subject continually taking part in a transformation social learning process. Freire (1970:111) says that there is no historical reality that is not human, and therefore no history without humankind. There's only the history of humanity made by people and – as Marx claimed – history made by people and history that makes people making them in turn. According to Torres (2019:20), human beings must constantly confront the structures and practices in which they are embedded and, which are understood from within the epistemology of heterogeneous interpretations of human society and existence and thus representative of culturally diverse meanings. In the anti-dialogic moment, Freire (1970:114-115, 120) warns that scientific revolutionary humanism cannot treat human beings as mere oppressed objects of analysis from whom “correct” behaviours must be demanded. It should instead present their own knowledge about reality as a foundation for transformation. He explains that cultural action is a cultural revolution precisely because it is materialist, educational and cognisant of the emotional and biological dimensions of human life. This is also the CCA's epistemological position. As discussed earlier, the CCA underscores how culture is relative and historical – not a single interpretation with a historical character.

As previously explained, Freire's theory of cultural action can be understood epistemologically as a theory that operates on a matrix of dialogics and anti-dialogics. In the latter, Freire states that anti-dialogic action is based on the following concepts: *conquest*, the idea of *divide and rule*,

manipulation, and *cultural invasion* (Freire, 1970:119-144). In the dialogic view, he then introduces the following concepts: *cooperation*, *unity for liberation*, *organisation* and *cultural synthesis* as opposing, corrective counterparts (Freire, 1970:148-164). These two opposing theories of cultural action provide a deeper understanding of the notion of culture, and how it should be incorporated into theorising the participatory paradigm. In understanding culture as a dialogic and anti-dialogic process, one can strengthen the notion of culture as one of the assumptions of a participatory approach to development. The CCA's epistemological stance aligns with such an interpretation, considering how it was earlier stated that culture is a process of co-construction by the subaltern as cultural participants. This is because they are best positioned to understand and produce knowledge that is appropriate to their realities instead of being made to use knowledge from an external realm. For Dutta, knowledge is a participatory, culture-centred process and outcome.

When Freire refers to conquest, he describes how paternalistic, anti-dialogic individuals impose their views of reality and their objectives onto the oppressed in both economical and cultural dimensions (Freire, 1970:119). Through this concept, Freire explains how the oppressed are disposed of their interpretation of the world, not only by being "housed" or immersed in the reality of the external agent but also because they are dispossessed of their words. Conquest thus means that the "thoughts" and reflective actions of the oppressed taken away. Moreover, they are also stripped of their "words" or the dialogic moments and avenues that enable liberating cultural action. Freire (1970:12-121) clarifies that conquest can only occur if the anti-dialogic individual or collective mythicises the world as a fixed entity instead of something that can be problematised. In modernist thinking and its banking pedagogical model, oppressors then deposit their ideas about development and culture. Freire (*ibid.*) explains that they achieve this through well-organised propaganda, slogans and the mass media (i.e., via modernist discourse). Throughout, their target in depositing these banking model ideas is the minds of the passive receivers whose ideas are viewed as inferior and must therefore be replaced.

This conquest occurs through various oppressive cultural actions such as *divide and rule*. Freire (1970:122-123) explains how these actions manipulate people into thinking that external agents or government bureaucracies want to help local people by emphasising the local, focalised view of their problems instead focusing on holistic view. He explains:

“In ‘community development’ projects the more a region or areas is broken down into ‘local communities’, without the study of these communities both as totalities in themselves and as parts of another totality (the area, region, and so forth)-which in its turn is part of a still larger totality (the nations, as part of the continental totality-the more alienation is intensified.”

Here, Freire describes how oppressive cultural action can suppress local communities’ awareness that their development problems originate in larger macro and meso contexts and not because of pathologies that are “inherent” to local cultural contexts and meanings. Or, in Dutta’s interpretation, local cultures are extracted and usurped for hegemonic cultural narratives and must be resisted. In other words: In emphasising that development problems are locally situated, oppressors can conceal exogenous ideas, structures and practices as the roots of development challenges. This is typical of modernist thinking about culture and development that dehumanises oppressed people and their problematising and meaning-making abilities. In such an anti-dialogic cultural action view, the ideas that outsiders have about development and about how to obtain it replace the locally embedded culture’s ideas and experiences. Accordingly, their knowledge systems and practices concerning how to authentically transform unwanted situations are effectively jettisoned. Specifically, the paternalistic view dominates cultural action in this instance, meaning that external agents are presented as the “saviours” of local people since only these saviours are supposed to possess true knowledge about how to foster development.

As discussed earlier, oppressive cultural action views materialistic development as the only legitimate form of human progress and development. In this manner, the oppressor precludes any other abstract or even any other materialist interpretation (i.e., beyond the economic dimensions) of reality from the local development context. Freire’s argument holds that the more alienated people are, the easier it is to divide them and keep them divided. Oppressive focalised forms of cultural action then limit the oppressed from perceiving reality critically and keep them isolated from understanding how development problems are generated externally. The CCA takes the epistemological stance that paternalism and other cultural hegemonies must be disrupted by recognising the intersectionality of subaltern communities (Dutta, 2018:88, 92). A culture-centred approach emphasises that the silenced or erased culture at the margins needs to inform development approaches.

Similar to this oppressive cultural action, *manipulation* is another important epistemological notion in Freire's anti-dialogic theory. In short, this involves so-called pacts that are made between the oppressive culture and the one that is dominated. Freire (1970:128-129) explains that such pacts are superficial impressions created by the oppressors and that dialogue takes place when it is absent. In this manner, the oppressors can conceal their particular dominant objectives while mitigating or completely ignoring the local culture's wants and needs and also ignoring more suitable concrete solutions to these problems (Freire, 1970:133). This agrees with Arnstein's typology of participation as *different degrees of tokenism* or even *non-participation* (discussed in Chapter 3). Via manipulation, oppressors can then conform local cultures to outside development ideas and practices and, through such anti-dialogic falsification, they can remain in control of the status quo.

The final fundamental concept of the theory of anti-dialogic action refers to *cultural invasion*. Freire (1970:133) describes this notion as being similar to the preceding notions in that it also has conquest at heart. Outside ideas and practices about transformation and development are imposed upon a local culture through cultural invasion. External world views then replace the local ones and thus inhibit the critical consciousness of local cultures. Freire explains that this is certainly an act of violence that the invaders perpetrate against the invaded people. Cultural invasion also takes the form of economic and cultural domination (Freire, 1970:134). He explains that the dominated people adopt not only the ideas but also the values of the invaders, therefore accepting the goals and standards of development and transformation that the invaders impose on them as if they were their own authentically their own ideas and values. In other words, the local culture's lifeworld (in a Habermasian sense) is penetrated and dominated by the external imperatives of money and bureaucratic values, instead of foregrounding locally embedded priorities and concrete solutions. In fact, this colonisation or cultural invasion will only succeed, Freire (1970:134) argues, if local communities become persuaded of their inferiority and are convinced that external cultures have superior development knowledge and solutions.

Freire completes his epistemology of cultural action by posing dialogue and its attendant concepts as a counter to cultural invasion. The latter challenge can occur via *cultural revolution*. As has already been determined, this would be a continual process through which people's critical consciousness would not only consider the surrounding structures but also problematise

and actively transform them into more desired structures, conditions and relations. Gadotti (2019:38) relates Freire's cultural revolution to the dialectical relationship between history and consciousness. He explains that if you change people's awareness, you change the social, political and economic structures that act as interdependent processes. Freire (1970:139) maintains that the totality of society can be reconstructed through cultural revolution: "Society cannot be reconstructed in mechanistic fashion; the culture which is culturally recreated through revolution is the fundamental instrument for this reconstruction".

The Freirean theory of cultural action maintains that critical consciousness based on dialogue will result in praxis that rejects people's status as *objects*, replacing it instead with an idea of people as *subjects* with whom the power of decision-making should be located (Freire, 1970:141). More specially, cultural action means that the oppressed, as beings for themselves, can discover that development is existential and not merely an economic process that originates from outside. As Freire (*ibid.*) puts it, cultural revolution assumes that while all development constitutes transformation, not all such transformation is necessarily equatable to authentic development.

As was already discovered in Chapter 5, much of Freire's critical pedagogy is inspired by Buber's philosophy on intersubjective communication. Subjects cooperate to transform the world in a theory of cultural action and revolution. Cooperation is therefore a fundamental concept in Freire's cultural action theory as well as in the CCA, both of which underscore solidity and intersubjective communication (Dutta, 2018, 2007; Freire, 1970:149). As a characteristic of cultural action, cooperation can only transpire through dialogic communication, as is evident in a dialectical relationship between outside and subjective interpretations of the world (Freire, 1970:149). With critical consciousness comes a more holistic understanding or perception of reality that demystifies, as Gadotti (2019:39) puts it, the rationales that explain how humans are in the world or how the world is mediated. Freire's cooperation notion allows a "critical analysis of a problematic reality" through intersubjective dialogic communication (Freire, 1970:149). As was argued previously, Freire argues that cooperation can only happen in the presence of human values such as solidarity, communion, trust, humility and love – values that reach beyond the economic meaning of human culture and development. Referring to culture as storytelling, Dutta (2018:97) also makes the point that culture is a form of participating in transformation and articulating values that are tied to a community.

In contrast with division and manipulation in the anti-dialogic conception of culture, the dialogic interpretation dedicates itself to emancipatory goals or – as Freire (1970:153-154) puts it – *unity for liberation*. For the oppressed to become fully humanised, they must be liberated from the static view that was imposed on them from outside, which then enables them to reject the externally constructed view that they cannot change their historical circumstances or subjectivity. As cultural action, *unity for liberation* extricates the Subject from a false, unproblematised view of reality and instead allows them to confront this externally mediated version of the world.

Freire (1970:155-56) explains that people will discover their selfhood and their subjectivity in their consciousness and not through the eyes of the dominant oppressors. With this rediscovered critical perception of the world, Freire reasons that oppressed people can choose to transform any unwanted or unjust reality by becoming more fully cognisant of the link between their substructure to the larger totality or superstructure. This also further facilitates people to *organise* transformation and liberation for and by themselves and not have it facilitated by external cultural actions. Freire does not however mean to deny the dialectical relationship between the superstructure and local communities but, through a process of *cultural synthesis*, he wants to argue for cultural action that fosters critical consciousness in both the external and local communities' knowledge about the world (Freire, 1970:162). He explains that *cultural synthesis* does not deny cultural invasion but instead encourages the dynamic, dialectical relationship between cultural invaders and the locally invaded people. Culture then becomes a liminal space where a plurality of cultural meanings and actions can take hold.

5.4.1.3 Communication as cultural action and synthesis: methodological assumptions

Based on the above ontological and methodological descriptions of Freire's (1970) cultural theory, it is clear that cultural action, as expressed via dialogue, is a problem-posing methodology by which local communities can interrogate their lived experiences and also improve them. In an anti-dialogical form, culture becomes the instrument of the invader to oppress local communities, but since dialogic praxis allows the latter to question and challenge oppressive circumstances, it becomes a type of cultural action of resistance. Cultural action insists that local

communities have the critical ability to understand reality from their viewpoints, belief systems, and understandings.

In contrast to cultural invasion and conquest, cultural action permits cultural authenticity as communities can respond to their needs as based on their own human values and standards instead of those of the invader (Freire, 1970:134). This means the local beneficiaries' culture must primarily inform development epistemes and practices. These belief systems need not be based on scientific methods but centres specifically on the cultural voice from within the community. Different communities may, for example, employ diverse cultural methods such as storytelling or other qualitative forms of cultural voice and expression to ground their examinations of reality and find appropriate solutions to development concerns or needs. Very often, these strategies are, therefore, also deeply rooted in a local culture's indigenous knowledge systems. In Chapter 3 (see 3.4.3) different kinds of participatory action methodologies were described. Likewise, these methodologies hold more value if they are deeply rooted in local cultural understandings of realities instead of external ideas. Methodologies must be culturally imbued if local communities are to successfully and meaningfully examine their social-cultural contexts and how to improve them if external cultures invade them.

Therefore, cultural action is not simply about representation but active agency. As evident from the above discussions (see 5.4.1.2-5.4.1.2), cultural action is methodologically also a humanisation process, meaning the human values intrinsic to a specific cultural context are underscored in the development process. Cultural action is deeply axiological and focuses on the ethical values of particular cultures, whatever they entail, which vary from one to the next.

This also makes cultural action methodologically a site of struggle. Cultural action is the method by which communities can culturally liberate themselves from external oppressors and their worldviews. They free themselves from oppressive cultures and the alienation that they cause concerning local subjective cultures. This is why Freire calls cultural action revolutionary. Freire (1970:139-140) explains that "cultural revolution" is the highest form of critical consciousness. He states that it rejects the "technical or scientific training" of so-called experts and instead emphasises how cultural action can help local communities to set them free from "cultural

remnants [of] the oppressor (Freire, 1970:140). Cultural action assumes that transformation is possible and that it is a methodology of problem-posing and education.

Methodologically, cultural action is intersubjective and also dynamic. This directly contrasts the ant-dialogical view of cultural invasion that claims that decision-making power remains with external cultures (Freire, 1970:141). Knowledge, in the development circumstance, cannot be imposed by one culture or group onto another; it requires that all cultures be included via dialogic praxis in the creation and application processes, meaning that cultural synthesis instead of imposition transpires. This means that cultural action considers all social actors in the development setting as capable co-creators of knowledge. As the discussions in the previous two sections demonstrate, cultural action, methodologically speaking, permits local communities to regain their agency and their voice that was previously suppressed and culturally invaded. Therefore, this kind of culturally situated action can challenge oppressive cultural norms or ideas. Methodologies in the participatory approach should entail cultural empowerment and shape social change outcomes in culturally appropriate manners. Solutions are never culturally neutral, but should centre local community *ethical and human values* when effecting and measuring social change. This, furthermore, means that methodologically a cultural approach addresses the power imbalances between so-called experts and local cultures. Since knowledge is co-created all social actors are equal and capable of learning from one-another.

5.5 SUMMARY REMARKS

This chapter has set out to examine culture as a central facet of the participatory paradigm. The initial sections in this chapter set out to trace the etymology and historical conceptual trajectory of culture. Based on the discussions in section 5.4, the ontology of culture can be summarised as follows:

- A dialogic pedagogy places huge importance on people's subjective experiences of themselves and their surroundings, which are embedded in their unique and varying cultural interpretations, values, norms and beliefs. The assumption is that transformation or development is ontologically mute when it is not tied to the cultural logic and realities of the local communities who desire development and social change.

- In this view, the subaltern or marginalised ontology is put front and centre. Ontologically, this implies the humanisation of local communities.
- Cultural action is an approach through which people can shape their ideas and actions to transform their realities. In this framework, individuals and communities are not passive recipients of development knowledge but active social agents who recognise their ownership – not only in resisting hegemonic cultural logics but also in actively articulating their own.
- Working through intersubjective dialogic communication, cultural action and the CCA accept that the human world cannot be separated from a community's cultural life. Its intrinsic value must always be recognised. Dialogic communication can thus counter anti-dialogic strategies and cultural invasion, even up to the point where it frees local communities from their cultural domination. At the same time, the immateriality (i.e., creative, affective and spiritual dimensions) and materiality of culture must be recognised in ways that do not favour neoliberal material views.
- Ontologically, culture is a site of struggle and resistance since it offers the locale for commitment to transformative social change. Therefore, culture is also the springboard for any revolutionary praxis.
- As was indicated above, culture imagines an ethic of intersubjective care and solidarity among diverse social actors in the development setting. It is both a conduit of intersubjective communication and a shaper of communication about development and the role of cultures therein.
- Finally, culture is ontologically concerned with addressing the imbalance of power relations in any development setting.

Considering the epistemological assumption of culture in the participatory paradigm, it can be inferred that:

- Culture can be understood as a dialogic and an anti-dialogic process. In this view, it is possible to use culture to not only interrogate hegemony but also use dialogue to reinsert the cultural views of local communities into the development fold. This emphasis on dialogue means that the decision-making about development strategies entails the inclusion of diverse perspectives.

- Local communities can produce their own development knowledge because they are culturally deeply embedded in their lived experiences. This encourages more effective and appropriate development solutions that are based on actual local needs.
- In addition to a culturally-centred approach, dialogic praxis and its attendant notions underscore that the cultural epistemologies of society's marginalised people should inform development discourses and applications.
- Through cultural revolution, local knowledge can help effect transformation and social change.
- Cooperation is fundamental to a development approach that foregrounds culture. More specifically, this view emphasises that culture informs social epistemologies that are based on intersubjective dialogue. Additionally, human values such as solidarity, communion and trust – to name only a few – should not only prefigure dialogue in a cultural approach but should also be reaffirmed in the communicative moment. A social epistemology emphasis negates anti-dialogic and hence also negates culturally hegemonic development models and practices.
- Cultural synthesis encourages a more dynamic interaction between cultural invaders (e.g., development experts) and the local communities who have been invaded. This facilitates a plurality of cultural meanings and actions for development.

Finally, the *methodology* that centres culture in the participatory paradigm read as follows:

- Critical pedagogy is grounded in a methodology of intersubjective dialogue. Central to this methodology of participatory paradigms is the idea of cultural action that extends beyond cognition to action. It involves centring culture in a methodological sense, because action makes more creative, imaginative cognitions and strategies (e.g. via artistic expression such as storytelling and theatre) for development possible.
- Cultural action and intersubjective dialogue *transcend traditional scientific methods* that view development in quantifiable, often material measures. This stance underlines that culturally informed methods for social change are not value-neutral and entail many qualitative solutions.
- A cultural theory of participation and action acknowledges that participatory and collaborative development solutions can be conceived as emerging from the bottom-up,

meaning that they are conceived *from within local cultures*. This also means that heterogeneous strategies are available in a development setting, especially considering the inevitable reality that cultures and their ontologies and epistemologies vary from one another. The diversity of cultures therefore suggests a variety in culturally effective and appropriate solutions for each community or society.

- Methodologies in the participatory approach should entail cultural empowerment and shape other culturally appropriate social change outcomes. Solutions are never culturally neutral but should centre local community *ethical and human values* when effecting and measuring social change. This means that a cultural approach to methodology addresses the power imbalances between so-called experts and local cultures.

CHAPTER 6: THEORISING EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

"We are all transformative beings and not beings for accommodation."

— Paulo Freire (1970).

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 concluded that the link between culture and dialogue is axiomatic in participatory communication (see Chapter 4 on dialogue). Culture acts not simply as a backdrop for dialogic *communication* and people's authentic participation in social change initiatives (see Chapter 3); it is also integral to participation's authentic nature and practice. Dialogue finds expression in distinct human values (refer to 4.2.2). This interplay between dialogue and values emphasises the intersubjective exchange of communication between various social actors and also encourages cultural affirmation and respect for the multifacetedness of local communities and their unique lived experiences and needs within any particular development context.

Building on these insights, Chapter 6 now aims to examine 'empowerment' as the final integrative assumption of the participatory paradigm. The discussions below demonstrate that empowerment, which is a multidimensional notion, is essential for local communities to gain increasing control over their lives and development circumstances. Seen through a transformative lens, empowerment requires local people's meaningful participation in genuine dialogue so that they can make the culturally specified development decisions that will impact their lives when put into action. Despite the fundamental status of empowerment in participatory communication, Chapter 6 critically appraises this concept and aims for definitional clarity within the participatory paradigm. For the last time, another chapter begins with a concise etymological examination of a concept – in this instance, empowerment. The etymological explanations in section 6.2 lay the foundations that are needed to contextualise further discussions of the notion within development communication in section 6.3, which is divided into three subsections. Empowerment's interdisciplinary historical and theoretical origins are

explored, thus underscoring how these foundations complicate defining and measuring it in participatory communication settings (see section 6.3.1).

In section 6.4, which also spans three subsections, Freirean critical pedagogy again provides a lodestone from which to metatheorise an ontology of empowerment in section 6.4.1. This section also argues that, ontologically, empowerment is entrenched in critical consciousness and that it is facilitated through dialogic praxis that further encourages the autonomy and self-determination of local communities, as pertains to their personal advancement and their collective action. Discussions in this section further examine empowerment's profoundly humanistic and socially transformative nature within the context of development communication.

6.2 EMPOWERMENT: ETYMOLOGICAL ORIGINS AND MEANINGS

As the introduction indicated, “empowerment” has complex historical and linguistic underpinnings deeply ingrained in different ideologies and is employed in similarly diverse social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. Calves (2009:735-736) and several others (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Hur, 2006; Melkote & Steeves, 2015) note how this complexity informs the centrality of the concept's meaning and operationalisation in development communication. According to Cornwall and Brock (2005:1046), empowerment likely “has a more curious history” and expanded “semantic range” than most other development communication notions. This results in a highly contested associated array of meanings and enactments in the subdiscipline. Before these are explored later, the notion's etymological evolution follows below.

The Oxford English Dictionary (2023:x) defines empowerment as “the state of being empowered; the action or act of empowering”. This primarily connotative definition elaborates the noun's contemporary usage as referring to “the fact or action of acquiring more control over one's life or circumstances through increased civil rights, independence, self-esteem, etc.” Correspondingly, two Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d., “Empowerment”) entries, paraphrased here, describes it both as the act of empowering something or something *and* the state of being empowered to fulfil actions based on the acquisition of the power, rights, or authority. Unlike the visual demonstrations of the participatory paradigm's already theorised foundational

assumptions, a GoogleSearch (2023) does not yield a historical breakdown of empowerment's word history. Regardless, a search for the case-sensitive term produces a so-called N-gram²⁰ (Google Books Ngram Viewer, 2023), revealing that "empowerment" gained increasing modern-day prominence during the 1960s and 1970s, peaking in the early to mid-1980s as a result of its prominence in social justice movements. However, empowerment's linguistic roots date back to the mid-seventeenth century Middle English with usage by intellectuals, social commentators, poets, and playwrights such as John Milton, Francis Beaumont, and Alexander Pope (Harper, n.d. "Empower", Merriam-Webster, n.d. "Power", Oxford English Dictionary, 2023).

Lincoln, Travers, and Ackers (2002:272) trace "empower" to Middle English, noting its first use as a verb in the author Hamon L'Estrange's book, *The Reign of King Charles* (1655). L'Estrange employed the verb in reference to official letters from the then Pope, stating that the Pope was "empowering them to erect [a] college". This contextual use emphasises the verb's original use as an action concerning some sort of authorisation or licencing. Moreover, the famous English poet John Milton used "impow'rd" in his 1667 work *Paradise Lost*; hence aligning this historical usage with the contemporary meaning in the Oxford English Dictionary (Lincoln *et al.*, 2002:272). These scholars (*ibid.*) thus observe that "empower" means to "impart or bestow power to an end or for a purpose; to enable; permit", which further underscores its foundational link to the delegation of power, a theme that will be explored further.

As a noun, Harper (n.d., "Power", "Empowerment") describes the term's root as being embedded in "empower" (or "impower") combined with the suffix "-ment", derived from the Latin "*-mentum*". This suffix commonly transforms verb stems to nouns, denoting the outcome of an action or, as Harper (*ibid.*) states, to signify the means to achieve it. He also notes that the prefix "em-" in either "empowerment" or "empower" indicates "to give power or authority to". Furthermore, these entries reveal that "empower stems from the root word 'power'", which dates to the fourteenth century. The noun "power" refers to the French word "*pouer*" or the related Anglo-French etymon "*poer*" and the Old French "*poeir*" or "*pouvoir*", meaning "ability,

²⁰ An N-gram model represents a continuous sequence of an item (N) from a given sample of text or speech. Items depend on context and application, including, for example, syllables, letters, or, in the current context, words such as the current case for the term 'empowerment'. In the latter textual analysis of empowerment, its frequency of application can be traced in a corpus of books as retrieved by Google Books (Google Books Ngram Viewer, 2023).

ability to act, strength, vigor, might”. Rather unsurprisingly, it specifically also relates to the context of combat or battle in which “efficacy, control, mastery, lordship, dominion” prevails, or otherwise to an entitlement, ability to command or control, and authority (Harper, n.d.; Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). Harper (n.d.) recounts that the Vulgar Latin root of power originates from “*potis*”, which means powerful. Several dictionary entries exist for power as a noun (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.; Merriam-Webster, n.d., “Power”; Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). Merriam-Webster’s (n.d.) entry also highlights its definition and usage as including a foundational concept for expressing the physical ability to exercise force or energy.

As a verb, power also reveals varied meanings that relate to authority or control, especially to signify either the capacity or the right to control and influence events, things and people. This control can manifest in many official, political or governmental settings – either in physical expression or in a more abstract sense that connotes conditions in which mental or moral efficacy is also prevalent. The noun dictionary definitions likewise show that “power” denotes a source or a resource of energy, relevant in contexts that range from human or natural capacities to more technical ones such as the generation, distribution and use of electricity. The last two entries in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d) introduce the noun as signifying magnification and scope, where the former refers to amplification and the latter to extension. The entry on scope and extension refers to the statistical aspect of power when the probability of the null hypothesis is rejected in a statistical test for an alternative true hypothesis, thereby emphasising the quantitative and analytic aspects of power. These noun definitions and conceptualisations of power significantly affect how empowerment can be grasped and conceived theoretically in development communication (see 6.3). The same argument also applies to how “power” (or empower) is described when it is used as a verb.

As a verb, “power” appears in either a transitive or intransitive form, indicating multiple literal and figurative dictionary meanings. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) expresses its transitive meanings as a) “to supply with power and especially motive power” and b) “to give impetus to” something or someone. Used intransitively, the word refers a) “to move about by means of motive power” and b) “to move with great speed or force”. These verb entries align with the above noun definitions and highlight shared meanings that denote the supply of power or the occurrence of movement or a kind of forceful action. However, the verb introduces

nuances concerning the sources of power and techniques of movement, therefore implying variance in their objectives and behaviours. This variance notably also points to power as something generative from within or conferred upon by one entity onto another. Section 6.3 further interrogates this line of argumentation by considering different power types and relations in a development communication context. It expands on interpretations of power that in turn inform different kinds of conceptualisations for empowerment in the development of communication discipline.

In concluding the etymological review of “power”, all of the cited dictionaries catalogue several noun and verb synonyms that emphasise the concept’s diverse meanings and uses, ultimately shedding light on its connection to “empowerment”. Synonyms include control, reign, dominion and authority, which together point to the aspects of power that have to do with delegation. Alternatives such as strength, muscle, capacity, and capability relate to power as a source or resource of energy. Expressed in terms of energy resources, power is found in words such as propellant, force and kindling. When power refers to innate ability, words such as capacity, capability, function, instinct and talent are relevant.

Considering the above etymological review of the terms empowerment and power, the various dimensions and aspects of these concepts within a development discourse context are appraised in the following section.

6.3 EMPOWERMENT: HISTORICAL AND ACADEMIC ROOTS

As noted before, this study agrees with the literature indicating that power analysis is a prerequisite for the further theorisation and application of empowerment (see Calvès, 2019; Chambers, 2008, 1994; Gaventa, 2011; Kamruzzaman & White, 2018; Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Okwori, 2010; Rowlands, 2016; Servaes, 1999; Uphoff, 1989; Wilkins, 2000; White, 1996;). Such an interrogation is nonetheless a complicated task involving tracing its historical and intellectual trajectory. The section below will first make a case for the intellectual trajectory examination, whereafter, several key power analysts and their theories on power follow.

6.3.1 Power: a complexity of discourse and practice

Bradley (2020:102-103) highlights that scholars, policymakers and practitioners habitually neglect the complexity of power's role in empowerment because of unproblematic understandings of its impact. She states that a generalised view of power enables its more straightforward application across diverse contexts but also notes that this often leads to the neglect of its nuanced implications for empowerment strategies. This oversight, she reasons, is partly due to the limited resources – including time, expertise, or focused attention – that are available to a broad spectrum of social actors involved in developing and implementing these strategies. Furthermore, the power dynamics and positionality of the involved and excluded social actors can considerably influence whose development interests are prioritised, further influencing empowerment views and applications (Bradley, 2020:102; Gaventa, 2020:120; Rowlands, 1997:vi). Power and powerlessness also intersect with various social identities and hierarchies, such as race, gender, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation, thereby adding layers to the already multifaceted identities of individuals (Bradley, 2020:104). This intersectionality underscores the difficulty of understanding and addressing empowerment in diverse contexts or, as Rowlands (2016:120) notes, at the minimum deliberately engaging with formal and informal power analysis.

Power matters greatly, especially in understanding how contemporary society is marked by pervasive ideological and physical conflicts and divisions. This concern is even more pressing in development communication situations where disparities between the powerful and powerless are often glaring and further impact which social actors have access to development resources and expertise. According to Petitt and McGee (2020:3), despite global human rights advancements, improved living conditions, educational opportunities, and various scientific and technical innovations, the struggle for justice, equality and environmental protection remains at risk and requires deeper analysis. They and several other scholars (Batliwala, 2007:562-563; Melkote & Steeves, 2015:3; Okwori, 2010: 243; VeneKlasen & Miller; 2007:46) explain that power elites regularly use their dominance to suppress positive social change and silence human rights violations or, just as often, deliberately facilitate them among the powerless groups in society. These communities mainly include low-income individuals, women, people of colour, differently

abled individuals, and LGBTQIA+²¹ groups. Despite of all these very real challenges, Pettit and McGee²² (2020:4) argue against fatalism by instead advocating for a critical analysis of power and its counterpoint, empowerment, especially in the context of the development communication, to not only understand but also to disrupt these inequalities and dynamics.

When considering historical and more contemporary power theory, various authors and scholars come to mind that who deserve attention. On the one hand, these theorisations of power represent a broader, multidisciplinary field and, on the other, the subdiscipline of development communication. Besides, the concern with power from a multidisciplinary perspective spans a vast historical and contemporary field.

6.3.1.1 Power analysis: a historical concern

Concerning the more historical landscape of power theory, some key classical philosophers, theorists and analysts, especially those who work in the social sciences, must be acknowledged. Preston (1996:32) relates that most of these views emerged in three stages that were expressed in the project of modernity, namely: a) the seventeenth-century Newtonian-inspired natural sciences, b) the eighteenth-century Enlightenment period during which social and political theorists applied the scientific model to human sciences and c) the early nineteenth century when social theorists presented their first formulations of modern social scientific thinking in the context of republican, democratic industrial society. Some of the theorists who pertinent to any discussion of power analysis include but are certainly not limited to the following historical epochs:

- The European **Renaissance, spanning the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries when the Italian diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) wrote in his work, *The Prince*, about the**

²¹ The acronym or initialism LGBTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual. There are sometimes two Qs used, since queer and questioning are two separate categories of sexual identity. The + sign is a placeholder for the continual expansion of this identity grouping, which occurs as social understanding and acceptance of new and often intersectional groupings of gender and sexual identity increase.

²² The present study cannot review the debates, discourses and practices these two scholars review in their voluminous work, *Power, empowerment and social change* (Pettit & McGee, 2020). However, this study, as the above scholars, takes note of the vast available literature and informed praxis that can focus on interrogating 'power'.

various aspects of how political and military power can be gained and wielded (Mautner, 2005:367; Mujahid, 2020: 93). Many still regard him as the father of contemporary political theory and research concerned with power analysis.

- The late **sixteenth and seventeenth centuries**, when for example the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) examined the role of absolute, sovereign power as it relates to the social contract, whereas his countryman John Locke (1632-1704) considered the notion of power, at the beginning of the Enlightenment period, in the context of governance and individual rights – but with an emphasis on the social contract and the consent of the governed (Mautner, 2005:278-280; Preston, 1996:34-35; Ritzer & Goodman, 2003:11).
- The work of the **nineteenth-century** German philosopher and economist Karl Marx (1818-1883), who focussed on the economic structuring of society, capitalism and the working class's struggle for freedom from a capitalist state (Mautner, 2005:375-377; Preston, 1996:81; Ritzer & Goodman, 2003:40-41, 61-63).
- The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) offered a foundational view of social power, defined as the ability to impose one's will in a social relationship, even against resistance (Ritzer & Goodman, 2003:26-27; Preston, 1996:113). Weber's theorising on the different types of authority (i.e., traditional, charismatic and legal-rational) influenced ideas on power and its expression through societal hierarchies, social actors and power relations. Weber focused on how authority and legitimacy found expression through power, For that reason, power analysis is intimately related to political analysis and discourse (Uphoff, 1989:295). When turning an eye to the more contemporary, **twentieth-century** philosophers and theorists, an even longer list emerges.

6.3.1.2 Power analysis: a contemporary concern

However, McGee (2020:53) poses an essential question concerning which version of power must be interrogated. Following her lead, the current study distinguishes between two main views. Firstly, some theorists focus on power from a human agency and relational view. At the same time, others adopt structuralist and poststructuralist approaches that concern the agency versus structure tension, whereas there are also those who bridge the agency-structure nexus. Some of

the most influential thinkers relating to power theory are presented briefly below. The discussions highlight some of the key figures in power theory by noting their essential contributions as pertinent to critical arguments that are then developed in the rest of Chapter 6.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the Italian philosopher and critical theorist associated with Hegelian Marxism, proposed his theory of cultural hegemony to explain how dominant classes maintain their power through a combination of economic, political, ideological and cultural instruments (Bradley, 2020:102; Davidson, 2016:244-246; Gramsci, 1971; Mautner, 2005:252; Ritzer & Goodman, 2003:267-268;). Cultural hegemony is a type of power and coercion that legitimates and normalises supremacy, meaning that the governed concede their subordination. This theory also differentiates between supposed traditional and organic intellectuals who either maintain or counter dominance. Echoing Marx, Gramsci contended that the former, comprised of the society's working class, could counter ideological dominance via revolutionary measures.

Mayo (2017:36) explains that the etymological roots of "hegemony" date back to ancient Greek. Gramsci adopted this term to describe the power relations between civil society as the private sphere (i.e., the media, schools and religious entities) and the political society as constituted in the state. Through dominance in the cultural sphere, hegemonic classes control and shape the subaltern's awareness and experience of the surrounding world. (See 5.2.2 for further details on Gramsci's notions of culture, cultural hegemony, and the "subaltern"). Analogous to Freire's notion of *cultural revolution* (discussed in section 5.3), Gramsci believed that power is not immutable; the subaltern or oppressed can contest cultural hegemony and regain cultural and political power agency. Section 6.4 will review these notions via a Freirean optic of the oppressed's agency and their quest for liberation through a critical pedagogy.

Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), the influential American sociologist, integrated power within his broader theoretical framework of action theory and systems theory to introduce several valuable notions that view power as circulatory, which is to say as a process of exchange that functions in maintaining social order and is established within social structures (Parsons, 1963:232-243). He explains that authoritative or institutionalised legitimation is the foundation of power, which aligns with shared social norms and value consensus. Parsons argues that the latter is authentic (Ritzer & Goodman, 2003:239-241). In this view, the social system is the agent exercising power

and mobilising resources to reach collective goals in a society. Parsons thus offers a view of power from a functional optic and sees it as being embedded in power dynamics.

Contrastingly, Parsons's fellow American **Robert Dahl (1915-2014)** conceptualised power in the context of pluralism in democracies and the interplay of related political behaviouralist notions such as political influence, power elites, public opinion and people's political participation. Of particular interest for the current study is Dahl's foregrounding of the relational aspects of power in his work *Who governs?* (1961). More specifically, this relational power framework will again be described through Jo Rowlands's (1997) perspective on Dahl's "zero-sum" formulation of power relations (Rowlands, 1997:9-10). Her analysis, which elaborates on Dahl's own power analysis as "A having some coercive power over B to do something", prepares a more nuanced discussion of power dynamics that will be explored later, especially in the context of empowerment and relational power.

Steven Lukes (b. 1941) elaborates on Dahl's perspective, extending it critically by focusing on the influence of hidden actors and aspects of decision-making (Gaventa, 2020:118-120). Lukes's power analysis operates in the framework of the "three faces of power", which are expressed in the dimensions of decision-making power, non-decision-making power and ideological power (McGee, 2020:52; Haugaard, 2008:99-106). This view conceptualises power in contrast to "powerlessness", where the most visible category involves observable decision-making in political actions. Secondly, the non-decision-making power is usually limited to specific groups that are both observable and unknown. The third face of power is the most hidden and insidious form of ideology, where external interests dominate people's perceptions, cognitions and self-interest, leading them to accept decisions that contradict their own.

The current thesis contends that the first two power dimensions correspond with Arnstein's (2019) "ladder of participation" (i.e., ranging from non-participation to citizen control or power) and White's (1996) typology of participation (i.e., varying from nominal to transformative forms of participation) (see full discussions in section 3.3.5). Arnstein's participation typology is comparable to Lukes's analysis of how power operates in society – according to 1.) different powerholders, 2.) those who lack power and 3.) the other objectives that these social actors have in mind, irrespective of their power status. Seen together, both theories concern the minimalist

and maximalist views of participation and power as they converge in a complex nexus.

As per Arnstein, non-participation (i.e., manipulation and therapy) correlates with the third dimension of power, where powerholders often subtly exert their authority to influence less powerful people's participation or (rather) their non-participation in societal issues and make them appear inevitable and normal. The second power dimension complements the middle rungs of the "ladder of participation" (i.e., informing, consultation and "placation") where an appearance of participation prevails. In contrast, real power still belongs to dominant power holders and their associated interests. Lukes's first power dimension and the top rung of Arnstein's ladder – namely citizen power (as expressed in partnerships, delegated power, or complete control) – meet to establish the observable decision-making processes and conflict where less powerful or oppressed participants can gain influence in development settings.

The commonalities between Lukes's three dimensions of power and White's (1996) participation theory correspond with the abovementioned comparisons. As limited engagement, White's nominal and instrumental participation overlaps with the first power dimension since restricted participation reflects superficial power. White's representative participation engages Lukes's second power aspect, insofar as participants in a development situation can start countering existing power dynamics and predetermined development agendas. Lastly, transformative participation speaks to Lukes's third power dimension to the extent that the former entails a process where power dynamics can be actively challenged and altered, thereby ensuring that the interests of development beneficiaries are prioritised over the agendas and desires of veiled powerholders.

While some scholars argue that power and empowerment are preconditions for participation others believe that participation precedes empowerment. As discussions in section 6.3.2 will demonstrate: When reviewing empowerment in a development communication setting, these differing views also present concerns about the notion's means versus end interpretations. These arguments will resurface when considering Freire's empowerment view on the agency-structure binary in section 6.4.

Anthony Giddens (b. 1938), a British sociologist, presented his structuration theory where power is conceptualised as a duality of tension between individual agents and the society that surrounds

them. Chitnis (2005:229) is one of the first participatory communication scholars who advocated using Giddens's structuration theory in conjunction with Freirean assumptions to understand the interactions between actors and institutions at three different levels: *discourse, domination and legitimation*. In so doing, participatory scholars and practitioners attain an improved assessment of how certain structures and their practices either facilitate or hinder a process of development and social change, specifically viewed through an empowerment lens. Section 6.4 draws on Chitnis' (2005:235) research that highlights parallels between Freire and Giddens concerning the ideas of conscientisation, empowerment and power, and knowledgeable agents, in addition to the dialects of power, control and domination.

An appraisal of key power theorists must also account for the influential work of **Michel Foucault (1926-1984)**, who has shaped power conceptualisations in a range of disciplines – most notably in the humanities, arts and social sciences. His power insights clarify the omnipresence of power in society and its reciprocal relation to knowledge. Notably, as a leading post-structuralist theorist, Foucault elucidated how power is used to produce knowledge and is reinforced by knowledge through the institutionalised domains of medicine, psychiatry and the penal system (Foucault, 2008/1997; Johnson, 2009:80-83; Ritzer & Goodman, 2003:585-594). His notion of “governmentality” questions the tools and techniques that governments employ to regulate human behaviour beyond the traditional restraints of governance.

Key to these viewpoints are the Foucauldian notions of “subjection” and “bio-power”. Johnson (2009:80-83) explains that subjection processes turn individuals into subjects, specifically when power is operated through social relations and the controls of the mentioned institutions. The subject internalises their subjection to external power. It seems inherently destructive, but for Foucault this is a complex duality: Through subjection, an opportunity for resistance exists wherein the individual becomes a subject of self-awareness and agency. This view challenges conventional notions of power as a hierarchical and centralised phenomenon. In Foucault's view, redefining the individual self and identity is possible. The concept of bio-power refers to:

Broadly speaking, bio-power describes the ability to decide not only the moral and technical terms on which life may be taken (through, for instance, execution, warfare, etc.), but also the moral and technical terms on which it may be sustained” (Johnson, 2009:81).

Foucault's power theories are particularly relevant to development scholars who, according to Johnson (2009:79), reject the grand narrative of modernist development theory and communication models in favour of more emergent and postmodernist interpretations (see sections 2.4 to 2.6 for contextual discussions of the trajectory of development communication approaches). Foucault's views on power are revisited in section 6.4 where Freire's interpretations of power dialectics are metatheorised. Analogous to Freire, Foucault regards power as a pervasive phenomenon and a discursive concept that finds expression on a micro level, operating within a network of different actors who can exert agency in their everyday practices (Rowlands, 1997:12). Scholars however diverge concerning their conceptions of internal hindrances that limit personal empowerment. Foucault's views will be recast later in the current section via Jo Rowland's views on relational power for cooperative, collective transformation aims, with specific mention of Freirean self-reflection practice.

Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929) has been mentioned several times in this study. His public sphere and communicative action theories (section 4.4.2) enrich power analyses that seek to differentiate between strategic or instrumental actions aimed at control and coercion as opposed to communicative actions aimed at understanding and cooperation (Jacobson, 2003; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Melkote & Steeves, 2015:387-388). The public sphere theory facilitates understanding power as something that is embedded in a public space among citizens who are capable of rational and critical open debate geared toward consensus (Habermas, 1969). Section 6.4 explains the parallels between Habermas's notions of communicative action and Freire's conception of dialogue as a critical praxis for liberation and, thus, empowerment.

The Spanish sociologist and communication scholar **Manuel Castells (b. 1942)** also deserves to be mentioned in any review of power theory. In his 2009 book, *Communication Power*, which develops Castells's theory about communicative power in a contemporary global age network society, he explains that "power is the most fundamental process in society, since society is defined around values and institutions, what is valued and institutionalized is defined by power relationships" (Castells, 2009:10). Like Foucault, Castells casts power in a distinctly social-relational structure instead of some abstracted property of society. Therefore, he is also concerned about the power relations in a society and how different social actors, progressive and oppressive, can asymmetrically influence the decisions of others as they relate to their interests

and values (Castells, 2009:10). For him, social actors range from individuals to collectives, organisations, institutions or networks. In Castells's view, oppressive power can be countered via the formation of social movements that critically examine social norms and discourses (Castells, 2009:10/31; Rowlands, 1995:101; Leal, 2010:90).

The claim concerning power asymmetry holds that one actor or group will always have a higher degree of influence over the other. Usually, this controlling power embeds itself in decision-making processes, conflict situation, and settings that exercise authority in people's personal lives, close relationships, communities and beyond (Rowlands, 1995:101-102). Castells (2009:10, 50) maintains that the Global Network Society involves a comprehensive analysis of power that has come to circulate in contemporary society in a vast, complex network of information and communication technologies. In this networked society, the content and information flow are disseminated by mass media, digital and social media communication platforms and networks, all of which become not only the tools of power but also its source. Castells identifies communication as a contemporary source of power. He argues that power finds expression in different political actors, social movements, the mass media, the internet, or any social actor that uses communication.

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) and **Edward Said (1935-2003)** were two highly influential scholars with more modern views of power. Bourdieu's notion of culture was briefly described as "cultural capital", which he viewed as a matter of aesthetic preferences and a source of power (see 5.2.2.). This view is rooted in his notion of habitus, which relates to the agency-structure view of power. Like Gramsci, Bourdieu asserted that dominant classes possess more cultural capital or power than the subordinate subaltern classes, thus maintaining their social standing. In this view, power is not only material but also socially and symbolically created and legitimated. In short, Bourdieu argued that power is not mutable but can be disrupted by countering the ingrained perceptions and behaviours that are created by culture. Section 6.4 will show the similarities between this power theory and Freire's interpretations of power.

Said's critique of Orientalism – that is, his contention that cultural imperialism is closely linked to political and economic imperialism – informs his power theory. This theory is built on an idea that power is not only about what aspects of Eastern societies and their stereotypes are included in

Western discourse and practice, but also about what is excluded and silenced (Add citations). As was discussed briefly in the previous chapter, Said's ideas about cultural imperialism and Orientalist cultural representation provide a lens of empowerment as a form of cultural power (see 5.2.2). Freire's conception of *cultural invasion* and *cultural revolution* as notions that frame culture were also examined previously (see 5.4.1). These notions are revisited in the current chapter's section 6.4, where Freire's views on empowerment are explored.

In a more contemporary setting, **John Gaventa (b. 1949)** (2020:117-120) formulated his "powercube" by drawing on Lukes's notions and under the influence research conducted by colleagues such as Andrea Cornwall and Karen Brock, who are part of the Participation Team, Institute of Development Studies (IDS). The "powercube" interrogates the complexity of participation as well its associated power dynamics. Using the metaphor of a Rubik's Cube, Gaventa (2020:118-119) defines the powercube as a three-dimensional tool, expressing firstly how power manifests itself as visible, hidden, or invisible (*a la* Dahl), secondly how it occurs in either closed, invited or claimed spaces, and lastly how it takes place on a global, national, local or household scale. This power analysis also corresponds with the "ladder of participation" discussed in section 3.4, in which participation is viewed as comprising different levels of minimalist or maximalist participation, meaning that the analysis therefore signifies shifts in power relations between the participating social actors. Likewise, the various interests of participation – see discussion on White's (1996) typology in section 3.4 – can also be viewed through the powercube to reveal different underlying power structures that range from the nominal to the transformative.

Equally, the powercube complements the abovementioned two typologies of participation in underscoring that spaces of participation can be closed, invited or claimed when expressed in the different levels and interests of an instance of participation. Hence, the powercube suggests that power can either constrain or enable different levels and kinds of empowerment. The top rungs of the "ladder of participation" correspond with the powercube's created or claimed spaces of power, whereas the bottom and middle rungs represent the more hidden power relations. Seen together, the powercube and the mentioned participation typologies provide a more incisive explanation of how power impacts empowerment notions and practices. Additionally, the discussions in section 6.4 will demonstrate that the powercube, even though it is a distinct and

structured power analysis tool, is complementary to Freire's views of how empowerment and transformation should be attained through dialogic praxis. This praxis and the corresponding power analysis take place on a local level and in the context of newly established communal spaces where the oppressed or marginalised reclaim their agency and power.

While many other theorists can be included (e.g., Nancy Fraser, Amartya Sen, Achille Mbembe, and Gayatri Spivak) in the list of contemporary power theorists, the last theorist whose work is discussed in this section is **Jo Rowlands (birthdate unknown)**, considering that her work is specifically centred within the field of development studies. Rowlands presents her theory of empowerment by working out how power can be shifted from the powerful to those who have been excluded from its possession and use. Her theorisation is set in the context of community project work she conducted from the early 2000s onwards for the non-governmental organisation Oxfam GB (Pettit & McGee, 2020:xvi; Rowlands, 2016, 1997). Her doctoral work on empowerment and her book, *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras* (1997), present a cornerstone from which to formulate the notion of empowerment within the broader development field and from a gendered optic. Rowlands's research reminds one of Arnstein's "ladder of participation" since the former also conceptualised power as a multidimensional phenomenon: **power over**; **power to**; **power with**; and **power within** – all of these dimensions operating in the contexts mentioned above. Section 6.4 returns to this specific typology when metatheorising how Freire's praxis philosophy coincides with Rowlands's power conceptions as forms of empowerment where *power within* is internal transformation, *power with* is collective action, *power to* equates to individual agency, and *power over* operates as the means to encourage power redistribution.

For current purposes, the research of all the theorists discussed above is used to complement Paolo Freire's liberation theory. Read together, they provide important analytical frames from which to multidimensionally conceptualise power and its counterpoint, empowerment, concerning participatory development communication (see 6.4). Before these theorisations occur, the discourse of power in development communication necessitates appraisal.

6.3.2 Power and empowerment: a development communication discourse and practice

An analysis of power in the development communication field can begin by briefly outlining the four main different eras during which it emerged as a concern.

The issue of power surfaced in the **1960s and 1970s** in the guise of critiques against the orthodox modernist rationality that equated development with economic growth (see 2.3). Calvès (2019:736) relates that, even though dependency theorists and advocates did not explicitly centralise power, their search for alternative development models that address global economic inequality and development challenges underlined the prevailing imbalances between postcolonial nations states and the Western powers that had dominated the global economy. Through their economic and cultural imperialism analyses, dependency theory implicitly informed subsequent critical, explicit studies about power and its dynamics in the development communication field. This era represents a crucial shift in recognising the interdependent but skewed relations between the core and the peripheral nations and communities in the larger world system. The 1970s also saw the rise of critical perspectives (Melkote & Steeves, 2015:16-17) concerning development thinking and practice. This era also saw the emergence of liberation or monastic perspectives, as derived from liberation theology. Section 6.4 will explain Freire's consciousness philosophy and approach, which are deeply concerned with notions of power as they are expressed in his conceptualisation of the oppressed and dominant classes of society and his ideas about the liberation of the oppressed.

The current study acknowledges that the earliest pioneers of development communication (e.g., Schramm, Rogers and Lerner) did reflect on the influence of technology, personal power and other socio-psychological variables (see 2.3). However, their interpretations of power were framed in concepts that had to do with control, influence and interdependence, as practised by so-called experts in development and social change.

During the 1980s, power theories trailed a comparable vague theoretical trajectory in the academic and professional fields. While scholars and proponents of participatory approaches and communication (see 2.6) emphasised that local communities had to take control over their development through participation, the centrality of power was not yet acknowledged widely or

studied critically. Nonetheless, there were some exceptions to the rule. The scholars Servaes (1989) and Chambers (1983), for example, pioneered power analysis as part of theorising participatory approaches, with Servaes perhaps more focused and explicit in his analysis than Chambers. The rise of participatory development marked an era in which scrutiny of the multidimensionality of power also commenced. Servaes (1988:2), for example, had begun to study the interplay between power, ideology and interests as they are constituted within an interpretative cultural framework. Correspondingly, in his foundational book *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (1983), Chambers confronted the conformist development practices that followed expert-driven strategies in urban environments and argued in favour of ones that centred on poor communities in rural areas. His analyses of such orthodoxy and development professionals advocated for development interventions that are conceived by local communities rather than by external social change agents.

A decade later, in the 1990s and onwards, Karin Wilkins (2000:197-208) called for a reconceptualisation of development communication theory and practice by accounting for power. A central theme of her research examines development communication that is enacted by wealthy, powerful agencies operating at the international and national levels. Framing development communication as discourse, Wilkins's (2000:207-208) examinations enable views of power located in power structures and dynamics that further inform what development is, in addition to determining who is allowed to participate, and in what manner, in development communication interventions or initiatives. Her power analysis centres on how power sources and their apparent legitimacy can be resisted. The scholars Melkote and Steeves (2015) have written extensively on empowerment in *Communication for development: theory and practice for empowerment and social justice*. This work offers a comprehensive reading of the history and conceptual concerns relating to communication for empowerment.

The 1990s ushered in the concern with alternative, people-centred approaches to development in reaction to state-led, top-down development and with it, the empowerment framework. Unsurprisingly, development scholars and practitioners have turned "empowerment" into a mantra and catchall phrase, as have a diverse range of institutions such as the World Bank, Oxfam and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Rowlands, 1997:2-4). A focus on "empowerment" has therefore informed the approaches of most radical social movements and

NGOs. Narayan (2005:3) and Rowlands (1997:2-3, 6-7) nevertheless maintain that, despite the pervasiveness of empowerment in the discourse and practice of the social change context, over time every society has come to articulate it through different local expressions, which include terms such as autonomy, capacity-building, self-reliance, self-direction, self-confidence and self-worth. These different words do not only signify different terminologies. Each of them communicates and meta-communicates different interpretations of the empowerment notion. These divergent vocabularies further underscore that the notion of empowerment has often been utilised in development practice and theory in different ways, oftentimes uncritically and inappropriately (Cornwall, 2009:3; Rappaport, 1987:122).

Broadly speaking, empowerment refers to the expansion of people's freedom of choices and actions to transform and assume responsibility for their lives so that they can fully and meaningfully participate in the social change processes and projects that are meant to benefit their lives (Chitnis, 2005:30; Okwori, 2010:243; Narayan, 2005:4; Raiño, 2006/1994:477, 448). In a development communication setting, the established assumption is that "empowerment" denotes how individuals and collectives at once have the capacity and the right to transform and effect social change (Raino, 2006/1994:443-453). White (1996:8-9) writes that empowerment involves a process where local communities can gain "greater consciousness of what makes and keeps people poor, and greater confidence in their ability to make a difference". From such an awareness, Okwori (2010:243) asserts that people become cognisant of their abilities, resources, as well as the limitations and challenges that either enable or restrain them and their development. He elaborates that, from this awareness there emerges the power to counter disempowerment, not only to resist it but also to destroy it.

These meanings highlight that empowerment has both material and less tangible aspects since it entails improving people's lived conditions, enhancing their mental capacities and developing their competencies and skills, all of which can facilitate positive social change and overall development. In gaining the confidence to address obstacles to growth, people also develop the power within and the collective power to challenge the relations or structures that disempower them. Following a capacity-building perspective, empowerment becomes a process and not simply an outcome or objective that must be reached (Obregon & Tufte, 2017; Waddington & Mohan, 2004:221-222). As the metatheorisations of empowerment below will demonstrate, it

entails that for individual and collective empowerment to transpire, people must not only have access to physical resources but also gain the critical understanding, capacity and thus the agency that is required to alter or transform their lived realities. In this view, empowerment is therefore also a social justice concern.

6.4 EMPOWERMENT: METATHEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

As indicated in the introductory remarks, this study uses Freire's dialogical pedagogy to theorise the notion of empowerment from its key metatheoretical positions. Empowerment is a buzzword that requires further theoretical depth and coherence. Section 6.4 will establish the theoretical linkages between various power theories discussed previously – but from the lens of Freirean notions concerning empowerment.

6.4.1 Empowerment: ontological assumptions

When ontologically examining “empowerment”, various kinds of questions can be raised, such as: What is the nature of empowerment?; What ideas and constructs comprise empowerment?; In what contexts does empowerment exist?; What – if any – are the goals of empowerment?; Who are the social actors involved in empowerment?; What kind of power relations exist between different social actors?; and What processes does empowerment involve? These concerns have already been raised in the discussions on different power theories.

Nevertheless, Freire's dialogic pedagogy is the primary entry point for resolving these issues. Given the previous metatheoretical discussions of Freire's philosophy (see 4.4.1) on the interfacing concepts of the participatory paradigm, the ensuing discussions will not look into a detailed theoretical analysis of the Freirean consciousness model. For present purposes, the critical aspects of Freire's ontological views that this study identify as being relevant to empowerment include humanisation, conscientisation, dialogue, transformation, the subaltern and the idea of emancipation. These notions are recast through the prism of the various power theories that were presented in this chapter's earlier sections. Accordingly, a more focused, coherent view of empowerment is theorised.

As has been established, Freire's worldview is bound to an ontological idea of humanisation versus dehumanisation that is representative of the completion or denial of the essence of human existence (Altamirano, 2020; Freire, 1970, 25-26). His empowerment view involves a process of emancipation by the disempowered or powerless from the powerful and their historical production and reproduction of imbalanced power dynamics and subsequent inequalities. Freire (1970:29, 30) contends that this liberation process is not secured to predetermined ideas or presumptions. Instead, it must be founded in the foundational human vocation to replace the fear of freedom with authentic autonomy and responsibility to take control of one's human destiny. To be sure, Freire (1970:30) states that inauthentic, disempowered human beings cannot participate in their own liberation or on behalf of anyone else. In the Foucauldian political act of interrogating dominant structures and relations (see 6.3.2.1), the marginalised or subaltern are already acquiring or regaining their human agency to ultimately transform perceived oppressive or unwanted circumstances in whatever ways they can conceive.

From this view, and as is contained in the structuration view of power by Giddens, a development participant can actively and critically reflect on contexts, organisations, processes or relations that prevent positive development and transformation (see 6.3.2.1). This mirrors Gaventa's second and third dimensions that represent those hidden and insidious forms of power that must be exposed for any shift in power to occur. In this manner, normalised empowerment discourse and practice can be interrogated along with the organisations and practices that dominate development communication. Waddington and Mohan (2004:221-222) underscore that empowerment theory and application must make the conceptual link between the personal and the institutional for actual transformation to occur.

In the participatory paradigm, Leal (2010:90-91) criticises the one-sided institutionalised understandings of empowerment that are evident in the dominant paradigm of development, explaining that they reduce the concept to meanings that are associated with the existing order. This then renders empowerment as the management of power when it is in the hands of the powerful. Such dominant readings conceive of empowerment as the bestowal of power upon the powerless by the powerful – as is described in the theorisations of Lukes and Rowlands, which point out that power has social, political and personal aspects (see 6.3.2.1). Melkote

(2006/2001:925-927) similarly assumes that power and control are used to steer and manage the development discourse and agenda by determining what gets included or excluded in development policy, plans and strategies. It can even extend to managing which ideas are allowed to circulate during a debate in the public sphere. In a development setting, power is usually exemplified by powerful organised money or organised people exercising control over economic, political, cultural and other informational resources. This exercise of power is to the detriment of the oppressed or powerless who need those resources, without which they cannot make meaningful improvements in their lives or address their basic needs (Kothari, *ibid.*).

In the context of organising for social change, there always exists a dialectic tension between those in power, who can limit the power of others or oppress them, and those who seek the release or liberation from such a controlling power (Papa *et al.*, 2006:57). Casting the inquiry a little wider, the purposes or objectives of empowerment come in to view as well. More questions can be asked. For example: Are individuals or communities then considered empowered once they have overcome intangible, internalised struggles?; Are they empowered once they have become participants in the free life or decision-making processes and structures of their communities?; Or are they empowered once they have gained access to markets or wages that would help improve the material state of their lives? There are further questions to add as well. Do these concerns raise a new matter? Is empowerment merely a means to some other end? Or is the process of empowerment an outcome in itself? As has been argued so far, rather than understanding empowerment in binary terms, this study reasons that it is a dialectic process.

Rowlands (1997:13) explains that apart from *power over* (i.e., controlling power), there are also other kinds of relational power. These include *power to* (i.e., to generate new possibilities without domination); *power with* (i.e., collective power, power created by group processes); and *power from within* (i.e., the spiritual strength that inspires and energises others) (see 6.3.2.1). Power therefore plays out in different contexts and different ways (also see Gaventa's views on power spaces, levels and forms). Hence, empowerment must be examined on different levels of analysis or dimensions that include the individual, group or organisation, and the community at large. As White (2006/1994:483) explains, empowerment rests on the subjective generative power to enact personal values and aspirations to preserve identity while maintaining the integrity of their culture. She claims that these are all necessary to sustain the psychic or

immaterial energy (i.e., *power as resource*) that is necessary for human development and social change.

Similarly, Thomas and Van der Fliet (2015:9-10) argue that access is often theoretically and practically linked to empowerment. His argument follows that people's material struggles should not only be measured in terms of a lack of resources but must necessarily also link to the absence of people's awareness of what they are a part of in their struggle against poverty. Often, this scarcity of knowledge is attributable to their lack of access to informational resources or insufficient opportunities to participate in transparent institutions and processes that would help facilitate the struggle against material oppression. Put differently, the notion of access suggests that when people become cognisant of their rights, they are empowered to confront and address the causes that keep them poor (Thomas & Van der Fliet, 2015:9-10; Freire, 1996/1970). On a non-material level, empowerment is associated with a positive, holistic outcome of self-discovery, successful human interaction and the ability to confront oneself and others through dialogic communication (White, 2006/1994:482-483). Arguably, personal empowerment and the ability and self-confidence to demand that one's rights should coincide with the ability to combine one's power with others in making mutually beneficial demands (i.e., *power to*). This understanding corresponds with a feminist interpretation of power that reads empowerment as involving "the personal as political" (Rowlands, 1997:102). Here, the idea of self-reliance enters into the empowerment framework.

White (2006/1994:483-484) defines it as being integral to participation in both an achievement of ends and a utilitarian way. She argues that self-reliance is not simply conceptually necessary for allowing people to escape dependency power relationships, but that it also actualises in various material, tangible ways such as access to economic and natural resources. This line of argument holds that empowerment indeed develops the personal power to demand one's political and cultural rights, but that one must also be empowered to have access to and take ownership of the material resources that would break dependency cycles and improve one's material quality of life. On the material level, Raiño (2006:446, 447) argue that people may need access to informational resources to improve their lives or fulfil their basic needs. Another way to make this possible is for individuals, organisations or communities to gain power over the economic, political and cultural forces or structures that impact their lives and offer avenues to

address their needs. In this manner, individuals will then also gain the self-reliance to utilise local economic resources that have a bearing on their physical and lived conditions (White, 2006/1994:483). This control includes accessing and taking ownership of communication and media systems that could help actualise personal empowerment and open up the knowledge resources that are necessary for physical empowerment.

Freire conceives of empowerment ontologically as an interrogation of power relations. As the powercube suggests (see 6.3.2.1), the invisible power dimensions of society must be made visible. If power dynamics remain unquestioned, they also remain unaffected; individuals or communities will therefore remain disempowered and unable to transform any unwanted lived experiences. An empowerment framework not only focuses on the agency of development beneficiaries to encourage social change but also brings into view the power structures or relations that they must challenge or transform for meaningful development to occur (Freire, 1970:25). Rowlands (1995:102, 103) argues that empowerment means involving people who have traditionally been left outside decision-making processes into them. As the argument has thus far unfolded, like the Freirean notion of critical reflection-action, Rowlands views empowerment in the context of the generative interpretation of power. In this understanding, people become empowered participants in the intangible decision-making processes that affect their lives by first becoming mindful of their own needs and interests and how these relate to the welfare and positions of others. From this newly gained critical individual awareness, Rowland explains that people can participate from a place of greater strength and influence in the processes and structures that affect their lives.

Still, in the Foucauldian sense, power permeates society more fluidly, meaning that it exists in the context of social relationships (Rai, 2007:5). This circulatory and relational nature of power means that it is dynamic and not merely a possession that remains in the hands of the few who strategically position themselves as powerful. Foucault maintains that power is not simply negative, limiting or repressive, but that it constitutes productive actions, effects and subjects (even in oppressive form) (Kesby, 2005:2040). Power is then stable insofar as it is reproduced in discourse, structures, actions and relations. Alternatively, it emerges in its application and the context of struggle or resistance over meanings or discourses.

Foucault (1997:19) concedes that albeit this resistance or interaction between the powerful and the weak could lead to empowerment and change, it could also incorporate the powerless into the status quo. He argues that, while the powerful will always be able to exert power over the powerless, individuals can also exercise power by contesting the status quo and reorienting power relations in favour of their interests and needs (Rowlands, 1995:12). So, in this sense power is simultaneously a form of refusal and one of permission, meaning that people can be restrained or enabled when it is exercised. This is analogous to the invited or claimed sites of participation explained by Gaventa's powercube and White's typology of participation interests (see 3.3.5). It is consequently also analogous with how the subaltern can gain agency to critically understand (i.e., power from within) by claiming *power over*, *power to*, and *power in* a collective sense to manage their own development and social change processes and outcomes (Kesby, 2005:2040). Rowlands (1995:12) describes Foucault's model of power as being bound up in interrelational and conflictual actions that occur in micro-politics. Consequently, in this model, power and empowerment mean both cooperative efforts aimed at political transformations and Freire's individual consciousness-raising (i.e., personal power) and personal acts of resistance (*ibid.*).

This nexus of personal and collective empowerment reminds of Castells's (2009) networked analysis of power, which states that power manifests in everyday relationships not only on a personal level but also in the communicative relational and institutional sense. Considering Gaventa's (2020) power dimensions as well, Freire (1970:29-31) focuses ontologically on the dialectical interpersonal relationship that prevails between the oppressed and their oppressors – a relationship wherein the powerless or subaltern (*à la* Gramsci) internalises the oppressor's consciousness and hegemonic structures and practices. Or, in the Foucauldian view, the subjugated subjects reproduce and transmit the normalised power expressions and practices that dehumanise and weaken them in the first place (Kesby, 2005:2040). From this perspective, the current study believes that Freire thus allows an ontological view of empowerment where personal transformation and empowerment can occur with a view to larger-scale social transformation and social change. Moreover, Freire's thinking allows hidden or overt power relations to be identified, problematised and confronted.

At its ontological core, Freirean philosophy stresses that empowerment occurs through the transformative and educational process of conscientisation to effect positive social change (Barranquero, 2006/2005:920). As was discussed in Chapter 4 (see 4.4.1), this contention is grounded in the notion that oppressed individuals and communities can rid themselves of different kinds of subjugation or marginalisation by identifying the sources of oppression and how such dominant forces negatively impact their daily lives. By critically questioning one's experience of the world, particularly concerning various social, economic and cultural institutions and relations, oppressed or marginalised people become aware of the social injustices that such structures and relations produce. However, reflection alone is insufficient to engender empowerment.

As was stated previously, Freire believed that once one has named or identified a problematic situation, the empirical act of changing or transforming it should then follow (Freire, 1970:32-33). Freire argues that empowerment is a political praxis or act that entails that human beings to gain critical awareness of imbalanced power relations and oppression. As social beings, they then translate their awareness into a human agency and capacity to directly change those unwanted circumstances and relationships. They must both *reflect* and *act*. This is an important ontological aspect of empowerment that cannot simply remain an abstract idea or a generative, spiritual *power within*. It must also lead to tangible social changes and the power to enact transformations (Freire, 1970:33). This interpretation aligns with views likening empowerment to psychological attributes that development participants attain through praxis. This kind of empowerment usually takes place on a profoundly personal level before it can also extend to the broader communal or even organisational contexts that are delineated in various power theories. Put differently, the potential for larger-scale social transformation can only be realised once self-awareness and self-autonomy are secured. However, this still occurs in the dialectical tension between the individual participant, the social setting and the situations in which they find themselves, and of course in respect of the social relations or intersubjectivity of the development situation.

While personal transformation is vital to bring about empowerment in any development communication setting, it must also manifest in concrete power redistribution, as well as the attainment of resources in the material sense. Freire cautions that, in the modernist

interpretation of power and empowerment, both are regarded in a unilateral materialist way. He writes that oppressor consciousness objectifies human existence and views everything in it as objects of domination (Freire, 1970:40-41). Freire believes that the oppressor's consciousness is preoccupied with the possession of money, making a profit, and other material advancement (as examples); hence, its overriding concern is with "having more" at the expense of human values and personal transformation. Freire (1970:40, 47) states that, for the oppressor, human existence involves *having* as a precondition of *being* human and thus empowered.

In contrast, Freire argues for an empowerment framework that encourages individuals and communities to have control over their own lives and start viewing themselves as capable of changing their subjective and objective worlds. Ontologically, empowerment must extend from an awareness of the subjective and objective worlds to the real-world act of altering them; that is to say, empowerment should be a transformative act. Freire's ontology of empowerment then means that it cannot simply be a "preoccupation" but must also be an "occupation" or human act towards social change (Freire, 1970:35-36). Consciousness-raising and action are ontologically interpretative and constructivist in their nature and require that those who need development or social change must make their hidden oppression and needs visible. Empowerment means that people can overcome what Freire (1970:30-32) terms internal or external "limiting situations" by questioning different interpretations of reality. This is what White (1997:7-9) calls transformative participation, where participation is meant to lead to the empowerment of low-income people or development participants. Empowerment is not simply material but involves profound internal growth and consequent shifts in interpersonal dynamics.

In an empowerment setting, those who are oppressed or subalterns should not remain the passive beneficiaries of development and empowerment ideas and efforts from the outside world. Instead, they must become active social actors who are directly engaged in social change and transformation. Going against purely historical materialism, Freire (1970:33) contends that there is no "world without people" and hence "no people without a world". Working from this ontological assumption, Barranquero (2011:170) reviews Freire's understanding of participatory communication and explains that it views empowerment from a humanist optic: This necessarily means that empowerment in development communication cannot only occur in a material, instrumentalist manner. Development beneficiaries are regarded as the key social actors and

change agents of their own empowerment and growth – not an idea of empowerment and growth that is imposed on them through external theories or practices. In the past, they were ontologically perceived as objects of empowerment and power was exerted over them, but this modernist perspective shifted after the introduction of the participatory paradigm. In the latter model, the subaltern does not have to depend on external change agents presumed to have a better understanding of their development objectives and requirements since the subaltern are no longer viewed as passive social actors. Instead, the subaltern should – as was argued previously, claim back their inherent agency and control via dialogic praxis.

As was discussed in Chapter 4, individuals and communities can claim or regain their authority and power through a dialogic approach to communication. Furthermore, the banking model of the modernisation theory, in which the competent teacher imparts information and skills to the uninformed learner, was discussed comprehensively (see 3.4.1). This hierarchical learning experience model epitomises imbalanced or asymmetrical power relations (Freire, 1970:52-63). Expressed again, this model posits that the teacher is a powerful expert who possesses knowledge while the learner is the disempowered or powerless student who receives knowledge from the instructor. Instead, one must conceptualise empowerment ontologically as a mutual problem-posing and learning process that typifies equal power relationships. For this to be realised, human values such as love, humility, trust, solidarity, sympathy and respect must underpin all empowerment praxis (Freire, 1970:19, 47).

These human values cast empowerment in a deeply personal and interpersonal way. Values such as trust and solidarity imply that people must not only examine their specific living situations, nor only the structures and social connections that control or *have power over them*. As was argued before, the people who are affected by development should also be *deeply connected with their internal experiences and their subjective perceptions* of their external surroundings. Rowlands (1997:11-13) explains that, in an ontologic sense, empowerment is only authentic once it extends beyond the conventional possessive, delegation definition by becoming *power with*, *power from within*, and *power to* – all of which must be employed in an intersubjective, generative and productive manner. By way of dialogic praxis, Freire (1970:48-49) maintains that empowerment must always involve a transformation process of the oppressed as managed by and with them

instead of for them. It should also be based on a worldview that is characteristic of distinct human values.

This learning process is implemented with intersubjective, critical dialogue among all social actors participating in development activities (described in Chapter 4, which provides an overview of how this process works). According to Freire, an alternative to a confined learning process would be the engagement of all social actors as equal players in a balanced and critical conversation, thus making empowerment a collective action and *power with* exercise that creates – as Rowlands (1997:13) explains – “a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of individuals, especially when a group tackle problems together”. Rowlands further relates that, in a decidedly ontological sense, the concept of *power within* then refers to the spiritual capacity and uniqueness of every human being the basis of “self-acceptance and self-respect which extend, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals” (Rowlands, 1997:13).

Furthermore, in this ontological model, empowerment is not merely information exchange; rather, it entails a two-way, reciprocal interchange of ideas and experiences pertaining to growth and development. The concept of empowerment, which includes both its meaning and the most effective means of achieving it (see 6.4.3), becomes a topic of conversation or dialogue between parties on an equal footing. Only in this way can the process or objective of empowerment become a process of humanisation and authentic social change. In this line of argumentation, dialogue is not only the means to empowerment but also empowerment in and of itself. Whereas Habermas’s (1987, 1994) ontological distinction between communicative action versus strategic action in an ideal speech situation imagines social transformation or empowerment to occur through a mode of mutual understanding, Freire’s view emphasises the dialects of dialogue, its political character, and (therefore) its conflictual nature (Barranquero, 2006/2005:921). It must be noted here that while the public sphere conception is based on consensus, it proposes that liberation and empowerment can occur via mediated spheres in which the powerful can be held to account. As such, it also amplifies voices that need to be heard in a development setting (Jacobson, 2020:288-289, 301-302). Likewise, while the Freirean view centres on how the oppressed can resist or disrupt the powerful, the former is where community-led development and social change can start .

Freire's understanding of dialogue provides a perspective on empowerment that calls for dominant power structures and agents to be actively reflected on and challenged. In ontological terms, empowerment requires a process and commitment to achieving social justice (cf. Melkote & Steeves, 2015). It was described in Chapter 4, section 4.4. how a dialogic pedagogy argues that people, their existence and struggles would become more humanised through critical reflection and action. From this perspective, "empowerment" means that the development beneficiary must first be fully humanised before being considered empowered. This is done assuming that the development beneficiary knows what their empowerment should entail. Ontologically speaking, empowerment is therefore a democratic and participatory process that does not exclude any social actor from the various stages of development but rather reintroduces those social actors who were meant to be empowered in the first instance. Freire's understanding of empowerment via critical dialogue emphasises the need to challenge dominant power structures and work toward social justice.

Freire's empowerment theory is founded on the critical tradition of communication theory and asserts that all forms of power are interrelated. These interconnections and the power relations that they produce and maintain have a direct impact on individuals and communities. Like Foucault's arguments about empowerment, Freire's poststructuralist interpretation argues that the agency-structure binary must be overcome. Freire further maintains that systemic power relations and the inequalities they produce must also be understood within the historical backgrounds in which they are embedded. An ontological understanding of empowerment is void in isolation from interrogating the past origins and contexts of skewed power dynamics and their resultant inequalities or – as structuration theory suggests – void when divorced from the dominant discourse and power relations that legitimate power. Freire emphasises that reality, or one's experience of reality, is not ahistorical or divorced from its historical dynamics. It involves continual interpretation and reinterpretation (Freire, 1970:50-51). Apart from dialogic praxis inherently being empowering, Freire (1970:64) contends that it also facilitates the constant generation of knowledge and strategies that are concerned with empowerment issues.

In this understanding, empowerment is also not simply mechanistic, instrumental or linear but happens in different spaces and during different temporal moments – as the powercube and different typologies of participation have suggested (Arnstein, 2019; Barranquero, 2011:170,

White, 1996). Empowerment is not a one-time event but a continuous process that requires ongoing support and resources. It involves equipping individuals and communities with the necessary tools and knowledge already inherent in themselves to take control of their own lives and shape their futures autonomously. According to Freire (1970:61-63), the world is a complex system of interrelated and contingent parts in which some people have more power than others. Reality is not a natural or universal truth but contingent on social actions that are embedded in organisation, processes and relationships. Through a dialogic praxis, those inequalities that perpetuate marginalisation and inequality and therefore maintain disempowerment or powerlessness can be challenged. This highlights the importance of understanding the social construction of reality and how power dynamics shape our experience of it. By engaging in critical dialogue and then taking action to challenge inequalities, we can work towards more empowered individuals and communities and create a more equitable and just society.

From the discussion above, it becomes apparent that the **social actors** involved in empowerment are not limited to “knowledgeable” external change agents. Instead, the external development agents now only takes on the role of the facilitator and the onus rests on them to engage in a dialogic exchange of ideas where they learn as much as the previously perceived local recipients of knowledge needed to learn. The nature of existence as understood by the so-called expert becomes subordinate to how the development actors in need of transformative change and empowerment understand the nature of existence. Ontologically, the worldview of the development beneficiaries takes precedence; their development reflections, wants and needs are primary in the development process.

6.4.2 Empowerment: epistemological assumptions

Within the participatory paradigm (see Chapters 2 to 4), knowledge is viewed from an approach that contrasts the modernistic top-down model of production and distribution to one that is bottom-up and collaborative. In this general epistemic frame, the knowledge in any field concerning any concept or idea is not purely based on rationality or scientific inquiry and observation but situated in a socially constructed process that is embedded in local epistemologies and experiences.

Similar to dialogue and participation, theorising the epistemology of empowerment emphasises examining how certain individuals, structures or groups possess or lack the power to produce knowledge that would either foster or inhibit the development or social change in society. As discussed in section 6.2, power and empowerment are intersecting concepts and an epistemology of the latter cannot occur in the absence of an analysis of power.

In theorising Freire's dialogic pedagogy, it was already argued that knowledge is an intersubjective and reflection-action process based on dialogue. Within an empowerment optic, knowledge is therefore not static, nor is it based on an objective, universal truth. It is situated instead in the localised and lived experiences of those beneficiaries who seek empowerment that could encourage meaningful social change in their lives and in their communities (Barranquero, 2006/2005:921; Manyozo, 2017:137-139). In the Foucauldian view, power is circular, and hence the discourse and knowledge surrounding empowerment ideas and strategies are as well. Just like Freire, Foucault contends that the relationship between power, knowledge and empowerment needs to be negative but can be productive. Freire's dialogic pedagogy also states that any epistemic claim is not only ahistorical but also socially constructed and always open for transformation. In theorising an epistemology on empowerment, knowledge about what constitutes empowerment and how best to achieve it suggests a recognition that empowerment can never be neutral or universally valid.

Instead, it must be situated in the subjective and lived conditions of those who desire empowerment and in their unique social, historical and cultural contexts (Freire, 1970:61-66). Gaventa's powercube underscores that hidden and coercive power organisations and their knowledge systems need to be uncovered and challenged if authentic empowerment is to transpire in any development setting. In this view, hegemonic discourses on empowerment are challenged and, in their place, the knowledge systems and narratives of marginalised groups are included in the theory and practice of development. As with Freire's ideas, the powercube underscores that a deeper understanding of invisible power will also reveal what ideas and applications hinder some people's empowerment while enabling the empowerment of others. Both views share a commitment to empowering individuals and collectives through the awakening of critical awareness and a consequent understanding of power dynamics and how to transform them.

Applying local or indigenous knowledge in a development setting, the subaltern or people on a local level can and must determine which areas of their lives require empowerment (Manyozo, 2017:130). For example, whereas conventional modernistic impositions entail material and quantitative measures, viewing empowerment from below means that empowerment can include gaining knowledge or skills about specific identified concerns. Additionally, as was discussed in the ontological discussions on empowerment, felt needs can extend to comprise more immaterial or spiritual dimensions, such as gaining self-confidence and self-reliance during the development process. These empowerment outcomes are thus often less tangible than more traditional interpretations would want to measure and quantify.

Freire's dialogic pedagogy instructs that a banking model of education must be replaced by an intersubjective communicative model that challenges power relations and social structures in society. The banking model of learning limits alternative epistemologies of development and reinforces dominant ideas and strategies for achieving empowerment. A Freirean view suggests that what constitutes empowerment and how best to effect it is dependent on the social settings and realities of the marginalised or oppressed during the development process, as is any determination of who produces and distributes those empowerment strategies. Of course, this requires a disruption of the epistemological status quo or, as Rowlands (1997) labels it, the "power over" of what constitutes empowerment. Freire (1970:53) rightly states that "knowledge emerges only through intervention and re-invention" that is enacted by the individual (i.e., power from within). This individual enactor is self-aware and cognisant of the external world, the other people who live in that world, and how to collectively construct appropriate knowledge and strategies for empowerment.

Corresponding to his ontological view on empowerment in the previous section, Freire's epistemological view also suggests that knowledge is not a constant or universal phenomenon. Since dialogue is used as the learning tool, the formerly commonplace monologic, instrumental rationality that guides inquiry on empowerment is replaced instead with a never-ending, communicative rationality. In ontologic terms, Freire (1970:53, 56, 61) describes reality as a process. This means that all knowledge and all cognising of reality constantly change a person's interpretations of reality.

Knowledge about empowerment is therefore not conceived of or even shared top-down and in a linear fashion. It is based on a democratic, open system that originated bottom-up from the grassroots of a society. The “narrative character” of a theory of knowledge and the knowledge it creates underscores that the ideas individuals and communities hold about empowerment and implementing strategies for empowerment can only be put into practice if these collectivities challenge and disrupt the arboreal learning model. Empowerment can be conceived with critical awareness and human action that are situated in specific historical, social and cultural environments and experiences. Just as in previous discussions, learning what empowerment is and how to attain it cannot be divorced from the actual living conditions of those who should benefit from empowerment efforts. In this view, empowerment is not elitist but based on real-world situations. Freire’s (1970:65) ideas about how individuals become empowered stress that it is always rooted in the historical present, meaning that it is dynamic and responsive to present contingencies and needs.

According to Freire, an epistemology of empowerment must not only be theoretical but also integrated with practice. For this reason, various approaches such as PAR and action research have been devised to conceptualise what empowerment constitutes (see 3.4.2). These methodological developments have enabled the creation and use of knowledge systems from the ground up. They contrast markedly with modernistic systems and ideas of what empowerment is, how it is best inculcated and to what ends it should be enacted. Epistemologically speaking, empowerment is therefore an experiential learning process. As Freire explains: One person alone can never speak the truth but intersubjective dialogue should instead guide learning about empowerment. This further suggests that knowledge cannot be gained by objective inquiry or observation. Its acquisition must be tied to critical reflection and human action that engages with the real world. Knowledge is constructed, and empowerment likewise. Freire (1979:61-62, 65) describes knowledge as a process of liberating and empowering education; it is not simply a matter of depositing ideas and skills in the minds of development beneficiaries.

When development participants engage in consciousness-raising and problem-posing praxis, they are not only empowered but their ideas, interests and needs concerning empowerment also evolve constantly. Empowerment should never be viewed as a fixed end goal but should be

treated as a continuous learning process that is dependent on the cognising individual or community. Knowledge about empowerment is always open for revision. The dialogic pedagogy further envisions that knowledge should question power structures and the inequalities that they create. Empowerment thus means that grassroots participants can question organisations or relations that perpetuate a lack of development or inequalities. Likewise, a problem-posing view of empowerment involves unveiling those powers that either enable or limit the transformation and development of the oppressed and marginalised (Freire, 1970:65).

Considering knowledge resources, White (2006/1994:484-485) explains that knowledge systems, knowledge generation, knowledge transfer and target knowledge acquisition should variously (and democratically) belong to the powerful, academics and experts, and newly empowered multitudes. The dialogic pedagogy does away with the traditional model of epistemology and introduces multiple, diverse systems and modes of knowing into development thinking. The notion and practice of indigenous knowledge is thus part and parcel of the empowerment framework, and it becomes possible once social actors dialogue about their different positions on knowledge and its applications. Or, as White (2006/1994:844) sums up the empowerment framework:

“When individuals become self-reliant, their behaviour will change – from apathy to action, from dependence to independence, from alienation to involvement, from intolerance to tolerance, from powerlessness to assertiveness, from defensiveness to supportiveness, from manipulatable to self-determined, from other-directed to inner-directed, from ignorant to knowledge.”

Since knowledge is never ahistorical nor objective but shaped by politics, society and economics, Freire maintains that knowledge about empowerment is not simply about collecting facts or information but is deeply socially embedded. Whereas traditional education enforces old structures and patterns of power and dominance, the dialogic pedagogy facilitates new alternative epistemes that question ideas about empowerment, in effect also offering new methodologies to facilitate locally empowered solutions to developmental problems.

6.4.3 Empowerment: methodological assumptions

With regard to the methodological assumptions of participation, section 3.4.3 discussed how several new and responsive methodologies have been developed in the participatory paradigm. For present purposes, the current section – also about methodological assumptions, but this time concerning empowerment – will not discuss those specific methodologies but instead refer to them in a metatheorisation of Freire’s methodological views on empowerment. Likewise, as the previous two sections discussed his ontological and epistemological views on empowerment, this subsequent section builds on these previously examined notions, but with the focus turning to methodological matters.

Freire maintains that a participatory dialogic praxis is the means to empowerment. As the arguments made previously clarified, he takes a dim view of objectivist and scientific understandings of reality, meaning that his praxis is infused with the critical theory research bias that qualitative, critical methodologies should instead take precedence. For him, empowerment is not merely providing the disenfranchised or disempowered access to resources or the “required” information or knowledge, but about being critical and reflective and, most importantly, actively engaging these people in finding empowerment solutions and strategies.

Through consciousness-raising via dialogue, people become increasingly cognisant of their socio-economic and political contradictions. Dialogue is the means or tool to perceive and confront such challenges. For this reason, Freire advocates for participatory methodological approaches instead of methodologies that are – as an example – imposed from above and exogenously through science and technology. Freirean ideas about empowerment greatly inspired the different participatory methodologies that were mentioned in section 3.4.3. Methodologies such as PAR, PRA or action research are inclusive of local people. These are not only tools or strategies intended to gain knowledge about development or enact strategies. By themselves, these methodologies (including their methods and their procedures) are fundamentally empowering – specifically through the actions and praxis that they entail. For instance, through PRA (Chambers, 1994:953-957), people can self-autonomously improve and examine their lived realities and how to plan and accordingly enact any identified changes. PRA is regarded as an “activist participatory

approach” and it therefore aligns well with Freire’s transformative and liberatory grasp of empowerment.

As was argued previously in this chapter, empowerment is generative and should also result in practical expressions. Therefore, PRA exhibits exactly such a characteristic in that it relies on development beneficiaries themselves to conceive of and employ strategies of empowerment that they consider appropriate to their social settings (Barranquero, 2006/2005:923). For example, Section 3.4.3 listed methods such as diagramming, informal mapping, and innovation assessment that people on the grassroots level can use to enact development and empowerment. Freire advocates for the empowerment of local social actors by their informed action – that is, through reflection and action – and techniques such as PRA fit this prescription well. Participatory methodologies facilitate agency, which was previously completely ignored as a desired outcome in the objective paradigm of inquiry. More specifically, Freire employs the notion of cultural circles as one of his instrumental approaches for dialogic praxis. Explained briefly, these circles are small pedagogical groups where people can critically examine their circumstances. As spaces for mutual learning and problem-posing, the so-called expert or teacher becomes a mere facilitator while the development participant becomes the primary researcher or investigator. This already constitutes an empowerment technique in the empowerment framework, but it can also lead to more ideas and knowledge on empowerment and how to enact it. Notably, this methodology contrasts markedly with top-down models of education and development. Instead, cultural circles encourage collaborative inquiry, collective learning and (as a consequence) active engagement by local actors.

Freire’s insistence on the primary place of subjectivity in empowerment further means that each situation, phenomenon, or situation is unique and requires different methodologies. Just as a universal empowerment epistemology cannot and should not exist, every community finds itself in different social and cultural circumstances. In short, a Freirean methodology challenges knowledge impositions and instead encourages a diversity of techniques and processes that make participants aware of their power to change reality. A universal methodology for empowerment only exists because it is located first and foremost within dialogic praxis.

6.5 SUMMARY REMARKS

This chapter aimed to theorise the notion of “empowerment” from several different readings, typologies and approaches. The discussion demonstrated that, due to a vast array of social actors and institutions involved, empowerment is perhaps one of the vaguest notions in theory and practice. Section 6.2 described the etymological roots of empowerment and showed that there are different definitions of the term. The same section also illustrated that empowerment is closely tied to the word “power”, which is conventionally defined as something possessed by someone that can be delegated to someone else. These dictionary definitions showed that empowerment must be conceived by first examining the notion of power.

Section 6.3 briefly presented several classical interpretations of power, followed by more detailed discussions of contemporary theorists’ power theories and analyses in two subsections. These discussions presented multidimensional descriptions of empowerment theory and practice and informed the metatheorisation of the concept in section 6.4. The latter was conducted by focusing primarily on the Freirean interpretation of empowerment.

To summarise: When read and metatheorised in a Freirean view, the *ontology* of empowerment involves humanisation. Empowerment is not simply a matter of gaining power. It involves the reflection and action of becoming more fully and authentically human. This interpretation ties into the idea of liberation, meaning that people can critically perceive their dehumanised or disempowered situation through dialogic praxis with the explicit intention of altering it. It also follows from this line of argumentation that, in contrast to how modernist thinking views empowerment in materialistic terms (a logic that is framed by an exploitative capitalist view of democracy), a more participatory model is humanistic and also places a premium on more abstract or immaterial dimensions of empowerment. By recognising the material gains of empowerment and its more human-centred, psychological and communal aspects, a participatory model of empowerment stresses the importance of individual agency, critical reflection and collective action toward social change. Empowerment is also not a passive process but a process of active engagement that leads to the attainment of agency and autonomy.

Epistemologically, empowerment is described as centring on consciousness-raising. As the discussions in section 6.4.2 have shown, any knowledge about how empowerment should be

conceived and practised is constructed and co-constructed. External actors cannot simply impose their views and applications on development beneficiaries. This knowledge is created from people's constant experiences and their interactions within the human-world nexus – specifically as expressed in Freire's dialogic pedagogy. Development beneficiaries empower themselves and are not merely the recipients of development. Furthermore, empowerment occurs locally and includes both *material* and more *abstract* forms.

Methodologically, empowerment equates to diversity. Not only is it dependent on unique analyses of the communities involved. The strategies to achieve empowerment for development are plural and generative. Dialogue is however instrumental in any methodology for empowerment. The following chapter offers a theoretical framework that presents a synthesis of the interfacing concepts of the participatory paradigm.

CHAPTER 7: TOWARDS A THEORETICAL-CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH FOR DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

“Frameworks are crucial because they serve as the foundation for understanding and analysing the phenomenon being studied.”

— Miles *et al.* (2014).

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As described in section 1.11, this thesis is divided into four main parts, each dealing with different concepts and aspects of the research phenomenon under investigation. Chapters 1 and 2 constitute this study’s contextual chapters and thus Part I. In the first chapter, the basic thesis of this study was introduced, namely that community radio as participatory media can deliver on development communication goals in South Africa. The statement was based on initial propositions stating that community radio is philosophical (*raison d’être*) – theoretically speaking – and legislatively conceived of and mandated to be participatory in nature and operation (see 1.1).

Despite this claim, the problem statement (section 1.2) identified a number of concerns by indicating that the theoretical framework chosen to investigate this claim (namely the participatory paradigm) lacks theoretical coherence. The theory and practice of participatory communication were founded on the notions of participation, dialogue, culture, and empowerment. These concepts were identified as being pertinent to the current study, but with the added problem that they are often ambiguous or under-theorised. Likewise, community media studies comprise a vast field concerning how the notion of community is theorised and how community radio can operate as participatory media for development. Chapter 1 proposed that this gap requires the further investigation of community radio as participatory media, a research objective that was encapsulated in the general research question (see 1.3.1) and first specific research question: *How is participatory communication conceptualised according to the literature on the participatory paradigm as relevant to community media?* (see 1.3.2.1).

While this paradigm is the contemporary norm in development communication theory and practice and needs critical examination, its ascent is complex and filled with varying interpretations of participation and participatory communication that, at least in theory, have since been discarded. Chapter 2 contextualised the normative paradigm through a genealogical conceptual reading (see 2.3 to 2.6), starting first with the modernisation paradigm, dependency model and multiplicity framework and then followed by discussions that pointed towards the emergence of the participatory paradigm.

Part II accordingly followed the above two contextual chapters by presenting the theoretical analysis of the participatory paradigm. Whereas Chapters 3 to 6 theorised the participatory paradigm concerning the abovementioned theoretical notions, Chapter 7 now serves as a summative theoretical framework or synthesis of the theorisations in these chapters. It aims to partially answer this study's first specific research question by presenting a revised theoretical framework for the participatory paradigm, achieved through the integrative literature study (see 1.8.1.1.1) that was used as the primary research method. Chapter 7 answers the stated question only in part, since the latter research inquiry evidently entails that this framework should also be contextualised within community media. This examination will however continue with Part III's chapters 8 and 9, which respectively examine South African community radio from a community media studies perspective and a legislative and policy one. Parts I and II of this study will then be concluded in the form of a final theoretical-conceptual framework of community radio as participatory media in Chapter 10, Part IV. But what is a theoretical or a theoretical-conceptual framework?

The sections below first present a brief summation of each of the identified theoretical assumptions of the participatory paradigm. These summaries were compiled after the available literature on the paradigm was mapped and then extensively examined (in Chapters 3 to 6) concerning the different typologies, theoretical views and approaches that are involved in each theoretical assumption.

Given the current study's formative nature, the reviews below culminate in a final theoretical guiding assumption about each associated notion. These theoretical assumptions then form the initial foundations of the study's theoretical-conceptual framework, which will be completed in

Chapter 10 when community radio theoretical and legislative concepts are added into the final framework.

7.1.1 Participation reviewed: theoretical views and synthesis

Chapter 3 established that the notion of participation is at the core of the participatory paradigm, but that a coherent theoretical definition remains elusive. The mapping of the available literature demonstrated a wide variety of source types and research foci. As such, it was established that most research on participation can be called “collections of concepts” or “concepts to think” and act with (Tufte & Tacchi, 2020:4).

When the literature concerning the theory and practice of participation was selected, mapped and examined, several conceptual and theoretical themes emerged that describe the notion. To some extent or other, most of the research defines participation in the following frames: *opportunity*, *access*, *engagement*, *inclusivity*, *agency*, *equality*, *stages*, and *dialogic communication*. Furthermore, the literature also makes regular reference to participation’s *transformative dimensions* and *empowerment focus*. Each of these frames or underlying notions is described conceptually below. While it emerged that the last three frames describe participation, they will receive more focused attention and discussion as primary concepts on their own – that is, the concepts of dialogue, culture and empowerment.

- *Participation as **opportunity**:*

Based on the scholarly literature, participation principally requires enabling environments in which it can be conceived and practised (sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). These participatory opportunities are either already in existence or potentially exist (see Dutta, 2018; Cornwall, 2009; Leal, 2010). This distinction underscores the importance of conceptualising and realising participation as a situated or located practice (Cornwall, 2009). However, Chapter 3 also revealed that participatory opportunity is usually wrought with dialectical tensions. Dominant social actors might employ participatory opportunities to instrumental or inappropriate ends, while others – ideally the beneficiaries of development – are only invited to opportune such spaces and in externally controlled manners. Accordingly, participatory opportunities must be opened,

reclaimed or created entirely anew by local actors to ensure that they gain participatory opportunities and are thus empowered.

Participation opportunities can be found in both institutionalised structures or informal occurrences (e.g. community meetings) (see Burger, 2017; Cornwall, 2009; Dutta, 2018). It is therefore crucial to interrogate the nature of participatory opportunities. Dutta (2020a:4-5) notes that irrespective of the context or nature of such opportunities, the redistribution of communicative power should also be centralised. Furthermore, these opportunities must manifest in both material and symbolic occasions. Or, as Cornwall (2009) notes concerning the latter expression, spatially participatory opportunity can exhibit performative and creative dimensions. While White (1996) cautions about the possibility that primarily symbolic participatory opportunities can be co-opted, Cornwall (2009) contends that community meetings (for example) are concurrently a space in which the “notion of ‘the community’” pre-exists and social practices that enhance the opportunity for participation are also allowed.

Considering structured participatory opportunities, participation is essential in spaces that are governed by legal and policy frameworks (e.g. mediated spaces such as community radio). Other institutional opportunities also include governmental or non-governmental organisations or large-scale national or supranational institutions like the UN, the World Bank or even the private sector (compare Dutta, 2020b:1-2, 4-5, 28). Cornwall (2009) asserts that participatory opportunities are inherently bound to actual political, social, cultural and historical contexts and particularities, all of which challenge idealised, ahistorical notions. Furthermore, such opportunities must extend beyond physical spaces to include discourses in academia, government, activism, the development industry, and the commercial sphere, in and from which planned participation then manifests. This notion of “situated practice” further accentuates that the varying characteristics of domains, contexts and levels will determine the nature and variety of participation opportunities.

- *Participation as **access**:*

In identifying participatory opportunities – in whatever form is available or needed – development actors must have access to them if they are to benefit meaningful. Access also highlights that various participatory opportunities exist beyond time and place: It involves

providing the various resources that are needed for authentic participation. Resource access is crucial in ensuring fair and inclusive participation in development settings. It involves not only informational access and the acquisition of expertise and skills – including indigenous knowledge (refer to 5.3.2) – but also the availability of pertinent economic and cultural resources (see 7.3.4 on cultural considerations). Such comprehensive access is fundamental to informed and relevant decision-making in development contexts. Access to social and political power and the right to participate in possible participatory opportunities is also crucial. Dutta (2012b:4, 20) emphasises that participation requires “access to the communicative sites where articulations” about development are made, policies formulated, and implementations or strategies selected. People who must benefit from development initiatives should have unobstructed access to freely voice their views and interpretations concerning their development lived experiences and goals, as well as any decisions that affect them (cf. Arnstein, 2019). However, access is often also a site of struggle that exhibits social and political dimensions (Dutta, 2011:251).

Access to communicative avenues is also fundamentally a basic human need and citizen right (see Arnstein, 2019; Melkote & Steeves, 2015). Within the participatory paradigm, this translates into a core communication right, including individual and collective rights to impart and receive information (cf. Burger, 2017, Cornwall, 2009). UNESCO’s interpretation (see 3.x) locates access within community media systems that entrench the right to communication and information and stress their communal self-management characteristics. Chapters 8 and 9 explore community radio as an embodiment of this view. For now, it is posited that community radio prioritises communal access to communicative sites, thereby offering participatory development communication opportunities that substantially benefit local individuals and communities. “Participation as access” will be further studied concerning *inclusivity*, *agency* and *the last two frames*, thereby clarifying the nature and process of access (Dutta, 2011). Additionally, section 7.3.4 will revisit the notion of power in relation to empowerment.

- *Participation as **engagement**:*

Once access to participatory opportunities is obtained, meaningful involvement in these opportunities must transpire, especially characterised by the active engagement of local actors (see Arnstein, 2019; Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009; White, 1996). Literature suggests that authentic

engagement necessitates beneficiaries voicing their ideas and cooperating with all stakeholders to formulate and apply development solutions (see 3.4.2 and 5.4.1). This engagement should prioritise internal participation over external involvement or mere strategic invitations to local actors. In development communication, the “ladder of participation” illustrates that mere consultation, information dissemination and planning are insufficient and represent tokenistic engagement (see 3.3.4 and 3.3.5). Genuine engagement aligns with Arnstein’s (1969) “participation by collaboration” and “empowerment participation” or otherwise with White’s (1996) “transformative participation” (see Table 3-2), all of which are meant to start from the grassroots level. The engagement of formerly subjugated individuals or groups in development is a vital aspect of participation (Burger, 2017:13).

Engagement, however, is a multidimensional idea. If viewed as an “opportunity”, it cannot be spatially or temporarily constrained but must embody dynamic, sustained engagement. It is linked intricately with inclusion, agency and equality, thus dictating the level and depth of participation. As its sustained character indicates, engagement should span the entire life cycle of a development project. These sub-concepts collectively establish the enabling environment in which engagement can occur. Their links are examined further and summarised below.

- *Participation as **inclusivity**:*

The inclusion of marginalised, underrepresented or oppressed groups is central to active engagement and participation in development settings. The participatory approach demands that the positionality of external social actors and their status as “development experts” be interrogated, advocating instead for the unfettered inclusion of local participants who are the primary beneficiaries of development (see 3.3.5). Inclusivity entails that a plurality of voices that encompass a variety of demographics tied to race, gender, socioeconomic status, cultural backgrounds and ethnicities are heard and represented. The cultural aspect of inclusivity will be revisited in section 7.3.4.

Inclusivity aligns with participation as access and engagement by encouraging equal access and removing all possible inhibiting obstacles that hinder people’s inclusion in development processes. Inclusivity thus problematises the modernistic development theory as a hierarchal,

nominal notion and practice and instead supports a development approach where all voices are considered without prejudice or discrimination in decision-making (White, 1996). Inclusivity is not just instrumental but a transformative and empowering process. As was indicated earlier, participation requires that participatory opportunities are assessed continually. Likewise, inclusivity is responsive and self-reflexive, meaning that the inclusion and exclusion of social actors are continually reassessed and adapted.

Building on the discussions in section 3.4.1, it becomes clear that the link between genuine engagement and inclusion is not linear but exhibits a mutually reinforcing dynamic. Depending on the participatory opportunity, active engagement could precede meaningful engagement or – conversely – engagement in available participatory occasions could enhance more inclusive environments. For example, inclusion may focus on initially including as many local participants as possible in a development project. Then again, including formerly excluded or dominated voices deepens the understanding of diverse voices, views and experiences (see 3.4.1-3.4.3). This is especially pertinent under conditions of great disparity in the inclusion of social actors and where the hierarchy and power dynamic calls for redistribution. In turn, deeper understandings in the self-reflexive and iterative occasion could enhance even more inclusive practices and strategies in development communication. Inclusivity clearly also relates to the idea of participation as agency.

- *Participation as **agency**:*

Within participatory development, the active engagement of all relevant individuals or groups is crucial for ensuring agency. Agency will resurface in the reviews on dialogue and empowerment. However, seen through a participation optic, the idea of human agency already points to the ability of informed and resourced social actors to act autonomously and participate actively in the decisions that influence their lived experiences. This agency is far more productive and beneficial than being subjected to nominal interests and limited participatory opportunities (Cornwall, 2009). The agency dimension requires that participation is voluntary and, as the “ladder of participation” delineates, free from manipulation, coercion or control (see 3.4.2). The empowerment assessment conceptualises agency as a dialectical notion and practice. However,

the literature on participation already indicates that the notion and practice of participatory communication propose the idea of equality.

- *Participation as **equality**:*

Equality essentially encapsulates many of the above-discussed frames of participation. To sum it up: In the participatory paradigm, equality means that everyone – but most especially also the subaltern at the margins of society (see Dutta, 2020a:12-115) – is equally entitled to contribute to and influence decision-making processes. Equality is also expressed in participation as having fair access to various participatory opportunities and resources, effectively translating it into a fundamental human and communication right. It furthermore requires addressing and overcoming any obstacles or power imbalances that might hinder true equality in participation. In this view, structural transformation that favours the subaltern agents is vital to the notion of evenly balanced participation. Participation as equality means that certain human values should also be upheld during development processes. The following section explores these values as being foundational to dialogue in participatory communication.

- *Participation as **levels or stages**:*

Based on the above summations, participation must transpire in many kinds of spaces and places and, as Arnstein's and White's comparable participation typologies accentuate, it must also transpire to the maximalist degree to ensure effectiveness and meaning (see 3.3.5). While participatory opportunities exist at the macro- and meso-levels, the micro or local level typically offers more genuine opportunities for participation. Large-scale participation often involves formal structures, but macro level involvement remains significant. For instance, social movements inevitably demonstrate large-scale participation that is less formal and more grassroots-oriented. But within the participatory paradigm, grassroots participation most frequently originates and thrives at the community level. Regardless of the specific frameworks and scales of participation, Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) emphasise that it is crucial to involve previously excluded social actors in all development project phases, including research, conceptualisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- ***Participation as dialogic communication:***

Any conceptual framework of participation inevitably embraces a specific kind of communication. The literature reviewed (see 3.3.4 and 3.3.5) signals that meaningful and egalitarian engagement by a diversity of social actors in participatory opportunities is only possible through dialogic communication. The next subsection summarises dialogue within participatory communication according to its specific frames or sub-concepts. However, it must be noted that dialogue is fundamental to the nature of participation, to the extent that participation is quite impossible without dialogue. Considering the abovementioned frames, dialogue creates participatory opportunities in which multiple, diverse actors and their perspectives are directly included and actively engaged in development processes. Section 7.3.2 asserts that dialogue must retain a particular character and follow a process of praxis that challenges traditional development notions and strategies.

- ***Participation as empowerment and a transformative practice:***

If participation comprises all of the above notions, it can lead to changes in binary development theories and practices that benefit local individuals and communities. Participation as a transformative practice (see 3.4.1) implies that participation is not simply instrumental. As has been argued until now, it is instead a continuous process of assessment, reassessment and adaptation, which is already an end in and of itself. These notions are explored in detail in section 7.4.4 where the empowerment notion is reviewed conclusively.

Following the re-examination of the notion of participation above, a conceptual-theoretical framework for participatory communication must be guided by the following synthesised assumption: *Participation is the integral and meaningful, situated notion and practice of dialogic participatory communication between a diversity of development social actors during the entire lifecycle of a development or social change initiative. Authentic participation must involve the unfettered, active engagement of primarily local, formerly excluded, social actors, specifically with the goal of bringing about their empowerment.*

Several core notions and sub-concepts emerged when the scholarly literature about the theory and practice of dialogue was examined. These are presented in the following section.

7.1.2 Dialogue reviewed: theoretical views and synthesis

According to the literature (see 4.3.1), the dialogic turn in communication studies is widely regarded as a central concept for establishing and maintaining meaningful communication in various contexts and toward different objectives. Several scholars share this view (see Altamirano 2020; Anderson & Cissna, 2008; Arnett, 2019). Dialogue is not only studied in academia, but professionals in a range of fields have also conceptualised and applied it in real-world settings. Concerning literature on the participatory communication approach (see 4.3.2), dialogue can be described as a prescriptive type of engagement between various social actors in a development setting. This type of engagement challenges the orthodox models of development communication, which assume a linear transfer of knowledge from “experts” to “ignorant” recipients. In its place, it was proposed in section 4.3.1 that dialogue is conceptualised and applied in a relational, but dialectical manner (see Carpentier, 2016; Cornwall, 2007; Dutta, 2021, 2011; Dutta, 2019 & Zapata; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Phillips, 2011; Servaes, 2008).

After reviewing the literature, this study established that the normative, theoretical contributions of Freire’s dialogic pedagogy and Habermas’s communicative action and public sphere theories could jointly provide a conceptual framework to reinterpret dialogue in participatory communication (see 4.3.2). As Chapter 4 maintained, these normative theories were chosen as appropriate for development communication since descriptive or explanatory dialogic theories risk being coopted by dominant social actors, thereby reverting participatory communication to conventional development models (refer to 4.3). Although the theorisations of both of these scholars differ on certain aspects of dialogue, they complement one another in other productive ways. Through synthesis, a set of concepts emerges that includes the ideas of dialogue as a means of *raising awareness* through a critical pedagogy, and dialogue as a praxis that involves a *dialectical* and *intersubjective* approach. Within this framework, it is also proposed that dialogue is based on the specific *human values* that prefigure and support it as a process. Lastly, Freire and Habermas regard dialogue as a necessary and sufficient process of *transformative action* and (ultimately) *empowerment*. This thesis maintains that dialogue prefigures genuine participation and facilitates and reinforces it during the participatory communication process.

- *Dialogue as a **consciousness-raising pedagogy**:*

Following the Freirean view, dialogue in participatory communication entails that local actors' self-awareness of their felt needs should be raised, since monologic, modernistic and other conventional development models have suppressed their consciousness (see 4.4.1).

As was etymologically (see 4.2) and theoretically described in Chapter 4, dialogue entails that human existence is inconceivable without people reflexively and deliberately examining their perceptions and engagements with their subjective, objective and intersubjective worlds. Similar to the public sphere of critical debate where public opinion on societal issues is formed, development beneficiaries must use dialogue as a critical tool to assess and understand their development realities and needs (e.g., socially, cultural, politically and economically) and – as the discussions below will show – in this manner also alter unwanted disparities or obstacles to their desired development (Freire, 1970, Habermas, 1989, 1987, 1984). As argued in section 4.4.2, conscientisation or consciousness-raising is a fundamental aspect of Freire's dialogic theory. Through dialogue, development participants can develop a critical awareness of their social reality. The process and result of gaining such awareness encourage them to pursue their liberation from oppression or unwanted circumstances.

Both theories provide frameworks to critically examine oppressive, antidialogic human structures and practices and learn how to act against such domination. On the one hand, Freire (see section 4.4.1) offers more practical and radical views on how dialogue enacts transformation, whereas Habermas (see 4.4.1) proposes more philosophical and procedural views on dialogue. For Freire (1970:69-70), similar to the generative conception of participation (see 3.3.3), dialogue is an "existentialist necessity" that allows for a historical realist and critical interpretation of reality. Dialogue is a continuous consciousness-raising process, entailing that reality can and should always be open to interrogation, interpretation and transformation (see 4.4.1).

- *Dialogue as **praxis**:*

Chapter 4 (see 4.4) concluded⁴ that dialogue, according to Freire, is a reiterative preoccupation or reflection *and* occupation or action for social transformation to occur (Barranquero, 2006/2005; Freire, 1970). A dialogic pedagogy discards the theory-practice binary, becoming an

essential catalyst *and* a reflective practice of how social transformation can take place. As was explained in the introductory remarks of section 4.4, the Freirean dialogic theory informs participatory communication as an active, communicative process and not simply as a passive or receptive one. This means that dialogue facilitates development beneficiaries in gaining critical insights into their development surroundings and employing such understandings to transmute unwanted development conditions by their own volition and human action.

Praxis in dialogue depends on reflection, and action is a mutually reinforcing process (Altamirano, 2020; Freire, 1970). This study proposes that praxis resonates with the Habermasian (1989) public sphere (see sections 4.5.2.1 and 4.5.2.2) to the extent that critical debate about societal issues occurs in the latter. Whereas the Habermasian view of dialogue emphasises mutual understanding, the praxis interpretation of dialogue encourages conflict and opposition during praxis (as succinctly summarised below). Both dialogic views nonetheless emphasise that dialogue as praxis should correct power imbalances by way of collaborative problem-posing. Dialogue as praxis is therefore a problem-posing and learning occupation and practice or – as was explained in section 4.4.1 – it retains aspects of reflexivity and performative communication in a development setting. However, this unity of reflection and action is dialectic in nature.

- *Dialogue as **dialectic**:*

Dialogue in participatory communication centres around contentious relationships far more often than consensus. This observation agrees with Freire's conception of dialogue as a praxis that disrupts monologic models of development knowledge (see 4.4.1). It does not imply that mutual understanding should or could not be part of dialogic objectives in a development context, but instead presumes that dialogue necessitates the critical examination of the structure-agency dichotomy and its influence on development and social change. In studying Freire and Habermas, the current research proposes that both offer dialogic theories emphasising how dialogue must be used to engage critically with development contradictions and imbalanced societal arrangements. If, according to the arguments made in section 4.4.1, dialogue raises individual and collective awareness about development challenges through praxis, its framework also accepts reality that the opposing views of diverse actors will be

exchanged continually and that these interconnected exchanges should then lead to new insights about how best to challenge and change the cognised inequalities.

The Freirean dialectical dialogic view proposes that participatory communication is not a matter of knowledge deposited from knowledgeable development actors to receptive beneficiaries. It argues instead that knowledge can be challenged and recreated through a constant, circular exchange of ideas (e.g., praxis and via the test of validity claims) by different social actors (Freire, 1970). From a participatory view, dialogue places primacy on the subaltern view concerning knowledge creation and development (Dutta, 2020a-b). However, dialogue need not be based on the communicative rationality imagined by Habermas (section 4.5.2), but should at least occur in an egalitarian manner that is expressed in the ideal speech situation. Both in the public sphere and in communicative action theories, Habermas's conception of dialogue allows for the "force of the better argument" to prevail when important matters are debated. His dialogic theory allows for critical deliberation even while consensus is its ultimate goal, which of course contrasts markedly with the Freirean view where continual struggle (i.e., generative themes) and emancipation are representative features of dialogue. For Freire dialogue allows for the naïve participant to become an informed and critical one.

In its dialectical moment, dialogue is also a humanisation process. This means that it is a generative tool that always generates emergent ideas about how to construct and enact social transformation.

- *Dialogue as **intersubjective**:*

Chapter 4 demonstrated that both dialogic praxis and communicative action theory align in conceptualising dialogue as intersubjective interactions between dialogic participants. Moreover, this intersubjective exchange of dialogue is conceptualised as being community-centred. Despite departing in some theoretical respects (see section 4.5, which summarises the dialogic views of Freire and Habermas), both theories propose that dialogue between subjects must disrupt the subject-object paradigm, thereby advocating for the centring of previously excluded or less powerful participants – or, as was indicated previously, centre participants who are usually the development subaltern. Since all participants are supposed to be on an equal

footing in participatory communication, the dialogue they engage in depends on the exchange of development ideas, experiences and solutions that are free from domination.

Moreover, their dialogue actually enhances their development ideas, experiences and solutions. These standpoints underscore dialogue as an intersubjective form of communication that creates shared participatory opportunities wherein development ideas can be exchanged *and* interrogated to synthesise new comprehensive development solutions. This is possible since intersubjectivity means that all participants in the development setting are equally capable of producing development knowledge and strategies. From the dialogic pedagogy view (see 4.4.1), participatory communication is also intersubjective if it exhibits an emancipatory nature and purpose by introducing the “pedagogy of the oppressed”. In contrast, the democratic participation of people in discussion takes precedence in the Habermasian dialogic view (see 4.5.2) and the differences between them are suspended. Regardless of these conceptual divergences, the dialogic views of both theorists emphasise communication between different participants as a fundamental component of participatory communication.

- *Dialogue as based on **values**:*

The dialogic pedagogy imbues dialogue as a deeply ethical practice. Likewise, the ideal speech situation and the communicative action that transpires therein are decidedly procedural, based on equality of participation and legitimated by validity claims. These normative theorisations inform dialogue in participatory communication with the values of respect, humility, trust, equality, reciprocity, commitment, hope, solidarity and love in the Freirean conception (see section 4.4.1); whereas the Habermasian understanding of dialogue is based on communicative rationality and equality (i.e., the ideal speech situation where no dominance exists during debate), as well as the four validity claims of communicative action, which are truth, normative rightness, sincerity and comprehensibility (see section 4.5.2.2). These values speak to the assumptions that participation is inclusive and embedded in specific cultural contexts. In section 7.3.3, it will become clear that a conceptual framework of participatory communication relies on dialogue as a mechanism that affirms cultural diversity and ensures that development strategies are appropriately beneficial to their specific cultural contexts. This study contends that the abovementioned prescriptive foundations of dialogue create enabling opportunities for

participatory communication that would not be available in monologic and purely instrumental development models.

- *Dialogue as collaborative knowledge-creation, transformative action and empowering practice:*

Provided that dialogue is a process of dialectical and intersubjective, values-based praxis, it makes partnerships possible between social actors who can then cooperatively, democratically cognise and confront their shared development challenges. The literature study established that dialogue in the participatory approach must involve communication that resits banking education and development models, instead encouraging alternative epistemes that incorporate the unique views and lived realities of development beneficiaries (see 4.4.1). As was indicated above, the dialogic praxis underscores an approach that views dialogue as a values-based praxis. This means that values prefigure the dialogic moment but are also necessary to deepen the dialogic exchange between the social actors involved. In this manner, dialogue fosters collaboration and increased cohesion between social actors. Not only does this collaboration and cohesion produce more comprehensive interrogations of existing knowledge systems and their employment, but on a structural level they also stimulate the emergence of entirely new and alternative epistemes. Dialogue as a collaborative practice fosters more inclusive and diverse interpretations of development. Accordingly, whenever dialogue is practised in this manner, personal and collective transformative action transpires and then leads to the empowerment of the interlocutors.

The second theoretical assumption that is inferred from the synthesised conceptual reviews above, reads as follows: *Dialogue in participatory communication is a form of praxis that involves the dialectical and intersubjective exchange of knowledge, ideas and experiences between all social actors in the development setting. Dialogue is primarily important for previously marginalised individuals and communities because it allows them to share their unique perspectives and contribute to a social transformation underpinned by human values. These human values are represented in the praxis of dialogic pedagogy and are put into action through democratic participation. Ultimately, the process and goal of dialogue are to lead to social transformation and the empowerment of development beneficiaries.*

7.1.3 Culture reviewed: theoretical views and synthesis

During the discussion on the etymology of “culture” (see 5.2) it was demonstrated that the meaning of this notion is contested and complex (Hammersley, 2019; McAnany, 2012; Gumucio-Dagron, 2008). Culture has been conceptualised in the fields of, among many other examples, philosophy, anthropology, political studies, sociology and, as Hammersley (2019:6) notes, since the 1960s also in the transdisciplinary field of cultural studies. The discussions in section 5.3 further revealed that despite its vast history, “culture” can be interpreted according to four meanings (Hammersley, 2019:7-10): firstly, culture can be seen as aesthetic cultivation, secondly as developmental, thirdly as distinct ways of life, and finally as entailing meaning-making.

The literature study in Chapter 5 highlighted that culture is also a crucial aspect of how participatory communication for development and social change should occur (see 5.3.1-5.3.2). In being so central to participatory communication, culture establishes the context for its implementation while similarly serving as a strong driver of meaningful dialogue and authentic participation. This perspective posits that it actively shapes how communities express their collective values, beliefs, practices, language, symbols and artefacts (Servaes, 2020c). Rather than sufficing as an invariable and static backdrop, culture continually and dynamically informs human activities and interactions in a development setting. Therefore, it is both the setting and the product of human participatory interaction and expression and is consequently considered fundamental to the participatory paradigm.

In Chapter 5, the concept of culture was discussed from the perspective of Freire’s (1970) dialogic theory. This theory proposes that it involves a process of becoming or humanisation for emancipation, which in turn suggests that oppressed or marginalised people challenge dominant notions of culture within the context of development. Section 5.4 explained how, in working through cultural action and synthesis, community members can confront professional agents of development who try to invade their local cultures by imposing external worldviews on them. For Freire and Dutta (2018), culture is a site of struggle against invasion or co-option that does not benefit local communities and their lived experiences (see section 5.4.1’s metatheoretical analyses). Chapter 5 argued that both of these scholars’ theorisations of culture accept its centrality in participatory communication. This then means that culture is viewed as a dynamic

site from which the voices of the marginalised can be heard with the goal of integrating their culturally specified knowledge systems into the development process. Both Freire's and Dutta's views on culture emphasise that it must be viewed through the lens of power dynamics. Accordingly, each of their approaches critically examines how social change is inherently tied to power relations and shifts of power within specific cultural contexts. Ultimately, both theories contend that if power shifts can occur because of culture, then individual, communal and social transformation can be realised. This viewpoint is based on Freire's and Dutta's contention that in any participatory communication setting, local cultural knowledge and practices must always be privileged over exogenous, hegemonic interpretations of developmental needs and goals.

A set of concepts on culture then emerges through a synthesis of these two approaches, including an understanding of culture as embedded participation and as something that is affirmed through *dialogic praxis*. Furthermore, in the participatory communication context the idea of "culture" can be viewed through the lens of a *revolutionary practice* that aims to *facilitate empowerment*. These frames are summarised below.

- ***Culture as embedded participation:***

Chapter 5 argued that culture is not simply a material, tangible phenomenon but is embedded in how people interact and relate to one another in their relationships, rituals, traditions, beliefs and practices. This interaction is rooted in the various different kinds and places of participation (refer to section 7.3.1) that can occur within a particular society or community. Participation achieves authenticity once it is contextualised within the lived experiences of a community. This unity between culture and socially embedded practice is proposed by both Freire and Dutta.

Culture and participation are not only mutually reinforcing but in fact also inseparable. Since development initiatives must be deeply informed by cultural norms and practices, participation in a development situation cannot be meaningful without culture. It serves as the agent or catalyst of true participation. Conversely, if participation is lacking during development initiatives, the influence of culture will be ignored and the development initiatives will become insignificant and unsustainable. Culture as embedded participation means that not only are the specific rituals, languages and so forth of a particular community considered to be valid systems

of knowledge and their expression, but they also become the practices that community members employ to reflect on their development challenges and find suitable solutions. As section 5.4.1.1 argued, Freire (1970) maintains that submerging the culture of a marginalised or oppressed community ultimately makes manipulating or invading local communities the operative norm of development. Alternatively, if cultural inauthenticity is ever to be challenged, a consciously dynamic cultural revolution should occur from the grassroots up.

As embedded participation, culture accordingly entails an active concept. It evolves as it does not naively encompass a set of shared, immutable characteristics among community members but instead something that is shared *and* challenged via dialogic praxis (Freire, 1970). Dutta (2018) maintains that respect for the cultural autonomy and self-determination of communities is paramount to participatory communication. This mutuality of culture and participation likewise proposes that every community is unique and that no universal development path therefore exists. For Freire, culture is affirmed through dialogic praxis and for Dutta there must be an ethical engagement with communities that have been dominated by instrumental interpretations of culture.

- ***Culture as affirmed via dialogic praxis:***

As established in section 7.3.2, dialogic praxis makes meaningful participation in development possible. Dialogic engagement with development challenges and solutions must however also be deeply attuned to the cultural identities of development beneficiaries. Through dialogic praxis, the cultural beliefs, practices and so forth of a community are not only identified but also valued and therefore intentionally integrated into development strategies in a process that Freire (1970) calls a cultural revolution (see section 5.4.1.2). As was established in section 7.3.3, in the development setting knowledge is not monologic and fixed but always open to mutual interrogation and construction. Dialogic praxis encourages the idea that culture itself is not immutable either but forever open for compromise or renegotiation. This consciously open form of praxis makes it possible to find development strategies that are culturally appropriate to a particular community's challenges. For Dutta (2018), participatory communication must challenge the hegemonic culture by means of respect and mutual respect for the oppressed

community's culture (see 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.1.2). Both approaches therefore view the participatory communication approach as a form of cultural *revolutionary* practice.

- *Culture as **revolutionary practice**:*

This thesis contends that, from the Freirean standpoint's basis in dialogue, culture forms the foundation that ensures the liberation of local communities from unwanted circumstances. As was argued in the section on the human values that underpin dialogue, dialogic praxis must also be understood as a conduit of cultural expression and interaction and – hence – as the participatory communication moment during which development participants collaboratively learn and co-construct knowledge of how to achieve social change. Inherently, this process is a cultural one. It retains a revolutionary character since it challenges culturally invasive and instrumental ideas about development, turning the focus instead to how best to achieve development from a plurality of cultural perspectives and interpretations. This is localised plurality is especially true for Freire's description of cultural action. Likewise, the culture-centred approach proposes that culture is always situated in a conflictual relationship with dominant structures and relations (see 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.1.2 for both theorists' views). The latter approach, like the former, conceives of culture in social change communication as a paradigm shift in how development should be conceptualised and enacted. For example, hegemonic neoliberal and mechanistic interpretations of culture must be disrupted with dialogic practice. As explained in section 5.4.1.2, Freire's notion of culture challenges the notion that it is a "superstructure" and static in its conception. He disrupts this monolithic idea of culture by emphasising the diverse local cultural views that are embedded into the supposed substructure and continuously undergo alteration. Dutta (20218) calls this the "resistive role" of culture, allowing for alternative interpretations of development and social change phenomena that resist instrumental logic (see 5.4.1.2).

- *Culture as **facilitating empowerment**:*

Culture facilitates the genuine empowerment of social actors, especially those who must benefit from development or social change initiatives. In the next section, this study's conceptual synthesis of the empowerment notion follows. But in this section it must first be emphasised how

participatory communication should acknowledge that development participants can only be empowered provided that their cultural identities, values and aspirations are cognised and incorporated into the development process. From the ontological views espoused by Freire and Dutta (see 5.4.1.1), it is apparent that culture allows for the humanisation or re-humanisation of oppressed or marginalised individuals and communities. In centralising the notion of culture in the participatory approach, local cultures are not only valued in an abstract sense but also become the source and resource from which empowerment can emerge. Culture thus becomes the locus of development knowledge and solutions that are not only more appropriate to a community's needs but also give rise to more impactful and sustainable development strategies. Furthermore, these solutions are themselves vehicles of empowerment (see 5.4.1.3). From this standpoint, the cultural knowledge of a community is seen as inextricably linked to the formulation of development solutions. This empowerment also reinforces culture as a foundational component of meaningful participatory communication.

The third theoretical assumption inferred from the above synthesised conceptual reviews reads as follows: *Culture in participatory communication is an embedded social practice that is enacted and reinforced through dialogic praxis. Culture is further a revolutionary practice that implies participatory communication must privilege local interpretations, practices, values, beliefs and other immaterial and material cultural resources to encourage social change and development. This revolutionary action therefore challenges and replaces dominant cultural views and strategies in a development setting with a community's local interpretations and a plurality of their views and solutions. The centrality of culture in participatory communication for social change underscores its active role as a site and process for the empowerment of local community members.*

7.1.4 Empowerment reviewed: theoretical views and synthesis

The scholarly literature on empowerment was reviewed in Chapter 6 (section 6.3). More specifically, this study employed Freire's critical pedagogy (see 6.4.1 to 6.4.3) to theorise and metatheorise the notion in the participatory paradigm. As with the preceding three concepts, the

current study gleaned key notions or frames from the literature study and the discussed metatheory. As before, these notions will culminate in a final theoretical statement.

- *Empowerment as **critical consciousness, agency and autonomy**:*

In section 7.3.1, agency was described as the ability of individuals or groups in a development setting to make independent decisions concerning their lives while also gaining increasing control thereof. In this framework, empowerment especially means that marginalised or weaker members of society gain access to different kinds of resources that will enable them to live materially improved and qualitatively fulfilled lives (see 6.3.1). However, this study agrees with Freire's stance that agency and autonomy cannot be exercised in the void of the marginalised's critical consciousness of their realities (see 6.4.1). As has been established in the current chapter, action is preceded by reflection in a participatory model. In an ontological view, any sort of transformative action or empowerment in a development situation must always be led by people firstly becoming consciously and critically cognisant of their own and externally imposed limiting perceptions and practices. Only once their awareness is attained can local communities begin to counter the structures and power dynamics that inhibit their empowerment.

Agency and autonomy as empowerment mean that local communities have the power to make informed decisions about their development lives. While autonomous agency and acting in one's own best interests are central to empowerment, the people in need of transformation and development do not necessarily have to act completely alone. They can and should however act on their own authority instead of depending on the control and power of exogenous social change agents and practices. These two dimensions of empowerment require that the critical awareness of marginalised people is first raised. While the authority of local communities is pivotal to empowerment, the review below contends that empowerment is also intersubjective by nature.

- *Empowerment as **material and immaterial enablement**:*

In addition to creating enabling environments where people's physical needs are met and their access to a variety of material resources is secured, empowerment in participatory communication must involve additional psychological, spiritual and emotional aspects. While the

materiality of empowerment is crucial, access to information and social, cultural and political power is also essential to the notion of empowered participation. Accordingly, the more abstract dimensions of personal advancement and the *power form within* (e.g. self-esteem, self-confidence, human dignity, spiritual strength, etc.) are of vital importance to any empowerment framework while they interplay more tangible or material aspects (see 6.3.2 and 6.4.1). This study therefore agrees with the ontology and epistemology of the critical pedagogy that empowerment encompasses both materiality and the less tangible or immaterial aspects of life (see 6.4.1 and 6.4.2).

- *Empowerment as **power redistribution and intersubjective empowerment**:*

Quite simply, empowerment is obtained from the bottom-up (see Gaventa, 2020; Cornwall, 1997; Freire, 1970). As has already been established in the preceding sections, intersubjective participatory communication implies that power dynamics must be examined (see 6.3) and altered in favour of marginalised or oppressed development communities. Top-down power arrangements and practices must be dislodged with dialogic praxis and, in so doing, any initiative for development and social change must engage the necessary voices, ideas and solutions through a perspective that is shaped by the ideal of citizen power (6.4.1 and 6.4.2). Empowerment thus necessitates that any power imbalances in a development situation are equalised. Clearly, empowerment is only feasible if democratic shifts in power take place that promote a flat organisational structure in the development initiative: Those who are considered authoritative should moreover be displaced by the agency and autonomy of local individuals and communities on a grassroots level.

Empowerment as intersubjective phenomenon does necessitate resistance, even while it can still be relational in nature and process. As various power theories suggest (see 6.3.1), transformative power should substitute *power over* or *power to* with collaborative, equally shared power interactions. While dialogic praxis should dismantle the power of dominant groups in the development setting, authentic participation means that all social actors engage with one another but always with a view to foster the empowerment of local communities.

- *Empowerment as **transformative**:*

Empowerment is about emancipation and freedom from oppression, whether physical or psychological (see Freire, 1970). The weak or suppressed must, through participatory communication and dialogue, take ownership of their development (e.g. personal or collective) instead of relying on external change agents (see 6.3.2). As argued earlier, they must overcome internal and external limiting situations (see Freire, 1970) by not only reflecting on imbalanced power and development inequalities but also taking action to change such disparities. For Freire, sloganeering or “empty words” have incomplete transformative potential. Empowerment is only authentic if it leads to actions that have a real impact.

- *Empowerment must be **sustainable**:*

Empowerment is not a temporary event or fixed outcome, but instead entails a continuous, multifaceted process during which individuals and communities must assess their lived realities. It requires that social actors take stock of their contexts and inherent individual and shared resources, while examining how to satisfy their future aspirations. This ensures empowerment is not a fleeting process or conclusion but a long-term one that has a lasting positive impact on the individual and community. Empowerment must be a sustainable effort and continuous experience. To realise this, an enabling environment, frameworks, support systems, and processes must be implemented via participatory communication to address people's development needs. Moreover, empowerment does not mean that only people's material or physical resource needs are met. Their intangible personal and psychological needs must be ascertained and developed as well. For example, people require specific physical and psychological skills to facilitate the empowerment process. Additionally, for empowerment to be genuinely sustainable, people must gain self-confidence to increasingly take ownership of their development needs and develop self-reliantly without overdependence on external support.

The final theoretical assumption inferred from the above synthesised conceptual reviews reads as follows: *Empowerment through participatory communication enables individuals and groups to become critically aware of their subjective, objective and intersubjective development contexts and lived realities. After consciousness-raising, they use their agency to take ownership of their*

lives and make autonomous decisions concerning their particular development aspirations. This, however, requires the redistribution of power and resources within a development communication setting. Critical awareness further means that social actors must cognise externally and internally imposed constraints, which must be challenged via human actions, facilitating further empowerment. From an empowerment view, development can transpire in the material and immaterial sense. It is not a singular or occasional process or final outcome but occurs continually through iterations of critical awareness, action and reinterpretation. Empowerment in development communication facilitates human actions that encourage transformation and positive social change for individuals and the community.

7.2 A METATHEORY OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

With these discussions in mind, a metatheoretical framework for participatory communication is presented in Table 7-1 below. This framework synthesises the assumptions that underlie participatory communication as based on the metatheorisations of participation, dialogue, culture, and empowerment that were presented in Chapters 3 to 6. This framework aims to give a critical, reflective interpretation through which participatory communication concepts and practices can be viewed in a more theoretically coherent manner.

Table 7-1 A metatheoretical framework of participatory communication for social change

Participatory communication		
Assumptions:	Concepts:	Description:
Ontology	• Social reality as emergent • Human agency and social structures • Community or cultural plurality/multiplicity • Humanisation and transformation	The ontology of participatory communication for social change implies that the development of participants' lived experiences is constructed via social relations among individuals and collectives, thus making them contextually bound to a multiplicity of cultural contexts and viewpoints. Reality is always emergent and never predetermined or fixed since all development participants – but especially the marginalised – have the human agency to continually and intersubjectively create and recreate their development realities through participatory processes. This human agency implies that development participants can interrogate social structures, relations and practices and therefore actively recreate social realities. Therefore, an ontology of participatory communication means that participation is always a process. It is never simply a means of becoming more fully human and, ultimately, empowering development participants to realise individual, collective and structural social transformation and change
Assumptions:	Concepts:	Description:
Epistemology	• A plurality of knowledge • Co-creation of knowledge • Knowledge as contextually-based • Knowledge as a critical dialogic praxis • Knowledge as an ethical, intersubjective participation and creation • Knowledge as empowerment	The epistemology of participatory communication for social change implies that traditional notions of development knowledge and solutions can be interrogated and replaced with a multiplicity of knowledge beliefs and practices, all of which are based on local or indigenous knowledge systems. Development knowledge and strategies are co-created through inclusive, critical dialogic reflection and action. This means that participatory communication is an intersubjective and continuous, dynamic process of problem-posing, learning and solution-seeking dialogue between a plurality of social actors. Through such a reflexive epistemological view, participatory communication is both the process and the outcome of development actors' empowerment (especially on the local level) to conceptualise and enact social change in ways that are culturally relevant to their developmental and social realities.

Table 7-1 cont

Assumptions:	Concepts:	Description:
Methodology	• Participatory/inclusive, dialogical methods • A plurality of interdisciplinary methods • Contextually-bound methods • Ethical methods towards empowerment	Methodologically, participatory communication metatheory encourages inclusive, adaptive and ethical techniques to foster real discourse and knowledge co-creation among community members. Participatory action research and community mapping are promoted to empower disadvantaged voices. Open, culturally aware dialogue is key, as well as underscoring flexibility, adapting to community situations, and carefully considering the resources and knowledge that are already available in a community to enact social change. Therefore, participatory communication also examines power dynamics. Iterative learning and assessment enable feedback and modifications, while capacity building gives communities active involvement capabilities. From a methodological point of view, participatory communication should empower development actors with interdisciplinary understanding and sustainable strategies for change. Respecting community knowledge and values is crucial to inclusive and transformational communication techniques in a participatory communication setting.

7.3 SUMMARY REMARKS

The next chapter will theorise community media, specifically focusing on discussions of community radio in the scholarly literature. Chapter 8 thus sets the scene for the subsequent chapter, which outlines the legislative and regulatory environment of South African community broadcasting.

PREFACE PART III

The penultimate main part of the thesis comprises two thematically interconnected chapters. Read together, these chapters will contribute to answering the study's general research question about developing a framework for local community radio stations as participatory media (see 1.3.1). These chapters intend to provide the theoretical scaffolding needed for this research's framework pertaining to community radio as a theoretical and practical phenomenon.

The preamble of this study indicated that Chapter 8: will examine community media theory to conceptualise community radio according to relevant literature on community media theory and as applicable to the South African context (see 1.3.2.2). After that Chapter 9 examines key relevant South African community broadcasting legislation to determine how community radio is conceptualised (see 1.3.2.3).

Chapter 8 points out that community radio, as conceptualised in community media theory, is a complicated phenomenon in historical and conceptual terms. The chapter demonstrates that community media theory must use a multi-theoretical framework to grasp the complexity of community radio.

Chapter 9 then examines five applicable legislative acts in South Africa regarding community broadcasting. These acts are interrogated to determine the principles, notions and values the legislative framework uses to define community radio broadcasting. These acts must be analysed to ascertain if an enabling legal framework exists for community radio to operate as participatory media.

CHAPTER 8: COMMUNITY RADIO THEORISED: A MEDIA STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

"There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication."

– John Dewey, (2018:6).

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1's introduction and background (see 1.1) indicated that community radio is not just another form of broadcasting but that it is commonly referred to as the "third tier", making it distinct from commercial imperatives and public mandates. The hyper-localised nature of community radio, as tied to geographical or communal interest, was also highlighted. Likewise, the introductory chapter made references to industry definitions of community radio (e.g. as defined by AMARC, UNESCO, the World Bank, the FAO, etc.) while more specifically also offering a condensed version of the South African legal definition. These descriptions were brief, however, and require further theoretical clarification.

Consequently, Chapter 8 conducts a theoretical examination of community media, which is crucial to this study's general research objective of conceptualising community radio as a participatory type of media for development and social change. Section 8.2 starts with an overview of community media as a research field by first acknowledging the field's status and theoretical trajectory along the lines of various critical historical and conceptual issues. Similar to the participatory paradigm's assumptions (discussed previously), the concept of "community media" is characterised by theoretical and empirical fluidity. This elusive quality is due to several definitional and legitimacy struggles that community media studies faced in its nascent years. These issues will therefore be discussed concisely before moving on to discussions in section 8.3 about the multi-theoretical community media framework that was proposed by Carpentier *et al.* (2003; 2007).

Cognisant of the multi-layered nature of community media, Section 8.3 defines community radio based on two definitions that have offered by international development and aid industry organisations. This section by no means gives an exhaustive list of all the global or regional

definitions of community radio, since there are arguably as many different regional, national and organisational-specific definitions of this type of radio as there are community radio stations globally. It presents industry descriptions of community radio as offered by UNESCO and AMARC.

As discussions in Section 8.4 then argue, a multi-theoretical framework of community media acknowledges the conceptual and practical complexity of this field, while also emphasising its participatory nature. In section 8.4, it is argued that this approach, through its four theoretical approaches, underlines the varied and specific nature of community media that monotheoretical understandings do not. This section will additionally compare the former's multifaceted nature set in the participatory approach's assumptions as theorised in Part II. A multi-theoretical approach underscores how the participation of local communities in community media creates civic, democratic engagement and representation that counterbalances mainstream media institutions, practices and content. Therefore, community media gives local communities a culturally appropriate voice and with a view to empower these social actors. Through the comprehensive description of community media presented in section 8.4, it then becomes possible to define community radio in a contemporary setting.

To conclude the chapter, Section 8.5 summarises how South African community radio is theoretically conceptualised in this study.

8.2 COMMUNITY MEDIA: DEFINITIONAL AND LEGITIMACY STRUGGLES

Although community media gained scholarly traction at the turn of the millennium, its peripheral status in academia and practice complicated the task of theorising this field comprehensively. Before community media is described from different present-day theoretical vantage points, its definitional concerns and legitimacy struggles are reviewed succinctly.

In Part II, the linguistic roots of the participatory approach's assumptions were examined. These overviews set the foundations for further theoretical explanations. Chapter 8 does not give a complete etymological overview of "community". However, this etymological overview does reveal that, ever since the Latin words *communis* and *communitas*, the late fourteenth century word

comuneté in Old French, and late Middle English's word *community*, the concept and use of "community" have retained various semantic nuances and connotations that are dependent on historical and cultural contexts (Harper, n.d., "Community"; Merriam-Webster, n.d., "Community"; Oxford English Dictionary, 2024, "Community"). These different meanings complicate its academic conceptualisation.

Whereas the word initially retained more concrete meanings, such as people living together in geographical terms, its meaning has become abstracted over time to comprise groupings of people who are drawn together based on their collective interests and who are encompassed in different contexts. Over centuries, the word evolved to represent an even more abstract, nuanced meaning, signifying a quality of condition – a sense of belonging – that indicates the interpersonal connection that people experience within a group regardless of spatial or temporal aspects. Whereas the current section does not interrogate these etymological meanings further as part of the concern with community media's definitional and legitimacy struggles, section 8.3 will reference some of these definitions when specifically exploring the multi-theoretical framework of community media. The discussions in that section will therefore incorporate some of the critical contributions made by sociologists and theorists in describing the notion of community, showing throughout how these definitions are relevant in the present study to contextualise community radio as a type of community media.

With that in mind, Kevin Howley (2013:819, 824) states that community media studies is generally described as a research field that critically interrogates the role of local media in encouraging democratisation, community development and social change. He claims that community media draws on several theoretical perspectives and disciplines that are usually situated within a critical paradigmatic view. These include communication, sociology, political studies, anthropology and cultural studies, thereby making community media a vast, diverse and intellectually compound subject area. Despite this theoretical heterogeneity and before more coherent theorisation occurs, several fundamental notions and characteristics of community media should first be highlighted.

According to Rennie *et al.* (2017:2), community media's conceptual mandate and operation are associated with notions of diversification of the media, "social good principles", "media self-

representation through direction participation”, and ideas about the “social benefits” gained from localised media. Agreeing with this assessment, Milan (2009:598-599, 606) depicts community media as “media for the community, about the community and by the community”, making it the people’s media, so to speak, while also portraying it as having an inherent “social mission”. This assertion points to ideas about “a range of community-based activities” that are conceptually and normatively distinct from the imperatives of commercial and public institutions that operate on regional, national and even global scales (Howley, 2002:2).

In contrast to the conventional notions and enactments of dominant media, community media is focused on the community’s interests as set in alternative agendas, narratives and real-lived experiences that are often overlooked or even deliberately marginalised by larger media institutions (cf. Lewis, 1993; Atton, 2015; Mowbray, 2015; Carpentier *et al.*, 2012; Carpentier, 2020). Elsewhere, Opubur (2000:11, 16) and Wanyeki (2000:30) affirm that community media in an African setting are “techniques and technologies for responding to the community communication needs” created by a community as part of its larger communication system. These scholars argue that community media is community-oriented and created from *within* a community; hence community-owned. Accordingly, they assert that community media must never marginalise the “community” from the “media” and that its employment should instead encourage ordinary citizens to participate meaningfully in development, politics, the cultural production and preservation of their community.

Raghunath (2020:18) states that most community media scholars would describe community media along the lines of key defining features, including its a) not-for-profit nature, b) focus on serving a defined community of people, c) management and ownership as located in the community, d) editorial independence from state influences, and its e) emphasis on encouraging the basic human right to communicate and allow for the free flow of communication.

While the above compact descriptions and key concepts simultaneously underscore the complex *and* unique nature of community media studies, they nevertheless gloss over the protracted legitimacy and definitional struggles – which is to say, the decentred status that the field has faced in both academic and practitioner settings. Several interconnected reasons and concerns have contributed to these challenges, which are now considered briefly.

Firstly, its initial peripheral position resulted from the *enclosed terrains of communication, journalism and media studies*. More specifically, for several decades the primary research concern of media studies entailed researching mass communication tools that were institutionalised in large-scale media organisations. These mass communication tools encompassed traditional media such as audiovisual broadcasting (i.e., television and radio) on the one hand and the print media (i.e., newspapers and magazines) on the other (Barranquero, 2020; Ragunath, 2020:17). Conventionally, the commercial orientation or public mandates of these media sidelined any interest that academics, policymakers and practitioners had in exploring alternative heterogeneous media. This also meant that the field of media studies was initially firmly established within the *global or national research level of analysis*. The idea of “media” entailed centralised and hierarchical organisations and practices that were regulated by free market principles or a national public mandate. This level of analysis reinforced the perception that *local or community-level* research in all its ontological, epistemic and methodological meanings and expressions was of lesser concern. Given the available literature, academic inquiry into local, community-level media that has operated according to a different ethos and the pursuit of goals other than profit or a national interest only started in earnest during the early 2000s (cf. Couldry, 2000; Atton, 2007; Fuller, 2007; Howley, 2002, 2005, 2013; Ragunath, 2020).

Secondly, *community media studies has faced theoretical incoherence* and different research foci within the field’s own ranks. Despite its long academic and empirical tradition, Servaes and Malikhao (2020:88) caution that this field of scholarship focuses on a multiplicity of media institutions that fall under the same umbrella term. Unsurprisingly, as Fuller (2012:xi) puts it, the definition of community media keeps changing. Terms such as “alternative”, “citizens”, “radical”, “independent”, “popular”, “grassroots”, “folk”, “indigenous”, and “social movements’ media” are interchangeably and often equivocally used to describe and examine the supposed same phenomenon (see Berrigan, 1979, Jankowski, 2002; Rodríguez, 2002, Downing *et al.*, 2001; Howley, 2013; Mowbray, 2015; Rennie *et al.*, 2017).

The upside of this heterogeneity is that community media can consequently include a heterogeneity of modes and expressions that are commonly contained in modern-day media (e.g. video,

photography, web-based and social media, television, newspapers and radio) and more traditional folk media (e.g. storytelling, drama, festivals, song, and dance) that all give expression to specific cultural realities (Granger *et al.*, 2018:38-39). This multifacetedness will be explored again in section 8.3 where the different approaches in the multi-theoretical framework are discussed. (For some of the critical contributions concerning alternative media, see Lewis, 1993; Atton, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2015; Downing, 2004; Downing *et al.*, 2001; Carpentier *et al.*, 2003; Lievrouw, 2011; Rodriguez, 2011; Chiumbu, 2014, Chiumbu & Iqani, 2019; Chiumbu & Ligaga, 2013; Bosch, 2014; Howley, 2015; Mowbray, 2015; Barranquero, 2020).

Thirdly, most mainstream communication and media studies were conducted in the US and Northern European contexts, in effect widening the existing disconnect between *Global North-Global South academic and empirical practices* even further, which accordingly extended to the nascent field of community media analysis (Teer-Tomaselli, 2001:232; Atton, 2007:18-22, 2015:2-3; Howley, 2013:818-819; Barranquero, 2020:330-331;). For example, as Moyo (2020:29, 31, 32, 190) asserts, the difficulty of defining “community media” has resulted from the “epistemicide” and the “methodicide” of the larger field – that is to say, the Western epistemological and methodological dominance of media studies that marginalised theories, histories and contexts of the Global South and in fact destroyed them (Moyo, 2020:10, 190; cf. Mano & Milton, 2021). Moyo thus urges African, Asian and Latin American media scholars to challenge Western-centric dominance by replacing it with “indigenous and endogenous” epistemes and methodologies of knowing. His contention is that the “borrowed spectacles” of reductionist Western approaches cannot produce accurate knowledge of the Global South. Consequently, in the absence of fitting meanings and strategies in this region, communities and societies aiming to grasp and improve their situations – and especially in a mediated manner – will fail miserably.

This call for decolonisation is of course not new. Over many decades, scholarship from a range of subdisciplines and theoretical vantage points has made similar urgent global demands for the decentring of Western media studies and a re-theorising of communication, media and community media that is fit for an African setting (see, to name a few, Berrigan, 1979; O’Connor, 1990; Tomaselli & Louw, 1991; Lewis, 1993; Kasoma, 1996; Curran & Park, 2000, Shome & Hedge, 2002; Kupe, 2004;

Nyamnjoh, 2005; Tomaselli, 2006; Banda, 2006; Dutta, 2007, 2018; Wasserman, 2011a-b, 2020; Shome, 2016; Rodny-Gumede; 2017; Rodny-Gumede *et al.*, 2017; Tyali, 2017; Chiumbu & Radebe, 2020; Mano & Milton, 2021).

For instance, the Latin American academic and activist viewpoint is recapped by scholars such as Barranquero (2020:329-340) and Brunetti (2000:115-127), who trace a critical postcolonial and decolonial scholarship as far back as the second half of the twentieth century. Barranquero (2020) cites studies by, among others, Diaz Bordenave (1976), Beltrán (1979), and Prieto (1980) as providing the impetus for a Latin American decolonial turn, explaining that this scholarship – which peaked during the 1980s – emerged in countries such as Bolivia, Cuba, Chile, and Colombia against the backdrop of numerous revolutionary and reformist political and social cycles and events during the preceding decades. These revolutions spurred the use of grassroots and alternative media tools and projects for socio-political and educational goals; consequently, academic inquiry into the emancipatory use of alternative media. Furthermore, these uprisings were coupled with the anticolonial struggle against Western domination and media imperialism in Latin America. Accordingly, it stimulated research that sought the cultural recognition of decentred, non-Western media systems and practices, in addition to formulating strategies to fill the gaps left by indigenous mainstream media that marginalised alternative, dissenting voices within Latin American countries (Barranquero, 2020:331-334).

Lastly, and closely associated with the former concerns, Raghunath (2020:3-15) affirms that community media research arose from a rejection of conventional media theories, specifically normative functional approaches. According to her community, media scholars have generally rejected instrumental accounts of the media's transformative influence in society, preferring theories that account (as the above-mentioned alternative scholarship encouraged) for the political economy view on media capabilities (cf. Curran, 2000; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Howley, 2002). Employing concepts such as “media power”, “media frame”, and “media rituals”, Nick Couldry, for example, contended decades ago in *The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age* (2000) that the media wields the power to reinforce its status and instrumentality in society and that this authority should be problematised in media research. Couldry (cf. 2000) urged that

conventional media theory should extend beyond concerns with media's production authority in favour of its symbolic power.

This new optic brought into view the latter's influence in shaping society's perceptions, views, norms and, ultimately, its contribution to the construction of reality – which accordingly also pertains to the maintenance of certain social orders. This view interrogates media power beyond the confines of its functional production capabilities or, as Raghunath (2020:6-9) states, its technological deterministic focus, which includes the social and cultural implications of media practices and rituals. She argues that this articulation must occur outside the confines of mainstream media and also be set in the phase of globalisation debates and the concern with the global-local media binary and dynamic.

Community media studies thus allows – as Kevin Howley (2013:819, 20002:20), who is one of the most prominent scholars in the field puts it – “a productive counterpoint to academic analyses that privilege national and transitional media conglomerates” in support of “multilayered settings and a plurality of actors”. It provides the necessary impetus and context to interrogate global media versus community media in a locally situated context. Raghunath (2020:18) clarifies that community media affords scholars the chance to examine how alternative media can claim space in the global media landscape, thereby serving as the proponents and preservers of (among others) local culture, rituals, practices, linguistic diversity and freedom of communicative expressions. In this manner, she argues, community media provides a counterpoint to the homogenising effects of globalisation.

Before discussing the community media theories that are available in the literature, the next section presents several so-called working definitions that are used in the community radio sector. These

8.3 COMMUNITY RADIO: WORKING DEFINITIONS

Many community radio broadcasting associations and community radio activists present different views and descriptions of community radio. These perspectives are formed by the contexts in which these organisations and proponents operate, for example, regions or countries. This adds to the taxonomic multiplicity of community radio. Below is a concise overview of two working definitions

of community radio put forth by UNESCO and AMARC. These were chosen as relevant for the current study as they are bound to international development and aid agencies, organisations, and associations concerned explicitly with the third tier of radio broadcasting. Therefore, they have a direct bearing on the current research positioned in the participatory communication context.

8.3.1 The UNESCO definition

UNESCO describes community radio as a platform for voiceless and marginalised people to discuss issues that concern them (Ondobo, 2001:iii). Furthermore, it views community radio as a mechanism to democratise societies and their communication systems, encouraging “the notions of transparency and good governance” on a grassroots level. UNESCO also firmly places its interpretation of community radio in the context of development communication. Ondobo (2001:iii) explains that community radio, as a mass communication medium, transmits “relevant information on developmental issues, opportunities, experiences, life skills and of public interest” to communities in an accessible and timely fashion that other mass media broadcasters neglect. He explains that these communities are usually set in rural, underprivileged areas and that community radio is thus the ideal platform through which to reach such communities.

In UNESCO’s *Community Radio Handbook*, Fraser and Estrada (2001:15-16) explain that community radio makes audiences the main protagonists of broadcasting services by involving them as the managers, planners, and producers of programming. In this manner, they become empowered to facilitate their community and social development. They add that community radio has other defining qualities that set it apart from other types of media. Firstly, community radio emphasises “localism” in terms of programming, news, entertainment and education. Secondly, as implied already, community radio’s operation is based on the principles of public access and participation in media processes. Moreover, the issues of ownership and management, funding, editorial independence and credibility, representation, and inclusion are identified as essential features of this type of radio broadcasting (Fraser & Estrada, 2001:16).

The notion of *localism* means that community programming and news, unlike conventional media, are not viewed as isolated occurrences or stories, but ideally rather as part of a continuum of on-

going, future stories and processes that fit within the context of community developmental issues and needs. *Localism* finds articulation as well in the form of programming in relation to entertainment and education. The former is seen as a form of “collective cultural expression”, while education involves the “collective sharing of experiences and learning” initiated from within the community, rather than being introduced externally by experts or development agents (Fraser & Estrada, 2001:16). *Localism*, according to Hadland and Thorne (2004:10) implies that as community media, a community radio service, upholds communities’ right to communication, by allowing them to “communicate directly with and through” such a medium (Hadland & Thorne, 2004:10).

8.3.2 The AMARC definition

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, known by its French acronym AMARC, share similar views on community radio than UNESCO. AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa (1998:9, 17), describes community radio as signifying a two-way process that involves the exchange of views from various sources and which allows the adaptation of media for use by communities. Similar to UNESCO (Fraser & Estrada, 2001:16), AMARC Africa (1998:16-17) states that a community radio station and its services are owned and controlled by a particular community under a trust, foundation or other collective association, and sometimes in the form of an external agency such as a non-governmental organisation. The control of the station occurs in the form of an elected representative community leadership, committee or Board of Directors that oversees a community radio station's overall policy and daily administrative and operational decisions.

Hence, communities, ideally, should not only be the consumers of media, but also use it as their means of expression. Quoting Lewis, Bosch (2003:105) summarises the basic underlying assumptions of community media, and hence community radio, as including the notions of access, participation, and self-management.

Access, in its simplest form, means that communities should be able to give feedback and criticisms to the planners and the producers that deliver the contents and media products that are aired (Bosch, 2003:106). Community radio therefore are not simply media organisations that exist *for* the community; instead their very existence depends on the participation in the organisation *by* the

communities in which they operate. Mtimde *et al.* (1998:13) insist that community radio should not only let community members gain access to contents that inform, educate and entertain them but should also allow communities to participate in such radio as planners, producers and performers. As suggested above, although access is necessary, it is not sufficient. Participation in community radio is perhaps one of the most defining features of this type of media organisation. Here, participation means that community radio stations should encourage participation by creating the opportunities necessary for audiences members to be directly and indirectly involved in programming design, production or broadcast (Krüger, Monji & Smurthwaite, 2013:7). Participation should nevertheless not only be limited to decisions about on-air programming and its contents, but should also be articulated at the level of management and decision-making (AMARC, 1998:16). Bosch (quoting Lewis, 1993:106) explains that self-management of community media is ideally the result of participation, meaning that communities should be involved in the governance of the station at all managing levels and during all associated processes.

Bosch (2003:105) summarises the basic feature of community radio therefore as:

“... its operation by specific groups of people who participate in all aspects of running the station, from fundraising and management, to programming, production and on-air activities. Volunteers, drawn from the audience, usually staff community radio stations. In this sense, the traditional boundaries between sender and receiver are blurred through the creation of an active audience.”

Still, as suggested by the distinctive names used to describe community radio, the notion of ‘community’ remains conflated and imprecise. Before community radio can be theorised, the term ‘community’ must first be examined more closely.

With these working definitions in mind the next section reviews how community media discourse conceives and approaches the notion and practice of community radio from several different theoretical perspectives and approaches.

8.4 COMMUNITY MEDIA STUDIES: FROM A MONOTHEORETICAL TO A MULTI-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For Howley (2002:2), community media comprises a variety of structures, practices and objectives that align with the lived needs of an associated community, as well as their inherent “resources and opportunities” in a specific spatial-temporal setting. Howley’s (2013:822-826; 2005:13-38) definition of community media comprises three prominent conceptual approaches, namely, a) *media democratisation*, b) *civil society*, and c) *the symbolic construction of community and society* (cf. Rangunath, 2020:18).

These approaches present community media as a site where civil society comes together in a mediated sociocultural environment or public sphere of engagement and where dialogue about everyday concerns, politics, development and so forth can occur. Each approach is based on values such as democracy, participation, empowerment, multiplicity and the engagement of civil society in media institutions and practices (Chiumbu, 2014:252; Carpentier, 2020:196-199). Their obvious normativity is set in specific idealisations of what community media's objectives are and how best to achieve them functionally: the meaningful participation of diverse social actors in local, non-commercial and small-scale media for individual and community development and empowerment.

Howley (*ibid.*; 2013:820-821) notes that much of the media democratisation view of community media followed a “case study methodology” as was framed during the 1970s in the foundational research by Frances J. Berrigan and commissioned by UNESCO. While this methodology and the above-mentioned normative community media optics offer valuable and decidedly more focused opportunities for analysis of the field, they still comprise monotheoretical understandings of the phenomenon. Against a unidimensional analysis, Bailey *et al.* (2008:5) uphold that the hybridity of community media types and practices should be emphasised and celebrated instead. They argue that a single-theory-based assessment of community media habitually risks overemphasising certain qualities of such media over other features, thus creating a reductionist view. Taking instruction from this assertion, the rest of this section examines a multi-theoretical framework for community media as first proposed by Carpentier *et al.* (2001, 2003:53-53, 2012:219-236). These scholars contend that the notion of identity in all its conceptual and real-world diversity is central to theoretically

examining community media. Accordingly, community media requires a plurality of conception and enactment. Carpentier (2020:205) suggests that using a multi-theoretical framework facilitates the desired synthesised, comprehensive meta-analysis of community media, thus avoiding any oversimplified and binary interpretations (cf. Carpentier *et al.*, 2001, 2003; Carpentier, 2020).

The proposed multidimensional framework comprises two central positions, namely *media-centric approaches* and *society-centric approaches*, which in turn both include two subsets of approaches, as seen in Figure 8-1 (Carpentier *et al.*, 2001:3). The distinction between the two leading positions is contingent upon the application of theoretical frameworks that are either “essentialist” or “relationalist”. Whereas Approach I is concerned with community media serving the community, Approach II emphasises the alternative identity of such media. The former is set in an essentialist, media-centred optic. It highlights the autonomous nature of community media, while the latter takes a relational view by sharply contrasting its identity to other dominant media types. Approach III views community media from a society-centred and essentialist viewpoint and Approach IV uses the rhizome metaphor of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) epistemological model to explain this type of media from a relational perspective.

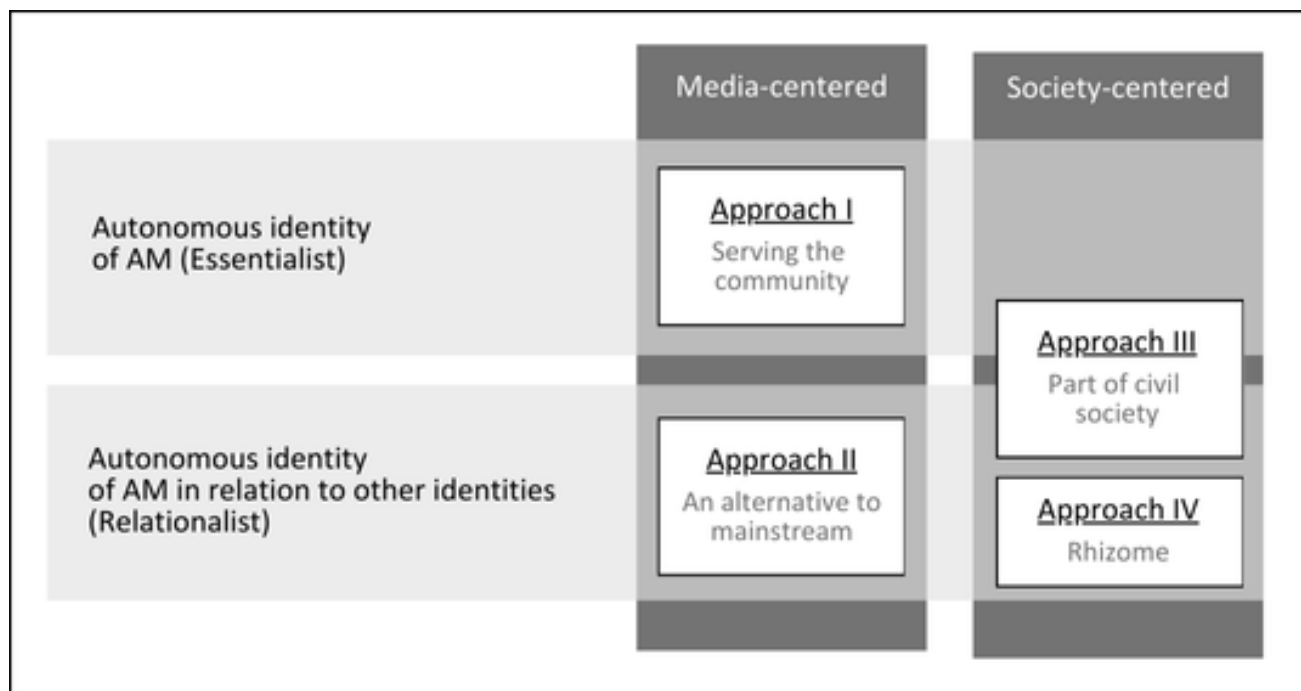


Figure 8-1 Positioning the four theoretical approaches (Source: Carpentier *et al.*: 2001:8)

Carpentier's (2020:197, 199, 205) combination of the different essentialist and relational approaches is constructive for the present study in that it examines how "participation" finds a place and role in development communication and social change settings. He argues that the multidimensional view of participation facilitates an overarching discourse on media and participation with specific reference to its embeddedness in a community media setting. Reflecting on the fluidity of "participation", Carpentier offers the current study an edifying overview of varied theoretical frameworks to interpret participation and its "many locations of media participation". Each of these locations, he argues, concerns specific ideas about participatory practices that retain differing "participatory intensities". Accordingly, media participation can be studied from four different theoretical subfields: a) audience theory, b) a Marxist-anarchist media theory, c) the public sphere theory, and d) development theory as combined with the UNESCO debates (Carpentier, 2020:199-204 cf. Habermas, 1989; Fraser, 1992; Atton, 2002; Fuchs, 2010; Bailey *et al.* 2008). Depending on the chosen theoretical approach, participation can also be grasped from two central positions: a sociological and political approach (Carpentier, 2016:71). These four approaches and their particular significance to the multi-theoretical framework of community media will be incorporated in the below examinations.

Furthermore, as it is interpreted in the community media setting, the multi-theoretical optic encourages further interpretation of the participatory paradigm's assumptions of *dialogue*, *culture*, and *empowerment*. Although all four approaches of the framework are instructive for understanding community media and defining community radio, the "rhizomatic approach" especially appeals to a more comprehensive investigation and practice of these media types in a development communication setting. As will be discussed, Approach IV permits an interpretation of community media participation that is not reduced to either a sociological or political approach, thus placing its theoretic optic in a more critical theory position. Discussions will show that this approach gives a more nuanced and meaningful understanding of community media and consequently also of community radio in a contemporary setting.

Carpentier (2016:70-71) argues that the latter stance acknowledges the need to grasp participation from its ideological, normative intensities. He argues that a critical perspective of participation

extends an interpretation of the notion “beyond [Arnstein’s] ladder of participation”. This then allows one to develop a more complex, cohesive theoretical approach that could further facilitate the development of more sophisticated analytical models of participation and its real-world articulations (see 3.3.6 for a full discussion of Arnstein's ladder). This approach aligns with the current study’s interpretation of the participatory paradigm’s assumptions positioned within an overarching critical, normative perspective that concerns the paradigm’s emancipatory ethos and potential in a development communication and social change context (see 2.2.1 for discussions on metatheory in communication studies).

8.4.1 Approach I: Serving the community

Approach I is centred on concepts such as community, “access by, and participation of” everyday people in the employment of “media technologies”, and defining community media from a media democratisation perspective (Carpentier, 2020:205). Howley (2013:820-822) describes Frances J. Berrigan's UNESCO research in the 1970s as being foundational to any contemporary analysis of community media – specifically community radio – in that it explained the rise of community media on a global scale and the need for more accessible and accountable media structures and practices. This understanding is closely bound to political theories that deliberative democracy and “communicative interaction among citizens” are integral to democracy and opportune and accessible through media participation (Dahlgren, 2002:6-7). Bosch (2011:75) asserts that public opinions – or, in the current research, the community narrative – are created in community media where “talk, or discursive interaction among individuals or groups” are possible. Approach I therefore suggests that participatory communication can emerge among a community’s members and from this kind of media.

As was discussed in the section on the participatory turn in development and social change (see 2.6), there are two major approaches to participatory communication available: the Freirean critical pedagogy and the so-called UNESCO debates (Berrigan, 1979, Carpentier, 2020:203-204). Scholars rightfully note that the former view advocates that the marginalised should participate in a far more radical type of participatory communication by the marginalised when pursuing their individual and

communal development. Moreover, the UNESCO discourse stresses its institutional embeddedness and practice, which many argue often become a site of instrumental participation (Servaes and Malikhao, 2020:86; Dutta, 2020a:101-103;143-145).

Keeping this caution in mind, Berrigan's (1979:7) UNESCO research was some of the first institutional research that described community media as "communications media". She described the latter as including "two-way communication" and as *serving* the programming needs of marginalised groups in society. Unlike media that is owned and produced by external actors or agencies, community media caters to the apparent, lived needs of communities (e.g. information, education, and entertainment) by promoting their active participation "as [the] planners, producers [and] performances" of media content (Berrigan, 1979:8). Berrigan thus introduced the dual "socio-political concepts" of ***access*** and ***participation***, and ***self-management*** into the conceptualisation of community media. Servaes (2020:85) summarises the final report's interpretations of these three notions:

- *Access* refers to how media must be used to serve the public concerning their media choices and associated varied, relevant media contents, as well as the opportunity to provide feedback to those who create media content.
- *Participation* is understood as increased public engagement in media and communication systems. This means that the public must be directly involved in the media production process and the management and planning of these systems.
- *Self-management* refers to the "most advanced form of participation" where the public can exert control and influence in the decision-making processes of communication and media systems. Most specifically, they must be fully engaged in the communication policies and plans that institutions produce.

Berrigan (1979) thus contrasted representative democracy with participatory democracy, which is a fundamental contrast to be aware of in any present-day community media analysis. In the centralised model, the community's needs and concerns are severed from the government's power and control mechanisms to raise its needed concern. According to Carpentier *et al.* (2007:222), this threatens the idea and existence of a community and leads to the decrease of the community's

power and responsibilities within society, often to the point of silencing it completely. In her research, Berrigan (1979:8-10) therefore critiqued the hierarchical structures of dominant media configurations and the linearity of the government-civil society communication flows it created. Instead, she advocated for horizontal information exchange through decentralised “community communications” or community media that could serve as dialogic vehicles between different levels of government and the community. She held that a “participatory democracy” model would promote government accountability and responsiveness to the community’s real-world needs. Berrigan (1979:10-17) accordingly added that community media could also offer alternatives to hegemonic narratives in the mainstream, dominant media, thereby suggesting that the former could become the “operational arm of a participative approach to development”.

According to this UNESCO view and Approach I of Carpentier *et al.* (2007:221-222), the “importance of community media” and its potential threats should be interrogated. These scholars maintain that: a) the notion of community must be validated and reinforced conceptually and in practice, b) an audience must be treated as being embedded in a community, c) members of a community must be enabled to access and participate in producing media content that is d) considered topically relevant to their community concerns, in addition, e) “to opening up a communication channel for misrepresented, stigmatized, or repressed social groups”.

Granting that this approach is media-centred and expressly values the traditional geographical theory and location of a community, Carpentier *et al.* (2001:4) contend that it equally concerns a more relational, anthropological optic by focusing on the communities of interest that the media should serve. By using several established sociological and anthropological meanings of “community”, the scholars compare “community” with the idea of society, while highlighting the former notion’s distinctness. Tönnies’s sociological community-society analysis is the first of these understandings that Carpentier *et al.* (*ibid.*) use to accent the close, concrete relations and collective identity between humans as a distinguishing feature of this first approach (see Chapter 5’s section 5.2.2 for a fuller description of Tönnies’s description of the community). Day (2003:35-36) clarifies that, in contemporary academic and popular discourse, Tönnies’s typology explains how people yearn for the softer, familial or neighbourhood-based community of caring versus a capitalist logic

of modern or post-modern society. In the latter, people live individual, alienated lives even when living physically close to one another. In this analysis, community media are manifestations of social organisation and belonging that yearn to find expression in collective action that contrasts with the alienating, individualistic state of being. Day (2003:36) argues that:

“‘Community’ is more than an empirically verifiable group of people based in place and time; rather it is a way of interrelating and of organising social existence. The components of time and place are certainly easy to describe in concrete terms but any understanding of ‘community’ must also include a description of the patterns of relations therein and of the affective/emotive expectations which people have of this entity.”

Bender (cited by Bosch, 2003:109) claims that the most basic definition of “community” underlines the idea of a community as a group of people who live in a particular locality and have a common interest based on social organisation and social activity. However, “community” also refers to a situation where a group of people share cultural, social or political interests independent from geographical closeness (Bosch, 2003:109, citing Jankowski). This sociological interpretation makes a conceptual shift from the community as being structured according to geography or ethnicity by reconceptualising it as a community of interest, and one with a globalised world, often forms via the use of digital or online media technologies (Lewis, 1993:11, 13; Carpentier *et al.*, 2001:5, 2016:73).

In describing a typology of community and alternative media, Pavarala and Malik (2021:195-196) suggest that subjective conceptions of community are available in Stanley Fish’s (1980) idea of an “interpretive community”, as well as the already mentioned “community of meaning” and “imagined community” ideas. They assert that all these notions of community rely on the active agency of community members to construct their shared identities, associations, and interactions collectively. Therefore, some of the critical features of Approach I entail that social cohesion and collective human engagement are considered as being foundational to the formation and practice of “community”.

These interpretations of community in a mediated context align with the synthesised reconceptualisation of the participatory paradigm’s notion of “culture” that was presented in Section 7.1.3. Culture was described as involving the *embedded participation* of local people in their

own development and as something that is affirmed through *dialogic praxis* in the Freirean interpretation. Culture was furthermore reconceptualised as a *revolutionary oriented* idea with a view of encouraging the *empowerment* of local people.

With this in mind, Carpentier (2016:72) maintains that the sociological approach to community media studies is evident in Carey’s ritualistic communication model, which expresses and emphasises the shared beliefs, togetherness and affinity people that share in a particular culture. This perspective captures the relational clarification of community and hence does not yet consider the political or, as mentioned earlier, Freirean view of participatory communication that enables cultural revolution instead of invasion. According to Carpentier *et al.* (2001:4), the subjective interpretation of “community” allows for its formation from within as a symbolically constructed concept; hence, as something that cannot be imposed on people from outside. In this manner (see in Table 8-1) they argue that “community identity” emerges as a “constructed social communication structure”.

Table 8-1 Defining community

Community as close and concrete human ties, as “communion”, as a collective identity, with identifying group relations.		
Traditional:	Re-conceptualisation 1:	Re-conceptualisation 2:
	Supplementing the geographical with the non-geographical	Supplementing the structural/material with the cultural
• Geography • Ethnicity	• community of interest • virtual or on-line community	• interpretative community • community of meaning

(Source: Carpentier *et al.*: 2001:5)

They add that community members thus actively construct a community and derive their shared identity from it. In a mediated context and as a group or collectivity, community members autonomously and collectively voice their previously denied or overlooked concerns through community media that operate outside the confines of commercial or state media and their hegemonic narratives (cf. Dutta, 2018; Manyozo, 2017).

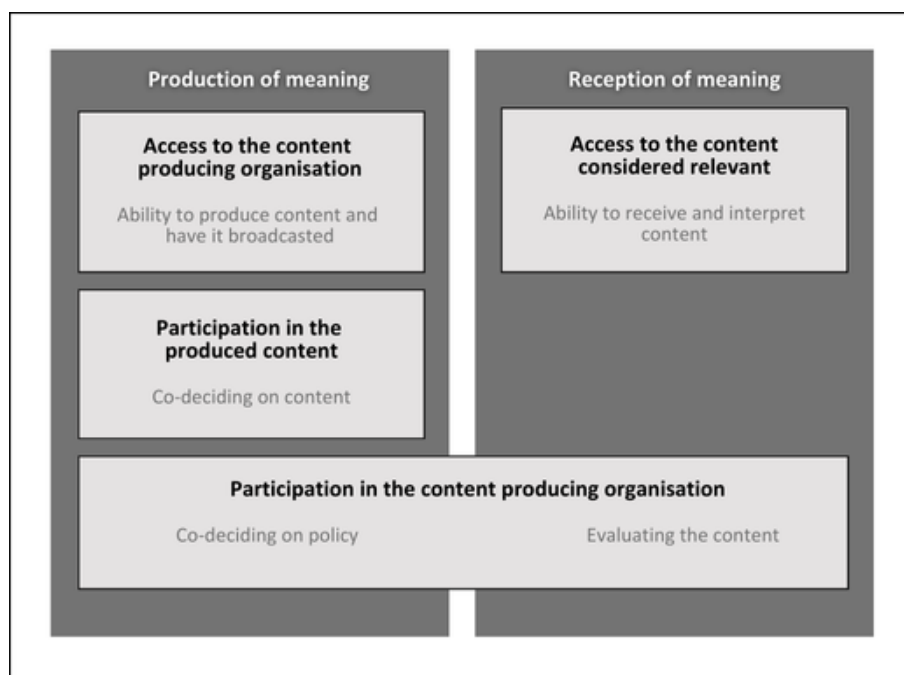


Figure 8-2 Access and participation of the community

(Source: Carpentier *et al.*: 2001:5)

For this reason and while remaining mindful of the UNESCO discourse on community media, the notions of access and participation are added to Approach I's definitions of community media (illustrated above).

Chapter 3 theorised the notion of participation from different theoretical approaches, frameworks and typologies (see 3.3.4). This approach aligns with the synthesised view of participation that was presented in Chapter 7's section 7.3.1, where it was argued that participation in development communication involves *opportunities* and enabling environments, (whether existing or newly created) for local actors to actively and meaningfully *engage* in their own development. As with Approach I, it was argued that *access* to different kinds of resources and communicative power should enhance participatory opportunities. *Access* in the current moment means that previously overlooked or repressed local social actors gain the right and real-world, unfettered physical access to communicative sites that have primarily been designed for their use and concerns. Community media that first and foremost serves the community can suffice as both material and symbolic resources, thus bringing local social actors into the development communication fold in a far more *inclusive* manner that is not afforded in dominant media or tokenistic interpretations of

participation. The different *levels* of participation were also foregrounded in reconceptualising the notion. In a community media setting, access and participation then demonstrate how local actors can use media on a communal level to address their development concerns. In section 7.1.1, engagement was moreover framed as participation from within and according to Arnstein and White's notions of *participation by collaboration* and *empowerment participation* spanning the entire participatory communicative moment or project.

Community media, therefore, assumes that the direct and authentic investments of community members are vital to its daily *and* strategic, sustained operations. Participation in community media is not externally forced or controlled. Instead of being passive recipients of media content, community members plan, produce and own community media and use it to encourage their desired transformative and empowerment needs (Carpentier *et al.*, 2001:5, 2016:73-74). In this manner, as Carpentier (2016:74) explains, "community" is not simply a temporal-spatial concept, but rather a socio-communicative one that stresses the significance of social interaction and human communication in a development setting. In this analysis, participation in community media also does not end with obtaining and interpreting locally produced content but comprises the evaluation of such produced content. Carpentier (2016:70-71, 75) insists that too little research is done concerning methodologies that can assess different kinds of "participatory intensities". He argues that the appropriateness of the produced content should be evaluated.

Approach I further aligns with the ideas of participation as community inclusivity and equality (presented in section 7.1.1) by designating community media as the most appropriate and accessible resource for securing peoples' engagement in their development. An insistence on community media ownership additionally requires that community members are empowered with the skills to produce relevant, culturally relevant media content. Community media both facilitates agency and strengthens it, which in turn ensures that control of such media and its products remains in the hands of local communities and does not fall prey to technicist values and rituals.

Carpentier (2020:205) adds that "empowerment" emerges as a central notion in Approach I, as the innate skills and authentic views of community members are incorporated into the conception and use of community media. Community is thus constructed along the dimensions of the lived material,

and the symbolic and structural realities of its members. This reinforces the characteristic of community media being embedded in the local community's perceptions, abilities and concerns, as was already described during the 1970s in Berrigan's research. The community service approach accentuates the critical role of community media as a development or social change catalyst. Chapter 7's section 7.1.4 reconceptualised the participatory paradigm's notion of empowerment as *critical consciousness, agency and autonomy* and concerned with the *material and immaterial* aspects thereof. Empowerment was further described as involving *power redistribution* and *intersubjective empowerment* and as being concerned with its *transformative* and *sustainable* characteristics.

Carpentier *et al.* (2001:6) claim that serving the community necessitates enabling and facilitating access and participation via *community media ownership and control*. Through community media, members can gain increased awareness of their lived realities in a critical and reflexive manner, as was explained in discussions about the Freirean view of critical consciousness. Once such awareness is created, community members can take action that will assist them to reclaim power over their lives, which has been neglected, marginalised or dominated by hegemonic societal organisations and practices, including those mediated by the dominant media. The scholars summarise Approach I as serving:

"Especially societal groups that are misrepresented, disadvantaged, stigmatised, or even repressed [and how they] can benefit from using the channels of communication opened by community media, strengthening their internal identity, manifesting this identity to the outside world, and thus enabling social change and/or development".

In section 7.1.4, empowerment was described as involving *material and immaterial enablement*. In the context of the current approach, community media are most suitable to create enabling environments of participatory communication that address a community's material needs. But they also facilitate its often less tangible social, cultural and political empowerment concerns. This refers to the current study's description of empowerment as *power from within* and concerning human values such as human dignity, spirituality, self-esteem and self-confidence. Community media is the most suitable communicative vehicle to encourage the empowerment of local people from within to the bottom up. Moreover, as noted previously, community media ownership redistributes power

in a community, further allowing *intersubjective empowerment* that is crucial in resisting dominant media power to occur. At the same time, this kind of empowerment permits further relational, communicative empowerment. As already established, Approach I claims that community media facilitates disruption *and* dialogue in vertical government-community relations. It can, conversely, also further horizontal information flows between various social actors who are engaged in dialogue. From this communicative moment, this study claims, empowerment as transformation and emancipation can follow.

As the above arguments suggest, a community service approach suggests that dialogue has a central place in community media. However, the idea of dialogue (theorised in Chapter 7's section 7.1.3) was not incorporated into the current study's assessment of Approach I but will instead be introduced in discussions on Approach III, which concern community media as part of civil society (see 8.4.3). The motivation for this is explained here briefly. The community media as a civil society approach focuses on how community media acts as a community-level, mediated public sphere. The Habermasian concept of a public sphere emphasises that regular people can come together in a public space to discuss issues and develop their opinions on matters under consideration.

The second approach concerns alternative structures and technologies that are antagonistic to mainstream media while also providing supplemental and alternative media organisations, practices, and content that are free from commercial or state influences (Carpentier, 2020:205).

8.4.2 Approach II: An alternative to mainstream media

While Approach II introduces the idea of alternativity to mediated communication, Carpentier *et al.* (2001:7) accept that what was once considered alternative media could transition into mainstream media in a different temporality and spatiality. Likewise, Downing *et al.* (2001:ix) describes alternative media as an oxymoronic as “everything, at some point, is alternative to something else” and hence he prefers to add “radical” to qualify alternative media. Cognisant of these qualifications, describing community media as “alternative” puts into focus the contingency and the contextual features of media that operate on a communal level and independently from dominant media

organisations and practices (cf. Rodríguez, 2001; Downing, *et al.*, 2001; Atton, 2002; Fuchs, 2010; Order, 2011).

This lens of alternativity, Atton (2002:2, 3, 7-8, 2007:18) explains, is usually viewed through dominant Marxist and Gramscian ideas that allow a definition of community media as being radical, counterhegemonic and traditionally as emergent from anti-capitalist publications (see 4.1 and 4.4.2.1 to 4.4.2.2 for discussions on the Marxian infused Freirean critical pedagogy and Habermasian public sphere and communicative theories, including 6.3.1 for a summary of Gramsci's power). He reasons that scholars and practitioners often use the notion of "alternative" to describe the apparent, intrinsic value of community radio compared with the ethos of its commercial and public counterparts. He furthermore defines alternative media as including media services that "protests groups, students, fringe political organizations, even fans and hobbyists" use in an amateur fashion and to advocate for diverse views, opinions, and interests that are not adequately represented by the mainstream media, adding that ordinary citizens or activists become the producers of media content without the usual constraints of the mainstream media sphere (Atton, 2002:3, 2007:18). More recently, Atton (2015:2), has referred to ideas proposed by the sociologist Alberto Melucci's (1996) who claims that social actors can actively construct and participate in social life, that the theoretical expression of "nomination" or naming of "community media" has furthermore been hugely influenced and complicated by the various social processes and practices in civil society associated with the phenomenon. Atton (2015:2) rightly cautions that theoretically ordering and understanding community media more precisely has deep consequences – not only in academic discourse but also in how alternative media are conceived and practised and how these media are imagined and used in information to interpret and shape society.

Clarifying Downing *et al.*'s. (*ibid.*) definition of alternative media as radical media, Order (2011:67) states that radicality speaks to "progressive politics and a progressively structured media participation organisation". He explains that Downing's interpretation of community media places value in the idea that community radio, for instance, is internally democratically arranged, thus emphasising a collective decision-making process rather than a hierarchical corporate governance of media structures. Order (*ibid.*) elaborates that Downing's radical alternative media definition

creates a democratic opportunity for a community to express radical politics or alternative, oppressed groups to voice their views. Moreover, he states, “it is an organisational prefigurative political stance” that encourages further societal democratisation.

In a recent study that reviewed community radio research literature in developing countries, spanning 2010 to 2020, Busolo and Manalo IV (2023:775, 781-782) determined that community radio is often used – especially in Latin America and African contexts – as a communicative platform to disseminate information that allows communities to challenge the dominant political discourse in the larger societal setting. The above-cited research raises concerns about the independence of community radio due to issues such as donor funding and repressive regulatory matters. However, it also underlines how community radio is used in revealing undemocratic, oppressive power structures and relations precisely because of their alternative, oppositional nature and practices (Atton, 2007:17-18; Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010:146; Order 2011:62, 66-67). Elsewhere, Rodriguez’s (2001:19-22) interpretation of alternative media, which was based on case study research, emphasises the participation of citizens in media production with a view to empowerment. In this analysis, community radio concerns ideas about power and empowerment that were already evident in discussions about the first two approaches in the multi-theoretical framework. Her definition of alternative media indicates that media participation is not a passive legal right but should be an everyday occurrence (Order, 2011:67).

In Approach II, Carpentier *et al.* (2001:7) contrast alternative media with “mainstream media”, describing the latter as follows: typically large-scaled and generally geared toward homogenous audiences, state-run organisations or privately owned, vertically organised and operated by professionals, and representative of dominant discourses and interests. Considering the oppositional or anarchistic view of alternative media, these scholars then describe several dimensions of this type of media, namely that it concerns:

- Small-scaled media concerned with serving a specific community, which has been otherwise marginalised or overlooked;
- Independence from commercial and state imperatives;

- Horizontally or democratic organisation that promotes a diversity of local community members' access and participation;
- The representation of non-dominant and often counter-hegemonic narratives that underline the autonomous self-representation of local communities in society.

Lewis's (1993:12) UNESCO research also informed the second approach where he attempted to describe the above broad characteristics of alternative media according to ten more distinctive features. Table 8-2 demonstrates these original dimensions and examples that Carpentier *et al.* (2007:7) added to clarify these features. Therefore, their second approach focuses on the internal and external organisation and orientation of community media.

Table 8-2 Defining alternative media

Domain	Examples of the domain
Motive or purpose	Rejection of commercial motives Assertion of human, cultural, and educational ends
Sources of funding	Rejection of state or municipal grants Rejection of advertising revenue
Regulatory dispensation	Supervised by distinct institutions Independent /"free"
Organisational structure	Horizontal organisation Allowing 'full' participation Democratisation of communication
Criticising professional practices	Encouraging voluntary engagement Access and participation for non-professionals Different criteria for news selection
Message content	Supplementing or contradicting dominant discourses or representations
Relationship with audience and/or consumers	Degree of user/consumer control Allowing the needs and goals to be articulated by the audience/consumers themselves Democratisation of communication
Composition of the audience	Young people, women, rural populations Diversity and multiplicity
Range of diffusion	Local rather than regional or national
Nature of research methodology	Qualitative, ethnographical and longterm research

(Source: Carpentier *et al.*, 2001:7)

More recently, Barranquero (2020:336) suggests that “community” as related to alternative media requires reconceptualisation in the age ICTs, digital media and “global, transnational social movements”. In this analysis, alternative media are accessible and used by a plethora of marginalised and minority groups without the centralised regulation of commercial, political or bureaucratic ideologies and mechanisms. Through internal democratisation afforded by digital and online media spheres, communities can actively produce content that serves their interests in more meaningful ways. Citing Jankowski (2006), Barranquero (2020:336) calls this reinterpretation the “third wave”, respectively following the initial and second waves in the form of the alternative press and the audiovisual media (i.e., radio, video, etc.). Community media now includes social media, which has a far larger diffusion range than traditional media as alternative media. This notion points toward the “rhizomatic approach” that will be discussed in section 8.4.4.

Furthermore, as alternative or critical media, the dialectical theory of Giddens (1984) is used by Fuchs (2010:174) in a mediated context to describe and overcome the structure-agency binary (also see 3.4.1, 6.3.1.2 and 6.4.1 where the concepts of participation and empowerment were also described through the object-subject; hence the lens of dialectics). The scholar argues that employing this theorem in a mediated context allows one to make the distinction between objective (i.e. structure) versus subjective (i.e. social actors) media theories, but simultaneously allowing its dynamic interplay. He explains the former as focusing on the more *enduring* aspects of media as *institutionalised in organisations, values, norms* and *specific economic and ideological interpretations* of the media and its product and hence its place and role in society.

These theories were first described by Siebert *et al.* (1956, 1984) in the work *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do*, and later revised by Dennis McQuail (McQuail, 2010, McQuail & Deuze, 2020) to include the “developmental model” and the “democratic-participant model”. Conversely, subjective media theories concern the *actions* and *interactions* of individuals and groupings of people in creating media content (Fuchs, 2010:174). From a dialectical view, social actors, their participation and their human actions are paramount to the media structures and products. As was

already evident in Approach I, the symbolic creation of community at once creates community *and* influences it.

The same applies to the interconnection between how media organisations are conceived and what people ultimately do with media in different societal contexts. This is especially relevant to online and digital media that further complicate the social contexts in which alternative media operate. The dialectical role between media structures and the actors involved highlights the need for an approach that does not only accept their interconnection. As Fuchs (2010:175) acknowledges:

“Media are not just social systems, they are social systems that reach a wide public and are therefore part of communication processes in public spheres. Therefore, the notion of the public sphere is important for a social theory of the media in general and as a result also for a social theory of alternative media.”

The above descriptions of community media as alternative media suggest that community media are viewed as being antagonistic toward the identity, organisation and practices of dominant media. They are not simply agnostic toward dominant media narratives. Approach II reinforces the idea that small-scale media that are community-owned and operated are the only suitable vehicles to promote diverse the participation of local communities in the media spheres and society at large. Comparable to Approach I, the alternative media definition of community media concerns the participatory paradigm’s assumptions of empowerment (see 7.1.4).

Chapter 7 formulated this study’s theoretical statement about the latter notion as follows:

Empowerment in participatory communication refers to the ability of individuals and groups to take charge of their lives and make autonomous decisions concerning their development needs and aspirations. It involves a redistribution of power and resources to meet the diverse needs of development beneficiaries. Before empowerment can transpire, local individuals and communities must become critically cognisant of their surrounding environments: perceived and lived as both externally and internally imposed. From an empowerment view, development can transpire in the material and immaterial sense. Empowerment is not just a one-time event, but a sustained process that requires continued examination and reinterpretation. Ultimately, it should lead to practical actions that can bring about transformation and positive change for individuals and the community.

Compared with Approach II, several commonalities emerge with this study's theorisation of the participatory approach's empowerment notion. Both frameworks view empowerment as involving autonomy and agency. The participatory paradigm stresses that interpersonal and communal empowerment means that people should take ownership of their lives through autonomous decision-making. In Approach II, community media is seen as the ideal communication platform from which especially oppressed communities can challenge dominant media configurations and practices. This study's theoretical statement converges with the alternative community media approach by examining the issue of structure-agency power redistribution in favour of oppressed communities. Once community media ownership is secured, local communities can exert their agency to create topical media content that addresses their diverse, specific needs and concerns, whether of a material or immaterial nature.

Both theorisations also stress that critical awareness is necessary to understand empowerment. In section 7.1.4 it was concluded that people's critical consciousness of their lived surroundings is crucial to their empowerment and that any impositions on such reflections can be both external and internal. Approach II likewise describes community media as the platform and process through which communities can become critically aware of their marginalisation and oppression.

This approach also stresses the dynamic, dialectical relationship between alternative community media and dominant media. This suggests that the relationships are never fixed but must continually be interrogated and adapted to enable the authentic empowerment of communities. This study's theoretical statement of empowerment is that it is an ongoing participation and reflective action process in a development setting. The Second Approach of Carpentier *et al.* (2003, 2007) focuses on empowerment in a broad sense and as obtained via media participation in counter-hegemonic community media. In the above theoretical statement, emphasis is placed on the participatory paradigm's idea of empowerment, which aims to lead to transformation concerning material development and change, as well as less tangible emancipatory ideals such as self-confidence, self-reliance and autonomy. Approach II suggests that alternative community media could lead to empowerment and effect social change, as it is viewed through the counter-hegemonic optic. It focuses less on any specific development communication concerns.

With these assessments in mind, the next section directs the chapter to the third approach in the multi-theoretical framework to community media that “link[s] community media to the civil society” (Carpentier *et al.*, 2001:8-11).

8.4.3 Approach II: Community media as linked to civil society

This assertion introduces the third approach in the multi-theoretical framework, “linking community media to civil society” (Carpentier *et al.*, 2001:8-11; Gaynor & O’Brien, 2017:29-47). The central assumption here is that community media is positioned in the intermediate space of “civil society” that is separated from society's public and private domains.

According to Carpentier *et al.* (2001:8-9), this separation from the greater society and its subsystems stresses the need and role for community media centred on community ownership and control. Drawing on Thompson (1995:122) and Keane (1998:xviii), scholars describe civil society as being important in academic and popular discourses and practice for various reasons. Firstly, it accords individuals’ freedoms in any society (i.e., both in the public and the private domains) from violence. It ensures, as well, that diverse community *and* individual identities find expression while promoting freedom of communication through diverse media. The community media as civil society approach claims that while the latter notion can be interpreted differently in different communities and nation-states, it applies in most countries where capitalism reigns or even in the most repressive ones where citizens resist domination and oppression (Carpentier *et al.*, 2001:10).

The idea of community media as a civil society aligns with the Habermasian public sphere theory discussed in Chapter 4’s section 4.5.2.1. Correspondingly, the communicative action theory was examined in the same chapter’s section 4.5.2.2 as the intersubjective, dialogic communication between social actors based on procedural values that emphasise democratic participation and communication in a public sphere (cf. Habermas, 1962/1989, 1948, 1987).

Viewing Approach III through the Habermasian theoretic viewpoint, community media, and undoubtedly alternative media, provides the necessary protected space for social actors, especially at the local level, to guard against the destructive and dominant forces of commercial media and

state influences in propagating their narratives and interests in society. Referring to community radio, Servaes (1999:260) calls community media the “third voice” of society. Community media present the opportunity and access to platforms for the expression or even inclusive representation of voices that otherwise do not find articulation in public or private domains.

Community media is the “lifeworld” that provides communicative platforms of self-representation and autonomy that systems at the centre habitually decay, manipulate or strategically manufacture to propagate and address hegemonic concerns (Habermas, 1962/1989:215-217). For this reason, Gaynor and O’Brien (2017:32) contend that at the micro level, community media connects the private and the public spheres by incorporating the communal interests of ordinary people through public deliberations and influencing policy and decision-making in the macro-sphere. They state that Habermas, therefore, presents a dual-track theory of democracy where the traditional democratic domains and institutions coincide with an active public sphere of vigorous, constructive debate by civil society organisations such as community media. Through community media, the views and interests of those at the periphery of society (i.e., the micro-spheres) are established to further inform and influence those at the centre of society (i.e., the macro-spheres).

In the historical interpretation, Habermas did not accommodate for a diversity of social actors or a variety of different kinds of public spheres. Critics of the bourgeois public sphere have, however, made way for a multiplicity of counter-hegemonic spheres and micro-spheres (cf. Fraser, 1992; Morrow & Torres, 2003; Calhoun, 2013; Negt & Kluge, 2016; Wessler, 2018) – which in the current content also find expression in a plurality of community media. As stated previously, community media is associated with a diversity of names, including grassroots media, local media, and (as discovered in Approach II) alternative media. Plurality is therefore emphasised in more recent views of the public sphere and its connection with community media.

Van Vuuren (2004:17-18) explains that the public sphere lens of community media becomes valuable when the former is viewed as a resource that groups of “commons” self-create and organise as they arise from the enclosure. She thus underlines the ability of people to organise themselves to their own benefit over the notion of a problematic, enclosed communal resource, indicating that “social capital” is vital to the concept and enactment of community media. She points out the paradox that

as a community media public sphere becomes increasingly open and diverse; it often necessitates some boundaries relating to who participates and what communication rules or norms govern public deliberation. Concerning the matter of allowed participants, this study does not imagine it from a prohibitive view but from the perspective of enhancing oppressed or marginalised communities' media participation and content generation through community talk and not imposed by dominant societal forces.

This speaks to Chapter 7's synthesised theoretical statement on the participatory paradigm's assumption about dialogue (see 7.1.2). This study has reconceptualised dialogue in a development setting as involving a *critical praxis* evident in the public sphere that emphasises public deliberation. Through dialogic participatory communication, social actors on a communal level exchange their knowledge, ideas and experiences as first-hand accounts. This perspective stresses that marginalised communities use dialogue to encourage social transformation and foster more meaningful social change.

Viewed together, Approach III and Theoretical Statement 2 conceive community media as providing the platform for such dialogic moments. While the civil society approach focuses on the institutional form of community media and its role in society, dialogue in participatory communication concerns the interpersonal communication and praxis that Van Vuuren (2004) indicated. This study's reconceptualised theoretical statement on dialogue expresses the intersubjective communication between social actors – especially the traditionally marginalised – that can be achieved through critical dialogic pedagogy. Therefore, both approaches share a concern with how inclusivity and democratic participation of a diversity of voices can occur. In this study, community media offers that vehicle. “Dialogue” was reinterpreted in Chapter 7 as retaining *dialectical* and *intersubjective* qualities. As Benhabib (1997:725-726) rightfully reminds us, community media offers the alternative to the formation of consensus in society exactly because, in a reinterpretation of the public sphere, community media should permit discontent, cynicism and disillusionment with dominant social systems to be expressed. In the interconnection between community media and civil society, it becomes apparent that community media must promote independent dialogic communication. In

this positioning, community media further gains an internal democratic, participatory characteristic while encouraging improved external democratic practices in society.

Approach III and Habermasian theory converge conceptually concerning several notions: the democratic role of community media in society, the separation of this media from external public and private domains for free public, dialogic debate to transpire, and the ideas of self-representation and inclusivity via such media configurations and rituals. As Berrigan's (1979) view on community media espoused, this type of media relies on the inherent skills of communities to address their needs and concerns. Similarly, Habermasian views on the public sphere and communicative action promote the idea that people are capable of forming public opinion via open, transparent and equal debate. Community media certainly offers the communicative opportunity and space for inclusive, broader participatory deliberations and the production of culturally relevant media content.

8.4.4 Approach IV: Community media as a rhizome

Finally, Carpentier (2020:205) describes the rhizomatic approach as being based on the metaphor of the rhizome in the manner used by the French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1987). In a simplified manner, the rhizome in its botanical form is a kind of root or plant (e.g. ginger, bamboo and certain types of grass species) that grows underground, usually horizontally and just below the ground. In contrast to other kinds of roots, a rhizome comprises nodes from which roots stem and further propagate, shooting upwards in the form of shoots. When a stem is broken, the rhizome will grow new nodes from which the root and shoots can grow anew.

As evident in Figure 8-3, Carpentier *et al.* (2001:13) state that the rhizome is used as a conceptual tool with which to describe four aspects of community media: its elusiveness, the interconnections among different kinds of community media, its connection with civil society as described in Approach III, *and* its relations with the commercial and public domains of society. Elsewhere, Pavarala and Malik (2021:197), state that Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) interpretation of the rhizome presents a theoretical lens to describe the alternativity, openness and connectable dimensions of community media. They explain that just like a rhizome, community media is constantly open for modification and renewal, that it forms and expands in civil society in a non-linear and non-hierarchical fashion,

in addition to its being just as flexible as the botanical root by being able to interconnect to other nodes or points to form a larger, news social network.

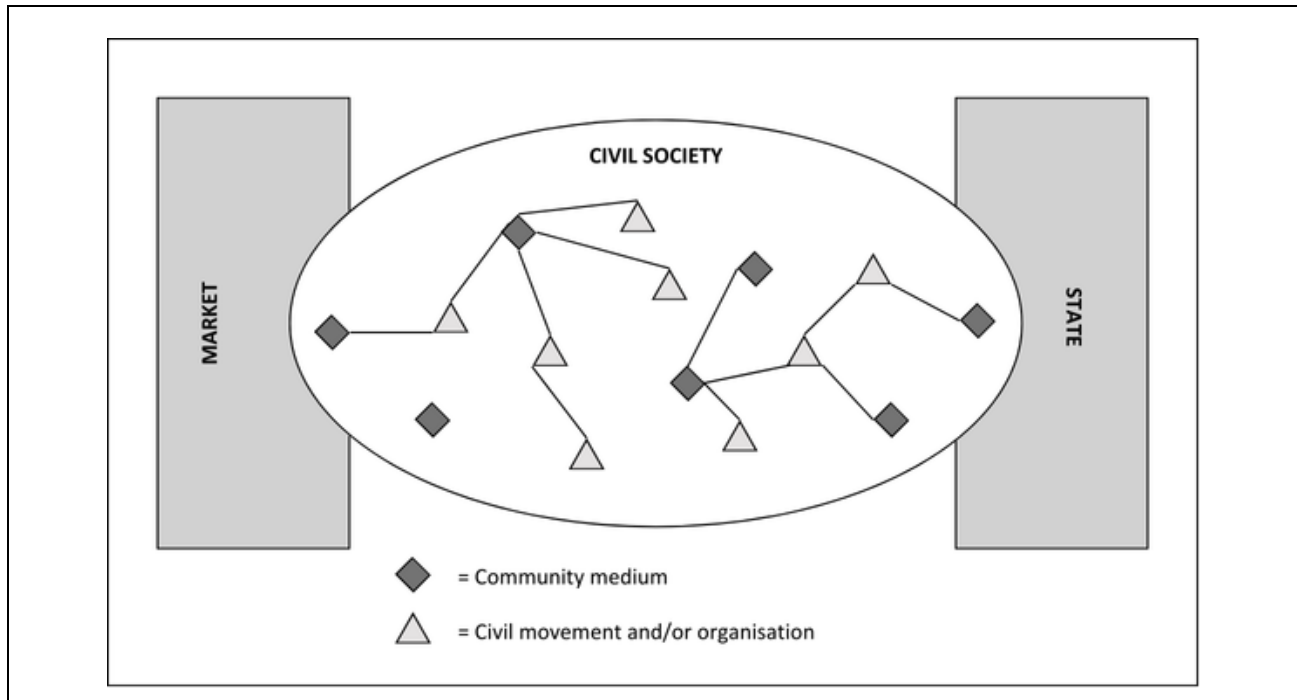


Figure 8-3 Civil society and community as rhizome

According to Carpentier *et al.* (2001:12) this notion is furthermore especially appealing in a mediated context. This is because it allows for a conception of community media that need not be antagonistic towards the state or market as described in Approach II, but instead allows for a reconceptualisation that accepts the complicated relations between community media and its connections with the market and the state. This, the scholars maintain, permits for a reconceptualisation of community media that can form interesting, complicated relations with centralised and profit-oriented organisations previously thought undesirable or impossible (cf. Bosch, 2003, 2024). This permits a complex view of community media that simultaneously accepts this type of media's autonomy but often overlooks interdependent relations with the state and market. This understanding of community media is found in the rhizomatic characteristic of growing in a dynamic, shifting manner and made possible through infinite different entry points or nodes. In this way, a much larger

rhizomatic network is established, which can be both typified and characterised by rupture and new growth points. At the same time, it also accepts that community media can, just like different nodes or a root, break away from other nodes and stems (i.e. the state and media) when they are inhibiting the former's independence.

Carpentier *et al.* (2001:12) assert that the rhizomatic network is also comprised of connections between different kinds of community media and social actors within civil society, further enhancing this theoretical approach's conceptual sophistication. The added value of this conception includes that the unique identities of different, autonomous community media need not be compromised. Just like the nodes of the botanical rhizome, a community media rhizome consists of many different segments of roots, nodes, stems, and shoots.

When considering Approach IV and the discussions about the participatory paradigm's assumptions as theorised and discussed in the previous three approaches, this study maintains that all four assumptions of participatory communication are evident in the rhizome. While this study's theorisation of participation stresses the involvement of marginalised communities in their own development, the rhizomatic interpretation of community media takes a more open view. It underlines the complex and fluid linkages and relations that can form between a diverse complexity of social actors, social moments, and different kinds of dominant and alternative media organisations. The rhizomatic approach rejects media *participation* as purely vertical or horizontally organised or entirely agnostic toward mainstream media. Instead, rigid structures and relations are required to be broken down while new forms of communication are being assembled. Viewed together, both approaches, however, highlight the inclusivity aspect of "participation".

Concerning dialogue, the rhizome view contends that dialogue is intrinsic to the place and role of community media. Given the fluidity of a rhizomatic network, dialogue is dynamic – it does not follow a rigid hierarchy or process but can follow the route of diverse communication flows between diverse social actors and organisations, allowing rich, diverse perspectives to find expressions through community media participation and products. In the rhizome view of community, dialogue is a decentralised communication phenomenon. As established, this study views dialogue in participatory communication as a praxis that enables marginalised communities to facilitate

understanding and empowerment. Dialogue is, therefore, an indispensable communicative process in both theoretical interpretations (see 4.4.2.1 to 4.4.2.3).

Evident from the rhizomatic approach's views on participation and dialogue, it fosters cultural diversity in a multi-perspectival manner and is not simply based on the cultural identities of marginalised communities. This allows for a far more extensive view of how to conceptualise community media and its role in society. A rhizomatic view suggests that community media can encompass a far more extensive social network through its various connections with different organisations and social actors and their diverse views. In this study, compared to cultural diversity theorised in a development setting, culture is a complex, core assumption of the participatory paradigm that stresses the inclusion of the oppressed or marginalised in development initiatives. While the community media as a rhizome approach is more flexible in whose cultural identities are included, the participatory paradigm's view concerns it as a site of struggle where the historically marginalised have to gain a new position in participatory communication.

Lastly, concerning "empowerment," this study's reformulation in the participatory paradigm and the rhizomatic community media approach both view empowerment as essential to community media participation and people's empowerment in a development context. The two views, however, diverge conceptually when the rhizomatic approach takes a more structural interpretation of empowerment as articulated in decentralised community media participation.

8.5 SUMMARY REMARKS

There are many different types of community radio stations globally, which complicates a unified theoretical conceptualisation. These stations operate in a large diversity of social and cultural settings and often with different kinds of purposes in mind, which further complicates its description. At the same time, these varying contexts and features make community radio a multifaceted phenomenon. The current chapter, therefore, set out to examine how this complexity could be theoretically defined. that a multi-theoretical framework

This chapter set out to define community radio by first placing it in the field of community studies (see 8.2). As a subdiscipline of communication, journalism and media studies, and as informed by various other disciplines, theoretical frameworks and concepts within the humanities, community studies is a vast, complicated domain. Research indicates that while the field of community media studies gained popularity in the early 2000s, it faced challenges in terms of defining its scope and gaining recognition in academic and practitioner circles. Conversely, community media studies offers a valuable alternative perspective, encouraging exploration of the significance and function of local media in society as opposed to focusing solely on mainstream media's influence and pace of development.

Community media scholars are generally concerned with how alternative media arrangements, practices and culturally diverse media content find expression in a wide variety of concepts and real-world settings. By focusing on the specific needs and voices of local communities, community media can disrupt the dominant media narratives that commercial media perpetuate on a global and public media on a national scale. Community media studies, therefore, concern media democratisation and the strengthening of civil society while encouraging the empowerment of local communities through their active, meaningful participation in the strategic and daily operations of diverse community media.

For this study, section 8.4 argued that Carpentier *et al*'s. (2003, 2007) multi-theoretical framework is the most appropriate theoretical and conceptual lens to define community media, and hence community radio. A multi-theoretical frame allows scholars to define community media more comprehensively than a single-based theory. This framework comprises a four-pronged approach defining community media from an essentialist view as ***serving the community*** and as offering ***alternative media*** to mainstream media institutions and narratives. In the first approach, the link between community media and community is underscored, emphasising concepts such as local communities' access to *and* participation in community media to their specific benefit. In the second approach, community media is conceptualised as explicitly concentrating on the position and purpose of such media in offering alternative media and narratives that displace and challenge dominant media narratives.

Approach III grasps community media in a rationalist framework and grasps it as ***civil society***. In this frame, community media functions as the so-called third voice or laminar space between commercial media and the state. In this reading, community media facilitates social cohesion and civil engagement as it encourages communities to participate in various democratic systems and practices. Community media operates as a community opportunity and place in which the public can debate matters of public concern, especially as related to the local level.

Lastly, as a type of media that exists as a ***rhizomatic*** or relationalist media, community media can contingently and fluidly interconnect with a multiplicity of social actors and social movements while also disrupting the dominant mediascape. This definition of community media demonstrates that while community media can retain specific characteristics and functions and thus operate independently from other dominant or community media, it can also overcome rigidity by creating connections with various media types in collaborative and diverse manners.

CHAPTER 9: SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY RADIO: A REGULATORY PERSPECTIVE

“Community stations are defined as those run, owned and controlled by community members or organisations, for their own communities, and funded by grants, sponsorships, donations and advertising, with profits ploughed back into the community – stations run ‘by communities for communities’.”

— Mtimde *et al.* (2000).

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Broadly defined broadcasting policy is the set of principles, guidelines, and the overarching context in which media, such as community radio, is established, defined and governed by a government and its specific regulatory bodies (Fourie, 2018; Raghunath, 2020; Bardoel & Van Cuilenburg, 2003).

This chapter will focus on how ICASA (ICASA, n.d., ICASA Act 13 of 2000), as the industry regulator, conceives community broadcasting in regulatory and legal terms by doing a thorough analysis of the fundamental principles, concerns and values that underpin several acts associated with community radio (see 9.3). ICASA must ensure the community broadcasting sector complies with contemporary broadcasting standards and license agreements. It must create an enabling macro-institutional legal framework in which community radio broadcasters effectively operate in service of South African communities. This study asserts that ICASA must promote community access to, community ownership of, and community participation in community radio for participatory communication for development and social change to happen.

Section 9.3’s analyses will edify Chapter 10’s final synthesised theoretical-conceptual framework through a dual conceptual strategy. It will use that framework to compile a new conceptual-analytical framework with which Chapter 10 will then finally interrogate the South African legal framework from a participatory communication optic (see Table 10-1). The rhizomatic framework of community media that was discussed before (see 8.4.4) will similarly be reviewed to compile an

analytical tool for analysing South African community radio legislation in the final chapter. After Chapter 10 uses these two analytical tools, the study's final, synthesised framework will be presented.

9.2 COMMUNITY RADIO AROUND: FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH TO SOUTH AFRICA

Before these legislative-theoretical comparative analyses commence, the current segment succinctly delineates community radio's historical establishment and evolution. Though this study accepts that community radio is a global academic research and practice concern, it emphasises this phenomenon's historical and theoretical trajectory in the Global South. It positions community radio's ascension as overarchingly framed in political struggle and media activism (see 9.2.1). After this account, the South African community radio sector's establishment and evolution are briefly charted. These summaries are also tied to large-scale political, social and economic transformations that took footing in the years before and after Apartheid ended (see 9.2.2).

9.2.1 Community radio in the Global South

In Chapter 1 (see 1.1.2) Gretchen King's (2017) timeline of the global rise of community radio was in brief cited. Figure 9-1 below displays her timeline of community radio's evolution, spanning four historical and conceptual periods.

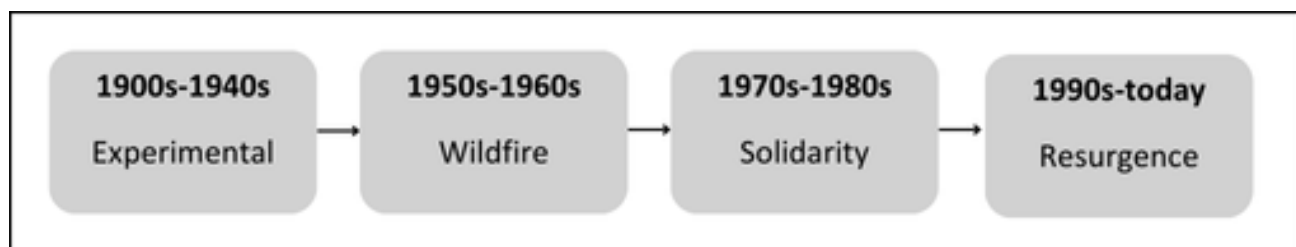


Figure 9-1 Periods in the evolution of community radio

The ***Experimental phase***, set between World War I and II, saw community broadcasting taking off in several European countries and the Americas (King, 2017:21-23). Broken into four smaller stages, this phase depicts how amateur radio enthusiasts began experimenting with the latest radio technology outside the traditional confines of state, military or commercial control just before the

outbreak of World War I. During this time, in Northern America, King (2017:21) recounts that “thousands of radio hobbyists and hundreds of radio clubs” on the United States-Canadian border filled the airwaves with their broadcasts”, and they continued their unlicensed broadcasting despite communication and war-time restrictions. She relates that during the 1910s, revolutionaries and social movements in Ireland and Germany, and later in the 1920s, dissent voices as far afield as Cairo, Egypt, began using radio to share their diverse political views outside the traditional, controlled broadcasting models and political regimes of the day.

Historically speaking, Backhaus (2022:581-582, 583) affirms that community radio’s rise in the southern hemisphere has socio-political roots. The establishment of community radio in the Global South originated in the 1940s in the mining communities of Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, and as exemplified in Cuba in Central America during the country’s 1959 revolution (see Barranquero, 2020; Bosch, 2017; Gumucio, 2001, King, 2017; Rodríguez, 2001). These radio stations were set up, O’Connor (1990:102-103) and Gumucio (2001:13) relate, by miners and *campesinos* (i.e. poor farmers), in addition to radicals who saw the usefulness of radio in their social, political, and economic struggles against capitalistic exploits by mine owners and, similarly, as suitable for resisting dictatorships. In 1947, *Radio Sutatenza* in Columbia and 1949 *Radio Mineres* were two of Latin America's first independent but unlicensed "community" radio stations (Barranquero, 2020:332; Gumucio, 2001:16).

Further North, King (2017:22) recounts that in 1946, the American Lewis Hill, “a fired broadcaster and conscientious objector during the Second World War”, set up the Pacifica Foundation that advocated for “peace and justice reporting”. Through his foundation, he explored a new listenership donor funding model for radio broadcasting, and in 1949 KFPA, in Berkeley, became the first non-profit community radio station founded by Hill and his new funding model. Elsewhere, in the Middle East, both Palestinians and Israelis in the late 1940s used underground radio stations to advocate their ideologies; likewise, pro-communist and anti-communist political groups in several European countries employed it as a political communication platform in the 1940s to 1950s (King, 2017:22).

Using radio in this manner prefigured community radio’s second evolutionary wave. The **Wildfire** of the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the multiplication of community radio in various Latin American, Asia

and African nations (Gumucio, 2001; King, 2017). Social activists and movements in these southern regions utilised non-state, non-commercial radio to extend their externally oriented post-colonial struggles and encourage internally focused fighting against local repressive regimes. The liberatory ethos of broadcasting by independent and dissent voices exemplified this historical and conceptual period of community radio (King, 2017:30). Thereafter, the 1970s and 1980s comprised the ***Solidarity phase***. It solidified the focus on self-governing media and media democratisation through community radio advocacy. King (2017:24-25, 30) explains that the internationalisation of community media activism gained traction as exemplified, for example, in the NWICO gathering as advocated by the MacBride Commission, as well as the rise and growth of various radio networks and associations (e.g. AMARC). These new affiliations sought to build the community radio sector, share knowledge and resources, and urge further global media policy reforms. According to King (2017) this phase also gave rise to alternative funding models for broadcasting and witnessed the first issuing of licences to community radio broadcasters in Australia in 1972 and Canada in 1976.

The ***Resurgence stage*** commenced during the 1990s, when globalisation and neoliberal economic and development agendas and models gained footing, shifting attention away from non-commercial, independent community radio broadcasters (King, 2017:26). While many gains were made globally concerning the proliferation of legislated community radio stations, many still faced new challenges in light of the refeudalisation of the community sphere by commercial interests and the renewed interest in developing strong national public broadcasting service models. Notwithstanding these shifts in media policy, King (2017:27) explains that more than fifty community radio mushroomed worldwide, forty countries developed community radio regulations, and eight countries witnessed the creation of community radio associations. South Africa was one of the nations in which the community radio landscape appeared in the early 1990s.

9.2.2 Community radio in South Africa

The institution and expansion of South African broadcasting, and specifically community radio, reflects a complexity of political, social and economic trials and transformations that the country underwent over many decades before, during, and after Apartheid (da Costa, 2012; Olorunnisola *et*

al., 2020; Teer-Tomaselli, 2004; Tella, 2022). These changes were directed by a vast array of local and international civil society actors engaged in an even broader range of societal spheres, contexts and activities. These actors included grassroots activists, liberation social movements, advocacy groups or non-governmental organisations that campaigned – through their varied agendas and strategies – to make a democratic, inclusive South African society a reality (Hadland & Thorne, 2004:28) (see 9.2.2.1 and 9.2.2.2). Some change efforts directly engaged with and effected changes in society's communications and media sectors by interrogating the ideologies, policies and practices that framed and governed these spheres. Others indirectly impacted these sectors' transformation by focusing on advocating for the attainment of the democratic vote and, by proxy, the achievement of basic human rights for all South Africans.

Apart from these efforts and their influences on local soil, on the global front, several key events, conferences, and other developments occurred that played a crucial role in shaping the South African society and its communications and media policy framework. The subsections below will describe some of the critical social and political forces that encouraged and shaped the rise of community radio in South Africa. These accounts, however, do not pretend to give comprehensive historical or conceptual descriptions. Fuller accounts are accessible in both foundational and contemporary local and international scholarship (see, *inter alia*, Bosch, 2017, 2003; Gunner *et al.*, 2011; Hadland & Thorne, 2004; Louw, 1993; Tacchi, 2002; Teer-Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1994; Wasserman, 2020, 2018; Wingston, 2020).

9.2.2.1 Paving the way for community radio: 1940s to the 1980s

Hadland and Thorne (2004:26-27) provide a helpful summary of important international events before the 1990s, which preceded progressive media policy formations in South Africa. Firstly, the Atlantic Charter of 1941, signed by the United States and the United Kingdom during World War II, was seen as a war declaration against the Nazis and their allies, but furthermore as a declaration of what sovereign rights and self-government in a free world should entail. This declaration provided confidence and encouragement to African leaders concerning their countries' quest for sovereign rule and autonomy. Therefore, in 1943, in response to the Atlantic Charter, the ANC adopted the so-called African Claims' Document, calling for full citizenship of all South Africans, including their rights

to “full participation in the educational, political and economic activities” of the state (Hadland & Thorne, 2004:26; Xuma, 1943). As part of this declaration, the ANC added a “Bill of Rights” that demanded other basic human rights for all while calling for the right of the freedom of the South African press (Xuma, 1943).

In the 1940s, two key international events set the tone for policy formations. In 1946, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 59(1) that declared that human freedoms must also involve the fundamental human right to include “freedom of information”. Three years later, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stated:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” (United Nations, 1948).

In this statement, the fundamental human rights to unencumbered, free thought, imparting and receiving information and ideas, and access to border media were articulated. Additionally, Article 18 of the UDHR had a significant bearing too, stating that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

Article 18, therefore, declared that people could share publicly or privately in an individual or collective belief system or religious life beyond freedom of thought. It was, however, especially Article 19 that became the “loadstone” not only for constitutional law across the globe but also for the development of media policy and laws in service of democratic rule (Hadland & Thorne, 2004:27). This influence was also felt in South Africa when the ANC launched the Freedom Charter on June 26, 1955 at a Congress of the People in Kliptown. The Freedom Charter stated the core principles of the South African Congress Alliance, which included the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats, and the Coloured People’s Congress (ANC, 1955). The Charter declared that concerning equal human rights, South African's rights to freedom

of expression, freedom of movement and association, in addition to their religious freedom and the right to education, should be acknowledged by law (ANC, 1955). This Charter also underscored the recognition of all South Africans' cultural and linguistic rights, placing additional importance on their entitlement to develop and nurture their own traditional, folk culture and customs.

The Freedom Charter added that:

“All cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands.” (ANC, 1955).

Hadland and Thorne (2004:27) explain, that although the media was not expressly mentioned in these types of declarations, the Charter did include the types of human rights that would set the tone for the South African constitution to come, as well as for media policy reforms needed that would guarantee communities' access to diversified media and equal media representation. Despite these positive events, and compared to the rest of the world, for almost thirty years, formal media policy formation, especially relating to community media, in South Africa remained stagnant (Hadland & Thorne, 2004:27).

Lekgoathi (2011:139-142) relates, that despite these official gaps, the ANC identified broadcasting media, specifically community radio as a vital, strategic tool in its liberation struggle against apartheid. The author recounts that Radio Freedom, the illegal, underground radio station of the ANC, came to symbolise the alternative, counter-hegemonic voice to the state-monopolised SABC with its launch in June of 1963. Broadcasting for over two decades from outside of South African borders, this radio station's operation coincided with the Global South's interest in community radio as described in the *Wildfire* stage and, to an extent, the *Solidarity* phase described in Section 9.2.1. Like political revolutionaries in Latin America, Asia and other African countries, the banned ANC identified community radio as a suitable vehicle for political communication and deliberating political issues from perspectives forbidden in the apartheid broadcasting model.

In 1983, UNESCO adopted a resolution on *“Communication in the service of humanity”*, which further called for expansion of communication rights, by:

- “(a) encouraging the free flow of information, at international as well as national levels;*
- (b) promoting the wider and better balanced dissemination of information, without any obstacle to the freedom of expression;*
- (c) developing all means of strengthening communication in the developing countries in order to increase their participation in the communication process; and*
- d) advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary.” (UNESCO, 1983:4).*

These resolutions made it more explicit internationally that the right to information, although necessary, was not sufficient. Instead, the importance of communications and communication rights was drawn within their importance to development and democracy in developing nation-states (UNESCO, 1983:1-2). In addition, these resolutions underscored the creation of a “new world information and communication order” wherein developing nations could participate on an equal footing with the developed countries in the Northern Hemisphere.

After almost three decades of stagnation, South Africans began to understand the international community’s philosophy on media policy and communication rights.

9.2.2.2 The transition to a South African democracy: an era of policy changes in the 1990s

Teer-Tomaselli (2004:7) writes that post-apartheid South Africa is synonymous with “transformation”; hence, connotatively, the revision and restructuring of institutions in the public and private sectors to make room for the political, social, and cultural changes introduced by the first democratic general elections of 1994. Universities, public enterprises, commercial companies, and government departments across the country had to review – and continue to transform – their mandates, purposes, structuring, and practices, all given adjusting to a diverse workforce and client base, and a new open and democratic South African society (Teer-Tomaselli, 2004:7.)

Similarly, mass media and telecommunications systems and practices in South Africa had to be reviewed and restructured during the transition period to a democracy. Previously, these institutions have been used to reproduce the ideological framework of apartheid, which segregated the population into distinct racial populations, each with their own independent culture, and living in particular geographic places (Barnett, 1999:277-280). The changes envisioned in the country's political, social and economic order meant that the full-scale restructuring of the media landscape was also on the cards. No less than 120 laws, which the apartheid government created to curtail media freedom, as well as limit the freedoms of expression and association, had to be either repealed or amended to create a media sector that would contribute to a new, open South African democracy (Hadland & Thorne, 2004:26).

This advocacy coincided with the *Resurgence* stage of community radio described in Section 9.2.1. Various role players in broader civil society began lobbying, campaigning and deliberating for a new configuration and role of the media in a new, democratic South Africa in the early and mid-1990s. Without the scope or intent to review all of these events, as comprehensively reviewed by Hadland and Thorne (2004:26), these can broadly be viewed as a series of events, campaigns, and conferences promoted by concerned key players on the international and national front. In their sights, the media became not only a site for transformation and democratisation but also became the envisioned platform through which the socio-economic development of previously marginalised South Africans could take place (also see Fokane, 2003:5, 7-12; Hadland & Thorne, 2004:28; Lekgoathi, 2011:139-153; Louw²³, 1993: 276-293; 306-328; 365-369; Wingston, 2007:3-58:). Hugely abridged here, these include, but are not limited to, the events and motivations indicated below:

- Unbanning of South African political liberation movements, such as the African National Congress, and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison on 11 February 1990;
- Setting up of the so-called Viljoen Task Group, officially the Task Group on Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa, in March of 1990 by the then National Party-led government;

²³ See P. Eric Louw's (1993) edited volume, *South African Media Policy: Debates of the 1990s*, for an extensive overview and commentary on the policy debates that took place between diverse role-players (i.e. activists, academics and political parties) during the 1990s concerning the shape and role of media in South Africa. The volume also contains several "original and hard-to-get resources" containing resolutions made during conferences such as the Jabulani Freedom of the Airwaves (1991) and the Free, Fair and Open South African Media in the Transition to Democracy (1992).

- Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves Conference, which took place in 1991 in The Netherlands, and the University of Bophuthatswana media policy workshop one month later, are considered by many as some of the most significant conferences that drove media reforms in South Africa;
- The emergence in 1992 of several social movements, the Campaign for Open Media (COM), encouraging transparency, freedom of expression and universal and equitable access to broadcasting services for all South Africans and the Campaign for Independent Broadcasting (CIB), representative of more than 30 organisations, advocating for an independent broadcasting system, free from state optical interference;
- Creation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority of South Africa in 1993, which established an impartial broadcasting regulator;
- The publishing of the IBA's "Triple Inquiry Report" in 1995, which concluded that the SABC had to be separated from state interests to become a public national broadcaster in service of all South Africans. This report also addressed media ownership structures and concerns, and also recommended that local content quotas should be implemented in the broadcasting sector. In short, the report called for the large-scale transformation of the SABC, which was officially created in 1936 from the former state monopolised and apartheid mouthpiece to a truly public broadcaster in service of democracy;
- The promulgation of the South African Broadcasting Act of 1995 that established the three-tiered broadcasting system; and the
- Establishment of the Media Development and Diversity Agency in 2002 that was tasked with promoting media diversity in South Africa, while also being an enabler for the development of a more, diverse media landscape, with a special focus on small, entrepreneurial organisations.

During the 1990s, community media in the form of alternative media, primarily in printed media forms, also set in motion the democratisation of South Africa while portending a diverse media landscape, including a diversified broadcasting system not limited to commercial or public models (Bosch 2003, Louw, 1993; Wingston, 2020). Notably, the Viljoen Task Group was assigned to evaluate existing broadcasting legislation to formulate new, responsive legislation for the modern organisation and regulation of broadcasting. Even though some lauded the Task Group as the first coherent attempt at broadcasting policy formation in South Africa, it was rightly critiqued for its lack of representation concerning the broader South African civil society and the subsequent uni-lateral governmental discussions that resulted from this misrepresentation (Fokane, 2003:5-5). Likewise, the Jabulani! conference highlighted the role of radio in a changing South Africa, the matter of

educational broadcasting, and the need for a three-tiered South African broadcasting system. During the conference, community broadcasting was defined as:

“Community or participatory broadcasting [as] is initiated and controlled by members of community of interests, or a geographical community, to express their concerns, needs and aspirations without outside interference, subject to the regulation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority.” (Louw, 1993:307).

The conference bemoaned the fact that community broadcasting had previously not existed in South Africa, and called for the creation of such a sector as independent from both the commercial and public broadcasting sectors (Louw, 1993:308). As evident from the conference's definition of community broadcasting, this sector had to be owned and managed by community members themselves, who should broadcast content as applicable to their particular community needs. The Jabulani! Conference additionally envisioned that this sector would create awareness among communities of the particular place and role of community media in their lives relating to skills development and training. Special emphasis was placed on the facilitative role that community media could play in “educational broadcasting” and the broader “democratic education process”. The former was defined as involving “the formal sphere, covering primary, secondary and tertiary curricula, as well as the non-formal spheres”, which included basic adult education and further educational training, community colleges, literacy training, as well as worker education (Louw, 1993:311).

In October of 1991, the Patriotic Front conference took place in Durban, while the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity held a seminar one month later, at which the ANC's draft Media Charter circulated (Hadland & Thorne, 2004:28). Louw (1993:230-31) describes the ANC's seminar as a turning point in its approach to media in South Africa, as the seminar turned its sights not only on the transformation of the SABC, but also to media policy as including broadcasting and telecommunications in South Africa overall. He describes the ANC Media Charter as deliberately unrealistic, given its idealistic and perspective terms that lacked clarification on actionable transformation strategies. The Media Charter, divided into six parts, however, declared through various clauses its stances toward communication and access to information rights for all South

Africans, for example, Clause 2 states: “Measures shall be taken to ensure that all communication have access to the technical means for the receipt and dissemination of information, including electricity, telecommunications and other facilities” (ANC, 1993). Clause 3 declares that “all communities shall have access to the skills required to receive and disseminate information, including the skills of reading and writing” (ANC, 1993).

Considering all of the above forces, events, and role-players, it becomes clear that the 1990s gave rise to a new South African broadcasting environment, which, with the official 1994 transition to democracy meant that the country had to create a new public sphere to accommodate all citizens who had previously been excluded and prohibited from participating in open, public and democratic debate and opinion-forming (see section 4.5.2 on the Habermasian public sphere). Likewise, as framed in a rhizomatic theory of community media (see 8.4.4), the South African broadcasting sector advanced in a decentralised and diverse manner as driven by miscellaneous civil society actors and in opposition to *and* collaboration with government role-players.

Just like the rhizome that responsively develops and adjusts to disruptions in the larger network, the above discussions show that the local broadcasting sector underwent various phases of development as represented by diverse interests, needs and operational codes. As the rhizomatic theory suggests, community radio in South Africa resisted top-down, hierarchical definitions of the sector by including those nonconformist and grassroots voices of civil society that were silenced under the apartheid regime. This is what Mano (2011:107) describes as the battles emanating from below, and from within communities as driven for the poor by the poor. The rhizomatic development of community radio in the 1990s was characteristic of the plethora of clashing ideological debates that played out through the above-described series of events, conferences and social movements.

In terms of the broadcasting landscape, this meant that former voiceless (i.e. the majority of black South Africans) who were marginalised, oppressed and impoverished under the apartheid system had to be given voice and access to participatory, mediated communicative platforms, space and mechanisms (Krüger, 2011:63-64). What remains to be seen is whether the legalisation framework for community broadcasting aligns with the participatory communication framework presented in

Chapter 7 and the rhizomatic interpretation of community media in the preceding chapter (see 8.4.4).

9.3 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY RADIO IN SOUTH AFRICA

The discussions below will analyse five critical legislative acts and their fundamental assumptions about community broadcasting. These outlines will also determine what values are attributed to community radio broadcasting servers in South Africa.

9.3.1 The Independent Broadcasting Act

The **Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA)** Act 153 of 1993 was the first legal act to establish an independent broadcasting regulator in South Africa. It came into effect on 30 March 1994. While this act was drawn up during the CODESA conference, its initial conceptualisation can be traced back to the contentious Viljoen Task Report (Hadland & Thorne, 2004; Fokane, 2003). The act determined that the authority was primarily tasked with three overarching responsibilities: a) formulating broadcasting policy, b) issuing three different types of broadcasting licenses (i.e. public, commercial, and community), and c) regulating and monitoring broadcasting activities in the country impartially and independently (Olorunnisola (2002:130). This sharply juxtaposed with the SABC's operation as an apartheid government broadcaster instead of operating as a public state broadcaster in service of the interests of all South Africans. The IBA was mandated to neither let political nor commercial interests interfere with its regulatory responsibilities. The act also established a broadcasting monitoring and complaints commission and a code of conduct for broadcasters as further measures to ensure that broadcasters and their services could be held accountable to the listening public and their concerns.

With the promulgation of the act, the concept of "community" was introduced to the South African broadcasting framework as including a geographically based community or as understood "as any group of persons of the sector of the public having a specific, ascertainable common interest" (IBA Act 153 of 1993). The regulatory body's independence was later entrenched when the Constitution

of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 was enacted in February of the following year. Chapter 9, Section 192 of the Constitution provides for “an independent authority to regulate broadcasting in the public interest, and to ensure fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing South African society”. The IBA Act of 1993 was amended in 1996, which paved the way for establishing the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa in 2000, which will be discussed later in this section. Crucially, the IBA Act of 1993 declared that community broadcasters are mandated to provide programming reflective of the needs of the community in which it operates. Bosch (2017:52-53) reports that in early 1995, the IBA started issuing temporary 12-month licences, and by the end of that same year, more than eighty community radio stations were licenced. The regulator also ensured that these temporary license applicants had to demonstrate community by way of providing documents (e.g. minutes of meetings of voluntary comment associations, community support signature list, etc.) from the community in support of the applicant. Applicants could alternatively conduct community surveys to assess the needs and interests of the community concerning local broadcasting services. This could then be submitted as evidence that the community needs the applicant’s services.

During this period, many radio stations that were illegally operating were finally legally licensed by the IBA. For example, in Cape Town, Radio Zibonele in Khayelitsha and Bush Radio in Salt River both operated illegally as “pirate” radio stations as a counter-voices to the Apartheid system (Bosch, 2003; Gumucio, 2001). Radio Zibonele, formed in 1993, was not only an alternative communication platform for marginalised communities but functioned to enhance educational, specific health education, campaigns and activities in its community through accessible and participatory communication programming and content creation. Likewise, Bosch (2003) describes how Bush Radio serves as a rhizomatic resistance communicative voice against the state and its oppressive broadcasting systems. She recounts how this station, before it was formally recognised, experienced several challenges that alternative media typically face in oppressive regimes. Today, both states still serve as critical voices and communicate social change agents in their respective communities.

Duncan (2001:166) explains that the establishment of the IBA, and the rise and “wildfire” growth of community radio in the early 1990s clearly sought to democratise the media landscape and diversify

the sector that was previously dominated by white communities and their interest. The IBA Act of 1993 expressly stipulated that community members must participate in a community radio station's programming selection and provision processes. Emphasis was placed on communities from previously disadvantaged segments of society, including "black people, women and people with disabilities". It furthermore mandated that the station's funding models could include "donations, grants, sponsorships or advertising or membership fees" or any combination of these models (IBA Act of 1993). Section 53 of this act provided crucial requirements concerning local content. It describes how broadcasters must promote the cultural life of South Africa by including stories, songs by local musical artists, and other creative works.

9.3.2 The Broadcasting Act

The **South African Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999** was the second crucial piece of legislation concerning community broadcasting that needs current attention. This act repealed both the IBA Act of 1993 and the Broadcasting Act 73 of 1976 to establish a new broadcasting act for South Africa. The new act described community broadcasters as community-owned, controlled, and operated in service of the needs and particular interests of the communities in which they function. This act was the first post-1994 legislation to recognise the three-tiered broadcasting system and, as Tyali (2017:184-185) contends, represents the first policy document in South Africa that truly speaks to the Africanising of broadcasting, particularly community broadcasting. This is evident, for instance, in its preamble that affirms that all three broadcasting systems in South Africa should, via its programming, promote the country's "identity, universal access, equality, unity and diversity". The preamble also apprehends that the ownership and control of South African broadcasting services must represent a plurality of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The preamble clarifies that the broadcasting systems should promote all cultures, religions and official languages and that all South Africans must find expression of a diversity of "opinions, ideas, beliefs and artistic creativity" and talent through radio programming broadcasting. The preamble concludes by underscoring that the broadcasting system should align with the democratic values entrenched in the South African Constitution.

Chapter 1, Section 2, “Object of the Act,” emphasises that historically disadvantaged groups in society should own and control the country’s broadcasting services. This is accentuated in Chapter 5(1) and 6 of the Broadcasting Act of 1999, which regards broadcasting in the community sector. Section 32(3) demands that community broadcast services should establish a management board as democratically elected by and “geographically” coming from within the community in which it operates. This section thus reaffirms the IBA Act’s provision that community broadcasters are community-owned and controlled. Section 32(4)(a-d) then stipulates several additional provisions. Firstly, a plurality of news, perspectives and content must be provided to all South Africans. This section further stresses that programming services should “reflect the needs of the people in the community, which must include cultural, religious, language and demographic needs” that other broadcasting services (i.e. commercial and state media) do not provide. It underscores that the services provided should be of informational, entertainment and educational value to the community. This section declares that community broadcasters must specifically focus on programming that focuses on “grassroots community issues, including, but not limited to, developmental issues, health care, basic information and general education, environmental affairs, local and international, and the reflection of local culture”, in addition to promoting the South African democratic culture, a sense of shared purpose, and generally “improve quality of life” of its citizens. Section 32(5) speaks to the funding models of community broadcasting, clarifying that all surplus funding that community broadcasters generate must be reinvested in the community and its members, which the regulator could audit.

9.3.3 The Independent Communications Authority Act

In 2000, the **Independent Communications Authority Act 13 of South Africa** dissolved the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA). In its place, the new regulator, now known as ICASA, emerged. Like its predecessor, the ICASA Act aimed to fairly regulate the broadcasting system in service of the South African public and its diverse interests (ICASA, 2000). Like its preceding acts, Section 192 of the Constitution ensures that ICASA operates as an independent media broadcasting and telecommunications body. This section of the Constitution states that an independent regulator

must oversee that broadcasting in South Africa covers public interests and that it encourages the representation of a diversity of views fairly. Like the Broadcasting Act the ICASA Act affirms that broadcasters in South Africa must look after the public interest fairly and as representative of diversity. Section 15 of the ICASA Act clarifies that funding to the regulator is secured through Parliament.

The ICASA Act indicates that community radio broadcasting can include special interest groups such as student communities, religious groups, and communities in South African hospitals or prisons. As its preceding act, this act places high value on the social responsibility and upliftment role of community radio broadcasting.

9.3.4 The Electronic Communications Act of 2005

In 2005, Chapter 9, Section 50 of the **Electronic Communications Act 36** affirmed the community broadcasting descriptions stated in the ICASA and Broadcasting Acts. This section states that these broadcasters should prioritise local content. This act also expanded on the preceding one by stating that, collectively seen, broadcasting services in the country should provide for regular news services, actuality programmes, and programmes that include political issues and concerns, and on matters of concern global, national, regional and local interest. Furthermore, in its Chapter 2 – Licencing Framework, the act specifies that ICASA must grant licences to broadcasters that promote the empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups, which should also include the youth. Chapter 14 of the act also sets more explicit requirements for community licensees and further states that broadcasting services should be universally available and accessible for underserved rural communities (ECA, 2005). Such provisions reinforced the importance of serving the interests of communities on a local level. As evident in its name, the act set a framework for broadcasters to facilitate the possible transition from an analogue environment into a digital one.

Furthermore, the ECA stresses that community broadcasters must adhere to particular content regulation requirements as regulated by ICASA. In Chapter 9's Section 52, for example, the ECA states that community broadcasters are not allowed to be associated with sort of movement or party organisation that has political nature.

Section 53 of Chapter 9 requires that all broadcasters keep a record of their programming for a period of 60 days from the first broadcast and, thereafter, to have a transcript or a script of the programme. Section 54 sets a code of conduct for broadcasters. Community broadcasters are compelled to either follow this code or a code of conduct set out by a self-regulatory body such as the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). Section 55 stipulates advertising codes that the broadcasting sector must adhere to, and Section 61 deals specifically with local content quotas. This section sets minimum quotas, for example, for South African music that must be broadcast on community radio. The local programming content quotas relate to national sports events, political broadcasts and election requirements and restrictions. For example, Section 58 states that while no community broadcaster must broadcast political advertising if it selects to do so, it must allow equal airtime to all political parties. Section 59 determines that broadcasters must give all political parties the same treatment during an election period and that there must be ample room and opportunities for discussing conflicting views.

9.3.5 The MDDA Act of 2002

Lastly, the **Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) Act 14 of 2002** created the government agency tasked with promoting the development and diversity of media that also serves the larger South African discourse “and which reflects the needs and aspirations of all” citizens. Its preamble declares that the “exclusion and marginalisation of disadvantaged communities and persons” from accessing media and the larger media sector should be rectified by the agency (MDDA, 2002). Furthermore, community media is defined by the MDDA Act in the same vein as the already discussed broadcasting legislation: it is “any media project” that is community-owned and managed. It also stipulates that where any financial profit was gained, it must be reinvested in the community media project. This community must have identifiable, shared interests or a shared specific geographic location. The agency focuses on small commercial and community media development and diversity.

As a statutory body, the MDDA's Section 3 states its objectives. It firstly asserts that its primary purpose is the development of a diversity of South African media grounded in the constitutional right to freedom of expression. This refers to both the media's right to impart and receive information or ideas. Like the Broadcasting Act of 1999, it emphasises that previously neglected linguistics communities and cultural groups must have access, ownership, and control of community media. The MDDA (2002) is also mandated to "encourage the development of human resources and training, and capacity building, within the media industry, especially amongst historically disadvantaged groups".

It obtains most of its funding from voluntary contributions by broadcasters, the national budget as approved by Parliament, and other sources within the industry with which it financially contributes, for example, to community broadcasters that need to procure infrastructure or cover daily operations. The MDDA also provides capacity-building and training opportunities for community broadcasters. It must promote the "challenging of resources" to community broadcasters, raise public awareness about the importance of media diversity, and endorse projects that encourage "literacy and culture of reading" in South Africa. Part of its other tasks include researching the country's media development and diversity and liaising with, for example, ICASA.

This study has identified several overarching themes from the above descriptions emerging from all five legislative acts. These themes are briefly indicated below, and their main ideas are concisely summarised (see Table 9-1).

9.4 SUMMARY REMARKS

The primary purpose of this chapter was to examine key broadcasting legislation in South Africa to conceptualise community radio. Before these examinations started, the history of community radio in the Global South (see 9.2.1) and after that, in South Africa was described (see 9.2.2). Both sections demonstrated that community radio usually has deep political roots and has always been used by individuals and groups who share the social, cultural, and political ideals of freedom from oppression or marginalisation and positive social change.

Table 9-1 South African broadcasting legislation: thematic categories

Overarching themes	Key ideas
Democratic values	Community broadcasters must align their services with South African democratic values, e.g. unity, equality, freedom of expression etc.
Public interest	Broadcasters must serve the public interest on a community level.
Community ownership and control	Community radio stations are owned, controlled, and operated by the community and for the community.
Diversity	Community broadcasters must ensure that their services reflect a diversity of groups (i.e. linguistic, cultural, etc.), interests and content.
Inclusion and representation of marginalised groups	Previously marginalised groups must be included in community broadcasting services.
Community participation in local content	Community members must be able to participate in selecting and providing programming content.
Local content	- Local content in programming is of primary concern in all the acts. - Community members must participate in the selection and provision of such programming.
Linguistic and cultural promotion	Given the value placed on including diverse social actors and groups in community broadcasting, all the acts value the promotion of language and cultural groups via their services.
Community development	Programming must not only entertain or inform community members but must educate and empower them.
Non-profit funding models to the benefit of community	Community broadcasters have various funding model options, but all profit must benefit the community.
Compliance to regulation	All the acts require that community broadcasters be held accountable via compliance mechanisms.
Community and media sector development	The regulatory environment mandates community radio stations to encourage community development, but it also values the internal capacity building of broadcasters and the development of the South African community broadcasting landscape.

Thereafter, five key pieces of legislation, namely the IBA Act of 1993, the Broadcasting Act of 1999, the ICASA Act of 2005, and the MDDA Act of 2002, were examined to determine what the legal framework concerning community broadcasting in South Africa entails (see all the sections from 9.3.1 to 9.3.5). From these examinations, it was concluded that the legislation covers twelve primary principles, values, and assumptions about the role of community radio in South Africa. These themes and their main ideas were summarised in Table 9-1. The legal framework clearly requires that community radio broadcasters, as community-owned and controlled, serve their listenerships and the broader community in which they operate. Furthermore, a legal environment is established that accentuates diversity, inclusivity, and the primacy of local content in community radio programming. Considering the delivery of local programming, community radio stations are directed by law to encourage community members themselves to decide on and generate content for broadcast, which underscores their active participation in the operation of stations. The legal framework also demands that community radio stations represent different social and cultural identities, emphasising additional emphasis on including groups previously excluded from the broadcasting landscape. Through several provisions, community broadcasting law encourages community radio development and diversification in South Africa, further strengthening media access and participation.

Next, Chapter 10, as Part IV, will present the final theoretical-conceptual framework of South African community radio as participatory media.

PREFACE PART IV

Chapter 10 is the last major part of this thesis. It presents the final theoretical-conceptual framework of South African community radio as participatory media. The chapter answers the main research question (see 1.3.1) by answering the three specific research questions (see 1.3.2.1-1.3.2.3) that were indicated in Chapter 1.

The first theoretical question that will be answered relates to how participatory communication is conceptualised in the participatory paradigm, while the second refers to how community radio is conceptualised according to community media studies, specifically as defined by the rhizomatic approach in the multi-theoretical framework. The third question that is answered in Chapter 10 relates to how community radio is conceptualised according to applicable South African broadcasting legislation.

Following these sections, the last chapter presents this thesis's final analysis of community radio broadcasting legislation compared with its frameworks about participatory communication and rhizomatic community media. These comparative analyses then contribute to this study's final theoretical-conceptual framework of community radio in South Africa as a participatory based on five normative assumptions.

CHAPTER 10: A THEORETICAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY RADIO AS PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

“Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end: then stop.”

— Carroll (1967).

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In Part I’s Chapter 1, it was stated that community radio occupies a unique place and role within the media landscape (see 1.1.1). Unlike its commercial and public broadcasting counterparts, it operates as decentralised, community-owned and governed media, operating without profit motives. Chapter 1 described community radio as primarily being concerned with serving the community in which it is rooted (also see 8.4.1). Its hyperlocal nature, focus, and operations differentiate it from public broadcasters that serve the public’s interest on a national scale. Hence, it is uniquely accessible to local social actors who would otherwise not find representation or inclusion in other media systems and rituals.

Proponents of community radio claim that its community embeddedness affords it a distinct participatory nature that sets it further apart from traditional media. Participatory communication scholars – which includes the positionality of the current research – and community media theorists argue that community radio’s local embeddedness offers communicative opportunities to social actors so that they can actively and meaningfully participate in their own development and positive social change (see 1.1.1). This study’s basic premise was presented in Chapter 1, namely, community radio espouses a participatory ethos and practice that permits once passive, disengaged media “audiences” to actively select, create, and broadcast programming and content that are suitable to a community’s needs. Community radio’s unique participatory positionality and functionality render it an ideal development communication platform to include and address a community’s concerns, thereby ultimately empowering the community’s members and causing positive social change.

In the light of this premise, the introductory chapter situated community radio theoretically within the participatory paradigm. With this theoretical positioning, this study underscored the status of

development communication and the role of community radio in a developing country such as South Africa. The most foundational assumptions of this paradigm were identified as participation, dialogue, cultural diversity and empowerment (see 1.1.7). Nevertheless, as articulated in the research problem statement (see 1.2), the existing body of theory regarding this paradigm remains under-theorised *and* theoretically ambiguous. It lacks a unified interpretation of how to conceptualise and enact participation and participatory communication for empowerment in a multiplicity of circumstances. Habitually, scholars, practitioners and policymakers have divergent readings of participation and its communicative aspects depending on their unique and diverse development communication applications, purposes and settings.

Given these disparities, a coherent framework remains elusive and its foundational principles are often not examined critically, as a consequence of which they are also not enacted satisfactorily. Hence, this study identified the research that was needed to theorise the participatory paradigm more coherently by examining the available, relevant literature on the paradigm. The general research question reads: *What should a framework for a South African community radio station, as participatory media, consist of?* (see 1.3.1).

This final chapter answers this general research question by proposing a theoretical-conceptual framework for community radio in South Africa as participatory media. This is achieved by linking the four major parts of this study conceptually into a synthesised framework, as was proposed in the preamble of this thesis. Parts I to IV are each associated with three specific research aims that were presented in Section 1.3.2.

Chapter 1 therefore indicated that the general research question will be answered through an integrative, semi-systematic literature review (see 1.7.1.1). This research strategy involved examining the different meanings and applications of the participatory paradigm's foundational assumptions in Part II of the study. Chapter 1 furthermore positioned community radio within community media studies. Specifically, the four-pronged multi-theoretical community media framework of Carpentier *et al.* (2003, 2001), specifically embodied in the fourth approach, which was the rhizomatic optic (see 8.4.4). This approach was identified as an instructive means to conceptualise community radio in South Africa because it takes a far more nuanced view of

community radio than a mono-theoretical approach would. The assumption was made that a rhizomatic lens would add a conceptual-theoretical layer to this study's theorisation of community radio, specifically read as decentralised participatory media in service of community concerns.

As part of the research design presented in Chapter 1, it was stated that a robust theorisation of the participatory paradigm must be accompanied by a metatheoretical and paradigmatic meta-analysis (see 1.7.2). These theorisations commenced in Part II of this thesis and included seven chapters in total. Four of these dealt with the selected foundational assumptions of the participatory paradigm, which then culminated in a theoretical synthesis in Chapter 7.

Before the participatory paradigm was examined theoretically in Chapters 3 to 6, the paradigm first had to be contextualised within the larger field of development communication in both a historical and theoretical setting. These discussions were thus conducted in Chapter 2. The resultant analyses described how the paradigm emerged as a critical response to the failures of previous development communication approaches. Additionally, these discussions clarified that the participatory paradigm's theoretical diffuseness is partly due to how much further it has progressed compared to the paradigms that predated it. As the paradigm responded to the limitations of its antecedents, its own conceptual and theoretical complexity increased, in turn making the conceptualisation of a unified framework more challenging.

The standard binary approaches to development, namely the dominant paradigm or modernisation approach (see 2.4.1) and the dependency approach (see 2.4.2), were therefore discussed critically in Chapter 2. The former followed hierarchical, top-down development communication strategies and external development ideas, values, systems and practices that were imposed on less developed communities and countries. In a critical response, the dependency theorists asserted that underdevelopment and development are mutually constituted results of the centre-peripheral binary. In contrast to this binary, dependency theory advanced ideas and practices about less developed communities and countries being independent of dominant, developed countries. Still, it neglected to provide sufficient strategies to effect meaningful development in peripheral countries. Section 2.5 briefly discussed the multiplicity framework, which evolved in response to the former binary approaches. This framework introduced a human-centred orientation towards development

communication ideas and practices that encourages the beneficiaries of development initiatives to participate meaningfully in their development. This framework set the foundation for conceptual and practical applications of the participatory paradigm, which gained traction from the 1980s onwards (see 2.6).

10.2 PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION: A THEORETICAL AND METATHEORETICAL EXPLORATION

Chapters 3 to 6 theorised and metatheorised the participatory paradigm's assumptions to answer this study's first specific research question: *How is participatory communication conceptualised according to the literature on the participatory paradigm?* (see 1.3.2.1). The findings of these four chapters were then re-examined in Chapter 7. The goal of Chapter 7 was to present this study's new synthesised metatheoretical framework of participatory communication by incorporating this study's theorisations and metatheorisations of participation, dialogue, culture and empowerment into a unified frame. This framework was summarised in Table 7-1 and described participatory communication according to the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that underpin it.

Chapter 7 began by re-examining Chapter 3's theoretical analysis of participation (see 7.1.1). It described this assumption as being grounded in ten different theoretical frames. The first eight of these theoretical frames include *opportunity*, *access*, *engagement*, *inclusivity*, *agency*, *equality*, *levels or stages*, and *dialogic communication*. Additionally, it was indicated that participation has an *empowerment focus* and *transformative practice* that are also included among the theoretical frames (see 7.1.1 for the full discussions of each frame). Likewise, Chapter 4's interrogation of the participatory paradigm's assumption of "dialogue" culminated in a synthesised perspective of dialogue (see 7.1.2). Dialogue was defined as comprising six foundational frames that describe it as a) *a form of consciousness-raising pedagogy*, b) *a form of praxis*, c) *dialectical*, d) *intersubjective*, e) *based on specific human values*, and f) *a collaborative knowledge-creation and empowering practice*.

After Chapter 5 interrogated the notion of culture, Chapter 7 concluded that it is *embedded practice*, as *affirmed via dialogic praxis*. It also determined that culture is *a revolutionary practice* and that it

facilitates empowerment (see 7.1.3). Chapter 6's examinations of the concept empowerment were then reviewed. It was concluded that empowerment is a form of *critical consciousness* and that it involves *agency and autonomy*. Furthermore, empowerment entails *material and immaterial empowerment* and means that *power redistribution and intersubjective empowerment* must occur during participatory communication. Furthermore, empowerment is *transformative* and aimed at *sustainability* (see 7.1.4).

A theoretical guiding statement was then formulated for each of these examinations. Concerning the first examined assumption, it was concluded that:

- *Participation is the integral and meaningful notion and practice of dialogic participatory communication between a diversity of development social actors, which takes place during the entire lifecycle of a development or social change initiative. Authentic participation must involve the unfettered, active engagement of primarily local and formerly excluded social actors, with the specific aim of empowering them (see 7.1.1);*
- *Dialogue in participatory communication is a form of praxis that involves the dialectical and intersubjective exchange of knowledge, ideas and experiences between all social actors in the development setting. Dialogue is primarily important for previously marginalised individuals and communities since it allows them to share their perspectives and contribute to social transformation, underpinned by human values and represented in a dialogic pedagogy and through democratic participation. Ultimately, the process and the goal of dialogue are to lead to social transformation and empower development beneficiaries (see 7.1.2);*
- *Culture in participatory communication is an embedded social practice that is enacted and reinforced through dialogic praxis. Culture is further a revolutionary practice implying that participatory communication must privilege local interpretations, practices, values, beliefs and other immaterial and material cultural resources to encourage social change and development. This revolutionary action therefore challenges and replaces dominant cultural views and strategies in a development setting with interpretations that originate from within a local community and are representative of a plurality of views and solutions. The centrality of culture in participatory communication for social change underscores its active role as a site and process of empowerment of local community members (see 7.1.3);*

- *Brought about through participatory communication, empowerment enables individuals and groups to become critically aware of their subjective, objective and intersubjective development contexts and lived realities. After consciousness-raising, they use their agency to take ownership of their lives and make autonomous decisions about their particular development aspirations. This, however, requires the redistribution of power and resources within a development communication setting. Critical awareness further means that social actors must cognise constraints that were imposed externally and internally. These constraints must be challenged through human actions that facilitate further empowerment. From an empowerment view, development can transpire in the material and immaterial sense. It is not a singular or occasional process nor is it a final outcome. It occurs continually through iterations of critical awareness, action and reinterpretation. Empowerment in development communication facilitates human actions that encourage transformation and positive social change for individuals and the community.*

Following these new theoretical descriptions, Chapter 7 formulated this study's new metatheory of participatory communication (see Table 7-1).

An **ontology of participatory communication** describes it as *entailing the development of participants' lived experiences, constructed through social relations among individuals and collectives and contextually bound to a multiplicity of cultural contexts and viewpoints. Reality is thus always emergent and never predetermined or fixed since all development participants – but especially the marginalised – are capable of continually and intersubjectively creating and re-creating their development realities through their own human agency in participatory processes. This human agency implies that development participants can interrogate social structures, relations and practices and therefore actively recreate social realities. Accordingly, an ontology of participatory communication proposes that participation is always a process – never simply a means – of becoming more fully human. Ultimately, this process involves empowering development participants to realise individual, collective and structural social transformation and change.*

The **epistemology of participatory communication for social change** entails that *traditional notions of development knowledge and solutions can be interrogated and replaced with a multiplicity of*

knowledge beliefs and practices that are based on local or indigenous knowledge systems. Development knowledge and strategies are co-created through inclusive, critical dialogic reflection and action. This means that participatory communication is an intersubjective and continuous, dynamic process of problem-posing, learning and solution-seeking dialogue between a plurality of social actors. Through such a reflexive epistemological view, participatory communication is both the process and the outcome of the empowerment of development actors to conceptualise and enact social change – especially on the local level – in ways that are culturally relevant to their development and social realities.

This chapter concluded that **methodologically, participatory communication** encourages inclusive, adaptive, and ethical techniques to foster real discourse and knowledge co-creation among community members. Participatory action research and community mapping are promoted to empower disadvantaged voices. Open, culturally aware dialogue is key in enacting social change, as well as underscoring flexibility, adapting to community situations, and carefully considering the resources and knowledge already available in a community. Therefore, participatory communication also examines power dynamics. Iterative learning and assessment enable feedback and modifications, while capacity building gives communities active involvement capabilities. Seen from a methodological point of view, participatory communication should empower development actors through interdisciplinary understanding and the use of strategies. Respecting community knowledge and values is a crucial aspect of inclusive and transformational communication techniques in any participatory communication setting.

With this synthesised metatheory of participatory communication, a specific research question 1.3.2.1 was answered. It addresses the theoretical and conceptual diffuseness of the participatory paradigm by presenting a unified framework of participatory communication and its foundational assumptions. This more cohesive frame then forms the foundation for examining community radio as participatory media. To operationalise this framework, it was refined conceptually to include six higher-order thematic categories, each with associated constructs that are relevant to the metatheory of participatory communication (see Table 10-1). This facilitated a systematic analysis of the relevant legislation in Section 10.5.1. These examinations determine if community broadcasting

legislation aligns with or diverges from this study's metatheory of participatory communication.

Table 10-1 Participatory communication: a conceptual framework for South African broadcasting legalisation

A. Principle	
1.	Multiplicity of Emergent Social-Cultural Realities within Contexts <u>Constructs:</u> a. Multiplicity b. Local identities c. Local lived experiences d. Contexts e. Fluidity f. Interaction g. Collectivity
2.	Human Agency for Transformation <u>Constructs:</u> a. Individual capacity b. Collective capacity c. Intersubjective praxis d. Subjective transformation e. Structural transformation f. Social transformative action
3.	Access & Inclusivity for Participation <u>Constructs:</u> a. Equitable access to communication opportunity b. Equitable access to resources c. Active engagement d. Representation e. Diversity f. Meaningful participation g. Participatory feedback h. Sustained engagement i. Empowered participation
4.	Knowledge Creation via Intersubjective Dialogic praxis <u>Constructs:</u> a. Intersubjective & critical dialogical reflection b. Intersubjective & critical dialogical action c. Diversity of knowledge d. Reflexive understanding e. Shared understanding f. Co-created social knowledge g. Knowledge as based on human-centred values h. Contextually relevant & empowered knowledge i. Dynamic & evolving knowledge

Table 10-1 cont

A. Principle	
5	Local Knowledge & Resource Utilisation <u>Constructs:</u> a. Local, community-based knowledge b. Indigenous knowledge c. Experimental knowledge d. External, formal knowledge e. Access to local resources f. Access to internal & external resources g. Application of local knowledge
6	Empowerment of Local Communities <u>Constructs:</u> a. Local agency b. Self-determination c. Local capacity-building d. Inclusion of diversity of & marginalised local identities e. Access to internal & resources f. Access to opportunities g. Participatory management by local communities h. Subjective & collective empowerment i. Sustained empowerment of local identities & communities

10.3 A RHIZOMATIC FRAMEWORK OF COMMUNITY RADIO

This section answers the second specific research question: *How is community radio conceptualised according to the literature on community media as relevant to community radio in a South African context?* (see 1.3.2.2).

This question was explored in Chapter 8. The chapter started with a critical reflection on the definitional and legitimacy struggles that community media studies faced before the field gained an academic footing (see 8.2). This contextualisation was done to prefigure community radio's unique place and value as an alternative to commercial and public service media, both in academia and real-world applications. These contextual discussions therefore already identified key themes and issues that a theoretical framework of community radio should encompass. For this reason, Section 8.2 discussed notions such as access to media, the idea of "community" in community media, media democratisation, power dynamics, media representation, participation in media, media inclusivity,

media multiplicity and empowerment.

This section was then followed by an outline of why a multi-theoretical framework of community media is necessary to define community radio instead of any of the mono-optic theories that are available (see 8.4). More specifically, it asserted that community radio should be theorised from a multi-theoretical framework as proposed in a four-pronged approach by Carpentier *et al.* (2003, 2001) (see 8.4). The first approach in this framework explained that community media have the unique focus and value of serving communities (see 8.4.1) for the very reason that they are embedded in a community and allow direct access to media structures and practices on a grassroots level. Approach I emphasised that a community can symbolically construct its communal identity and interests. Based on this identity and these interests, they can then access and participate meaningfully in managing their own community media and the culturally relevant content that it generates and distributes. Community media thus distribute power to the community and facilitates a community's empowerment through the self-management of media.

Approach II (see 8.4.2) discussed the alternative characteristics of community media, which were described according to ten defining features (see Table 8-2). To recap, community media reject commercial motives and instead serves the local cultural, social, and other content needs of communities that are not served by mainstream media. Community must instead function independently from commercial imperatives. Its independent nature suggests that it is not regulated in the same manner as commercial or public media services. Its alternative nature is embodied in its horizontal organisation, which allows for power distribution and non-hierarchical media practices. Alternativism additionally means that community media rely on volunteers from the community to own and manage it. This then means community media have a non-professional nature. The discussion that focused on Approach II similarly demonstrated that a community determines and produces the media content they require and that the inclusion especially of marginalised voices (e.g., women, young people, people with disabilities, people in rural areas, etc.) in these processes is crucial. Alternativism underscores diversity and a multiplicity of views and beliefs that are not represented in mainstream media and are often purposefully silenced by such media. In this approach, community media can take on many forms. Among these are formats not traditionally

found in mainstream media such as folk media, theatre, storytelling, zones, social movements and community radio.

Approach III, which focuses on community media as civil society, was then discussed in Section 8.4.3. The outline of this approach indicated that community media hold a unique place between private and public spheres, including mediated spheres such as commercial and public media. This view aligned with discussions about the Habermasian public sphere (see 4.5.1), in which communicative action (instead of strategic action) and dialogue occur between community members. As civil society, community media allow individuals and communities on the grassroots level to dialogue about matters that concern them from their unique points of view instead of being represented by external media professionals and views. Given that community media are democratically owned, controlled and managed by a community for the community, external agendas and influences cannot and must not infringe on its place and value in society. Approach III therefore regards community media as a resource and communicative opportunity through which communities can self-represent their interests in more meaningful, autonomous and participatory democratic ways. Furthermore, discussions of this approach showed that, despite the dialogic characteristics of community media, consent is not the primary or only purpose of this mediated sphere. Building on the alternative nature of community media, it should allow dissenting voices and concerns to find articulation.

This study's perspective on community media as a rhizome provides the most appropriate optic to conceptualise community radio (see 8.4.4 for Approach IV). Using the rhizome, community media can be described (as in Table 10-2 below) through a metatheoretical instead of a mono-theoretical reading. A rhizome stresses the openness, flexibility and far more dynamic nature of community radio. Viewing community radio through the rhizome furthermore acknowledges the alternative nature of community media while simultaneously encouraging complex, constructive interconnections between different kinds of social actors and organisations in a development setting. It regards community radio as practice that promotes social and cultural multi-perspectival identities and articulations. However, it also accepts that the place and value of community broadcasters allow communities to nurture their unique communal character and needs.

In using a rhizomatic approach to conceptualise community radio, another specific research question

was answered (see 1.3.2.2).

Table 10-2 Community media as a rhizome

Assumptions	Summary descriptions
Elusiveness	- Community media are challenging to describe theoretically for the very reason that it represents a wide variety of media that reject the typical <i>hierarchal configurations</i> and practices of traditional commercial or public broadcasting media. - In rhizomatic fashion, community media operate more <i>horizontally and fluidly</i>, allowing its media practices and rituals to evolve in <i>non-linear ways and multiple directions</i> (see 8.4.4). - Community media are thus <i>context-dependent</i> and particularly <i>responsive to a local community's concerns and needs</i>. Its rhizomatic characteristics underscore that it is representative of <i>multiplicity and diversity</i>, meaning that different communities can utilise community media as across various configurations and practices for different purposes and as they arise. It also adapts into <i>open, reiterative processes</i> based on the <i>contextual needs</i> of a community (see 8.4.4). - It is asserted in this study that community media's <i>rhizomatic features align with participatory communication's insistence on inclusivity, diversity, context dependency, and responsiveness to social actors' emergent needs and concerns on a community level</i>.
Alternativity	- The rhizomatic and participatory community approaches both focus on creating communicative spaces for people and communities <i>outside of commercial or state imperatives</i> (see 8.4.4). - Discussions on Approach IV indicated that community media are rhizomatic, as they are community-rooted and facilitate the articulation of multiple <i>alternative social and cultural perspectives</i>. - Alternative, local <i>perspectives</i> are furthermore <i>not bound to profit motives or broader public interests</i> of dominant groups. - Both the rhizomatic and participatory communication approaches emphasise that community media support <i>alternative media content selection, production and distribution</i>, thereby reflecting the community's specific development needs and concerns <i>through dialogic, social, and participatory communication</i>.
Civil society orientation	- The rhizome is also resonant of participatory communication as its orientation is specifically <i>civil-society oriented</i>. - The examinations of the rhizomatic approach show that its non-linear and non-hierarchal nature allows community members to focus on local concerns and needs. Its community embeddedness allows it to primarily focus on serving the community of interest or the space in which it operates (see 8.4.4). This agrees with the participatory communication's focus on local communities.

Table 10-2 cont

Assumptions	Summary descriptions
Interconnected-ness	- Despite its alternative nature and focus on serving a local community, the rhizome underscores <i>complex interconnections</i> between a community and various other social actors (see 8.4.4). - A rhizome's alternativity permits community media to explore interconnections <i>within and between different communities</i> in participatory communicative manners. - Despite its decentralised nature, the examinations in Chapter 8 demonstrated that community media can also forge relationships with, for example, <i>social actors in commercial and public media sectors in less antagonistic ways</i>. - Its interconnectedness similarly means that community media <i>continuously grow</i> despite possible disruptions in certain relations and practices. This means that it can <i>develop dynamically into a network beyond community media alone</i>.

With this summary of the rhizomatic community media theory in mind, a conceptual framework is presented in Table 10-3 that will be used to systematically examine if community broadcasting legislation aligns with or diverges from this approach (see 10.5.3). This framework includes five higher-order rhizome theoretical principles with several related constructs.

Table 10-3 Rhizomatic community radio: a conceptual framework for South African broadcasting legislation

A. Principle	
1.	Non-hierarchical, Decentralised Media Organisation <u>Constructs:</u> - Community ownership of media - Community control of media - Community governance of media - Local agency in content selection, provision & broadcasting - Decentralisation of power & decision-making - Horizontal communication - Self-determination
2.	Multiplicity & Diversity <u>Constructs:</u> - Plurality & diversity of social actors & voices - Inclusion of marginalised voices - Media content diversity - Media content catered for niche audiences & their needs - Local agency in content selection, creation & distribution

Table 10-3 cont

A. Principle	
3.	Connectivity & Networking <u>Constructs:</u> a. Horizontal & fluid interconnectedness b. Internal community interconnection c. External community interconnection d. Networked interconnections e. Cross-community media partnerships f. Decentralised network expansion
4.	Alternative media <u>Constructs:</u> a. Primacy of local community concerns & needs b. Alternative local programming & content c. Community autonomy in content selection, provision & distribution d. Responsive community programming e. Dynamic, horizontal interconnection & interaction within the community f. Dynamic, horizontal interconnection & interaction between the community & external social actors
5.	Not-for-profit: <u>Constructs:</u> a. Non-commercial entity b. Non-profit purposes c. Serves the community of interest d. Alternative funding models e. All revenue must be reinvested into the community for its benefit

10.4 SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNICATION BROADCASTING LEGISLATION REVIEWED

The penultimate chapter of this thesis aimed to answer the specific research question listed at 1.3.2.3: *How is community radio conceptualised according to relevant South African broadcasting policy?*

Chapter 9 began with a reflection on the development of community radio, specifically in the Global South and then as contextualised in South Africa (see respectively 9.2.1 and 9.2.2). These discussions showed that community radio developed during four major phases, namely the *Experimental*, *Wildfire*, *Solidarity* and *Resurgence* stages (see 9.2.1). Section then 9.2.2 delineated the creation and development of South African community radio and its origins in social and political struggles that

spanned several decades before the first general democratic elections took place in April 1994. Discussions outlined how many international and local events and movements anticipated the unique place and value of independent media that would serve the interests of all South Africans and not only the white minority (see 9.2.2.1). In Section 9.2.2.2 attention was paid to how the 1990s saw South Africa domestically prepared for its democratic transition while remaining cognisant of global trends concerning economic transformations and media policy reforms, especially as concerned with community-broadcasting regulation. This section highlighted several international and local events that encouraged the creation of a South African broadcasting media landscape that would be more accessible and diverse than it was during the apartheid era.

These overviews were followed with an examination of crucial ICASA legislation that pertains to community broadcasting in South Africa, namely the IBA Act 153 of 1993, the Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999, the ICASA Act 13 of 2000, the ECA 36 of 2005, and the MDDA Act of 2002 (see 9.3). Each of these Acts were examined to determine the foundational assumptions and values concerning community radio broadcasting. From these discussions, twelve overarching principles emerged pertaining to community radio's place and value in the South African broadcasting environment (see Table 9-1). These Acts clarified that community broadcasting legislation emphasises *democratic values* and the *public's interest*, but expressed specifically on a community level. All of the Acts emphasised the *community ownership and control* of community broadcasting services. The notion of *diversity* being expressed in different social identities, interests and programming content was also identified as one the key themes that is covered in all of the legislation. Several of these Acts further emphasised the inclusion and representation of previously marginalised groups in community broadcasting.

Many of the legal provisions further emphasised the primacy of *local content* – *selected and provided by community members* – and the *promotion of linguistic and cultural groups*. With regard to the programming stipulations, the examination of the various Acts determined that community broadcasting content must not only inform or entertain but also *educate and empower communities*. As was expected in respect of the funding models of local radio services, the *non-profit nature of community radio* was emphasised in all of the relevant legislation. It was also clear that the profits

of any community radio stations should be reinvested into the community. The legislation moreover emphasised the accountability of community broadcasters to their listening communities and the regulator over matters of compliance. Lastly, the MDDA Act and the ECA Act underline that the community media sector must *continue to grow and diversify* while ensuring that the internal capacities of community broadcasters are enhanced.

10.5 SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNICATION BROADCASTING LEGISLATION : A PARTICIPATORY AND RHIZOMATIC ANALYSIS

The South African broadcasting regulatory environment are interrogated theoretically and conceptually in the two subsections that follow (see 10.5.1 and 10.5.2), using the theoretical frameworks in Tables 10-1 and 10-3. These analyses then culminate in this study's final theoretical-conceptual framework of community radio as participatory media (see 10.6).

In the following examinations, two columns are added to the theoretical frameworks to methodically designate and tabulate observable alignments or divergences between these frameworks and specific provisions in the South African community radio broadcasting legislation. Concise narrative descriptions of observable patterns inform these categorisations and assessments.

10.5.1 Community radio broadcasting: a participatory communication analysis

Table 10-4's six higher-order thematic categories include the following: (1) multiplicity of emergent social-cultural realities within contexts; (2) human agency for transformation; (3) access and inclusivity for participation; (4) knowledge creation via intersubjective dialogic praxis; (5) local knowledge and resource utilisation; and (6) empowerment of local communities. Colum B indicates where the participatory communication framework and legislation on community broadcasting converge, whereas Colum C indicates the departures. It must be noted that no specific comparisons were made for the ICASA Act of 2005, since this Act primarily lays the foundations of the overarching legal framework for the establishment of South Africa's independent regulator and the supporting legal environment in which it is supposed to carry out its duties.

Table 10-4 Comparative analysis: participatory communication and South African broadcasting legislation

A. Principle		B. Evident Legislative Alignments	C. Evident Legislative Misalignments
1.	Multiplicity of Emergent Social-Cultural Realities within Contexts <u>Constructs:</u> a. Multiplicity b. Local identities c. Local lived experiences d. Contexts e. Fluidity f. Interaction g. Collectivity	IBA Act: a-d, and g. Broadcasting Act: a-d, and g. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-d, and g. MDDA Act: a, b, c, d, f, and g.	IBA Act: e and f. Broadcasting Act: e and f. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: e and f. MDDA Act: e.
2.	Human Agency for Transformation <u>Constructs:</u> a. Individual capacity b. Collective capacity c. Intersubjective praxis d. Subjective transformation e. Structural transformation f. Social transformative action	IBA Act: b, d, e, and f. Broadcasting Act: b- f ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: b-c, e, and f. MDDA Act: b-f.	IBA Act: a and c. Broadcasting Act: a. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a. MDDA Act: a.
3.	Access & Inclusivity for Participation <u>Constructs:</u> a. Equitable access to communication opportunities b. Equitable access to resources c. Active engagement d. Representation e. Diversity f. Meaningful participation g. Participatory feedback h. Sustained engagement i. Empowered participation	IBA Act: a-e. Broadcasting Act: a-e. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-e. MDDA Act: a-i.	IBA Act: f-i. Broadcasting Act: f-i ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: f-i.

Table 10-4 cont

	A. Principle	B. Evident Legislative Alignments	C. Evident Legislative Misalignments
4.	Knowledge Creation via Intersubjective Dialogic Praxis <u>Constructs:</u> - Intersubjectivity - Intersubjective & critical dialogic reflection - Intersubjective & critical dialogic action - Diversity of knowledge - Reflexive understanding - Shared understanding - Co-created social knowledge - Knowledge as based on human-centred values - Contextually relevant & empowered knowledge - Dynamic & evolving knowledge	IBA Act: a-b, d, f-j. Broadcasting Act: a-b, d, f-j. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-c, d, f-j. MDDA Act: a-j.	IBA Act: c and e. Broadcasting Act: c and e. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: e.
5.	Local Knowledge & Resource Utilisation <u>Constructs:</u> - Local, community-based knowledge - Indigenous knowledge - Experimental knowledge - External, formal knowledge - Access to local resources - Access to external resources - Application of local knowledge	IBA Act: a-b, e, and g. Broadcasting Act: a-b, e, and g. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-b, e, and g. MDDA Act: a-g.	IBA Act: c-d and f. Broadcasting Act: c-d and f. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: c-d and f. MDDA Act: a-g.
6.	Empowerment of Local Communities <u>Constructs:</u> - Local agency - Self-determination - Local capacity-building - Inclusion of diversity of & marginalised local identities - Access to internal & external resources - Access to opportunities - Participatory management by local communities - Subjective & collective empowerment - Sustained empowerment of local identities & communities	IBA Act: a-d and h. Broadcasting Act: a-d and h. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-g. MDDA Act: a-f, i.	IBA Act: e-g and i. Broadcasting Act: e-g and i. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: h-i. MDDA Act: g-h.

10.5.1.1 Multiplicity of emergent social-cultural realities within contexts

Compared with the metatheoretical participatory communication framework presented in Section 7.2, several patterns emerge when examining the first thematic category, which consists of seven different constructs (outlined in Table 10-4). The table below describes observations from the comparative analysis of the five examined Acts of Parliament.

Table 10-5 Principle 1: Multiplicity of emergent social-cultural realities within contexts

Acts	Comparative Analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	Concerning the alignment with the first theme, both Acts align with five of the seven constructs. The idea of <u>a. multiplicity</u> is contained in both by reference to the regulatory body, indicating that it is mandated to safeguard and promote the public interest by representing diverse views. Multiplicity is also evident in how these acts stipulate that previously disadvantaged South Africans should help select and provide diverse programming concerning views, news, and other content themes. The Broadcasting Act also underlines linguistic, cultural, religious and creative diversity, thereby once again connoting the notion of multiplicity. Both Acts accentuate the importance of <u>b. local identity</u> as something that signifies community, describing it as an identifiable shared interest or specific geographic spatiality. Although not stated in explicit provisions, these references underscore that <u>c. local lived experiences</u> are thus implied concerns in both Acts. The legal definitions of community, which stress communal interest and shared spatiality, could also extend to the construct of <u>d. context</u>. The Acts take cognisance of different kinds of South African communities that need to be served by community radio stations. Their legal references to the types of communities associated with community broadcasting indicate an awareness of <u>g. collectivity</u> on a grassroots level, where individuals and communities collaborate and engage with one another. This points to ideas of collective action and participation within a community radio context. Concerning the divergences, neither Act seems explicitly concerned with the ideas of the participatory communication approach that are encompassed in the notions of <u>e. fluidity</u> and <u>f. interaction</u> being crucial to emergent realities. While both Acts, for example, require that community members choose the board that manages a community station, and while both also state that programming should reflect a community's needs through that community's participation in the station's programming, neither Act stipulates how to view interaction between community members. Fluidity is perhaps evident in the fact that programming must reflect the democratic values of the country, but this does not adequately address the concept's full variability. Interaction is also merely implied in the Broadcasting Act and not fully outlined.

Table 10-5 cont

Acts	Comparative Analyses
ICASA Act	The ICASA Act does not provide any additional stipulations other than what has already been specified in the above two Acts. It should thus be noted here that the ICASA Act of 2002 primarily provided for the establishment of a new merged regulator of telecommunications, broadcasting and postal services in South Africa. Therefore, this Act was crucial in creating an authoritative regulatory framework according to which the regulatory body could oversee the compliance of the broadcasting sector without providing any specific provisions concerning community broadcasting. The latter was primarily established in the abovementioned two pieces of legislation.
ECA	The ECA Act, however, brings several new expressions to five of the constructs in the first thematic category while also departing from the constructs of <u>e. fluidity</u> and <u>f. interaction</u> . Concerning <u>a. multiplicity</u> , this Act requires broadcasters to provide large varieties of content ranging from global to local levels, thereby showing diversity concerning interests, contexts and scale. The ECA underscores <u>b. local identities</u> in, for example, its insistence that broadcasters must adhere to local content and music quotas. The notion of <u>g. collectivity</u> is foregrounded by this Act, where it insists that previously marginalised South Africans must be included in the media landscape. It explicitly references groups such as the youth, women and people with disabilities, and those rural areas that are underserved by mainstream media. To an extent, these stipulations therefore reflect an awareness that South Africans have unique <u>c. local lived experiences</u> that are dependent on their varying <u>d. contexts</u> .
MDDA Act	The MDDA Act aligns well with the observations made above. The Act does takes a somewhat different ideological vantage point given that it focuses on the larger community media industry and its growth. Apart from the notion of <u>e. fluidity</u> , the Act converges with all the constructs in the first thematic category. The aligned notions find specific expression in the MDDA Act, stressing the importance of media plurality and ownership diversity in South Africa. It makes particular reference to the establishment and development of community-owned media organisations. Like the other acts, the MDDA is cognisant of different kinds of South African communities and contexts. It is notable that, unlike the other four acts, it stresses that <u>f. interaction</u> between different role-players in the media is crucial for the growth of the community media industry. Furthermore, it declares that the internal capacity of community broadcasters must be encouraged through training programmes and workshops. The notion of <u>g. collectivity</u> is, as in the examples of the above-analysed Acts, contained in the MDDA's insistence that the profits made by community broadcasters must always benefit the community through reinvestment.

From the comparative analyses presented above, it is clear that the existing community broadcasting legislation aligns well with the notions of the multiplicity and diversity principle. It shows that the

legislation states that South African communities are diverse both in their varying lived experiences and different social and cultural contexts. It accentuates community media ownership and representation in community broadcasting programming and content. The examined Acts all direct community broadcasters to serve the interests of their listeners but also stress that the inclusion of marginalised groups is of great importance.

However, a significant gap exists collectively in the current legal mandate regarding participatory communication – specifically as it pertains to interaction and fluidity being part of the emergent realities in local communication. The legal framework lacks significantly explicit provisions on how individuals and communities can be enabled to participate more actively and meaningfully in community broadcasting services and programming. As a result, it remains uncertain how community radio stations should operationalise a participatory ethos.

10.5.1.2 Human agency for transformation

Regarding the **second theoretical principle**, which concerns human agency for transformation, six constructs were used to examine the community broadcasting legislation. They include (a) individual capacity, (b) collective capacity, (c) intersubjective praxis, (d) subjective transformation, (e) structural transformation, and (f) social transformative action (see Table 10-4). The table below presents the analyses of this principle.

Table 10-6 Principle 2: Human agency for transformation

Acts	Comparative analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	The IBA Act places much weight on the concept of community when it states that community broadcasters are accountable to their listening public and <i>their</i> concerns. This collective optic is reinforced by the Act’s already-mentioned geographic and community of interest notions (see Table 10-5). However, from this vantage point it prioritises human agency and transformation in a <u>b. collective capacity</u> perspective rather than an optic concerned with an <u>a. individual’s capacity</u>. To reiterate, the Act further specifies that the community’s needs must be reflected in programming, thus aligning with a focus on the larger community. The IBA Act declares that “black people, women and people with disabilities” should be included in the operation and programming of the station, which further implies that

Table 10-6 cont

Acts	Comparative analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts (cont)	collective capacity and possible <u>e. structural transformation</u> are at stake. Including these previously excluded social identities in community broadcasting indicates the legal mandate that this sector must bring about structural changes in media access and participation. The inclusion of these specific kinds of subjectivities could however point to the legal obligation to assist these specific groups in their <u>d. subjective transformation</u>. However, this convergence to participatory communication theory is not made explicit. The IBA and the Broadcasting Acts can also be interpreted as being concerned with communal well-being, considering how all of the profits made through various kinds of models must be to the benefit of the community. This is stressed in the different kinds of funding models described by both Acts. The notion of <u>c. intersubjective praxis</u> could be expressed in the Broadcasting Act because it promotes a diversity of perspectives, views and beliefs and encourages human artistic creativity. The Acts do not indicate how intersubjectivity must be enacted by community radio stations. Both Acts concern <u>e. structural transformation</u> as they separate community radio from commercial and public broadcasting models. Such structural transformation means that ownership configurations and practices in the larger landscape have diversified. Furthermore, as both pieces of legislation confirm, the community owns community media for the community and non-commercial reasons. This demonstrates structural transformation, which in turn could facilitate <u>f. socially transformative action</u>.
ICASA Act	Like the first principle, the ICASA Act does not provide any other stipulations beyond those specified in the above two Acts.
ECA	This Act's focus on local content can be viewed through the lenses of <u>b. collective capacity</u> and <u>f. socially transformative action</u>. The Act places a lot of emphasis on local content and local programming quotas. In this manner, the ECA looks after the collective interests and human agency expressed in creativity and its insistence that broadcasting should facilitate people's right to freedom of expression. Again, like the IBA and Broadcasting Acts, these legal stipulations could effect <u>e. structural transformation</u> in the media sphere landscape. The ECA advocates for universal access for South Africans to broadcasting services, especially in underserved rural communities. This provision agrees with ideas about structural transformation. The emphasis on local content means that communities can express their diverse views from within their community and <u>c. intersubjectively</u> share their concerns and ideas, potentially leading to <u>d. socially transformative action</u>. Human agency for transformation – as expressed in <u>a. individual capacity</u> and <u>d. subjective transformation</u> – is not expressed as clearly in this legislation.

Table 10-6 cont

Acts	Comparative analyses
MDDA Act	The MDDA Act aligns very well with all of the constructs in the second thematic category, excluding the notion of <i>a. individual capacity</i> . As was evident in theme one, the MDDA Act clearly sets out to structurally develop and transform the small and community media sector in South Africa. This emphasises that the MDDA Act seeks to develop the collective capacity of community broadcasters, bring about structural transformation and <i>f. facilitate socially transformative action</i> . The MDDA is mandated to help build human resources in the community sector and intersubjectively coordinate with various social actors in the larger industry. By foregrounding local languages, raising awareness about literacy in general and encouraging a culture of reading, the Act seeks to promote social transformation in communities.

The South African community broadcasting framework prioritises collective human agency over individual capacity building. As several of the interrogated Acts promote the inclusion of diverse social identities and underserved communities, they underscore that community broadcasters must create inclusive, structurally transformed spaces of mediated communication. This aligns well with the objective of participatory communication to cause structural changes and social transformation. However, the framework is less explicit on how community radio broadcasting services must encourage individual capacity and subjective transformation. Similarly, while some legal provisions could be read as encouraging intersubjectivity between different social actors, they are only stated implicitly. More specific requirements on how this should be enacted could enable communicative spaces in community radio that are more participatory in their practice

10.5.1.3 Access and inclusivity for participation

The third theoretical principle regards access and inclusivity for participation, which involves nine constructs. They include (a) equitable access to communication opportunities, (b) equitable access to resources, (c) active engagement, (d) representation, (e) diversity, (f) meaningful participation, (g) participatory feedback, (h) sustained engagement, and (i) empowered participation (see Table 10-4). Table 10-7 presents the analyses.

Table 10-7 Principle 3: Access and inclusivity for participation

Acts	Comparative analysis
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	Several of the third thematic category's constructs are prominent in the IBA and Broadcasting Acts. Concerning <u>a. equitable access to communicative opportunities</u> and <u>b. equitable access to resources</u>: Both of these Acts have created the much-needed third tier of broadcasting that serves previously marginalised and underserved South African communities. Community broadcasters are legally obligated to grant local social actors the right to freedom of expression through universal access to a mediated communication sphere, which is an obligation that was absent before 1994. The Acts stipulate that community radio stations are community-owned and managed; thus, they are legally considered open and available community-owned resources that must serve the community's interests. The Broadcasting Act stresses that community broadcasters must deliver a wide variety of programming (e.g., songs, local stories, local music, etc.) to the community. This stresses the demand that community radio must <u>d. represent</u> the communities concerning a <u>e. diversity</u> of needs and concerns, which includes people from various cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. The programming released by community radio must be informational, educational and entertaining. Where both of these Acts diverge from the participatory communicant theme is in their framing of how <u>f. meaningful participation</u> and <u>g. participatory feedback</u> should transpire. While the community must <u>c. actively engage</u> in a station's programming selection and provision, these two Acts do not specify the exact mechanisms through which this active engagement should occur. They therefore also do not attend to the <u>h. sustained engagement</u> aspects of such participation. Lastly, the IBA and Broadcasting Acts imply <u>i. empowered participation</u> but, apart from managing community ownership and control, they fall short of stating other specific legal requirements that would ensure this type of participation.
ICASA Act	As the ICASA Act repealed the IBA Act, it does not provide substantially different stipulations from the latter or the Broadcasting Act.
ECA	Given the ECA's already-discussed primary focus on local content, universal access, diversity and local quotas, it undoubtedly converges with most of the third theme's notions. Even so, it diverges from participatory communication's assumptions of meaningful participation, participatory feedback, sustained engagement and empowered participation. While these latter notions are denoted in the Act and could potentially result from delivering on other aspects of access and inclusion, they are not indicated directly and comprehensively. For example, the ECA refers to the empowerment of marginalised communities but it does not give any detailed provisions of how this should be achieved.

Table 10-7 cont

Acts	Comparative analysis
MDDA Act	The MDDA Act strongly matches the notions of access and inclusion for participation. Given its focus on developing the wider community media sector, the Act focuses on access to communicative opportunities for South Africans and providing them with representative broadcasting resources while also fostering their further capacity training and empowered participation. The Act is focussed on promoting marginalised language communication (as an example) while also promoting diversity. Furthermore, its community media research stipulation correlates strongly with the constructs of participatory feedback and sustained engagement.

The legislation concerning community broadcasting forms an environment of equitable access to community media opportunities and resources. Together, the Acts direct community radio stations to serve their listening communities' needs by representing a diversity of social actors and needs. While the legal framework does promote communities' active engagement in the activities of a radio station, it lacks more precise mechanisms that would reinforce such participatory communication processes. This leaves shortcomings in the overall legal framework. The MDDA Act does, however, make several provisions on how participatory communication can transpire via meaningful participation, participatory feedback, sustained engagement and empowerment participation concerning community broadcasters.

10.5.1.4 Knowledge creation via intersubjective dialogic praxis

Table 10-8 compares the **fourth principle of knowledge creation via intersubjective dialogic praxis** and the key community broadcasting legislation. This participatory communication concept used ten constructs in this analysis. They include (a) intersubjectivity, (b) intersubjective and critical dialogical reflection, (c) intersubjective and critical dialogical action, (d) diversity of knowledge, (e) reflexive understanding, (f) shared understanding, (g) co-created social knowledge, (h) knowledge as based on human-centred values, (i) contextually relevant and empowered knowledge, and (ji) dynamic and evolving knowledge (see Table 10-4). The table below presents the examinations of these constructs.

Table 10-8 Principle 4: Knowledge creation via intersubjective dialogic praxis

Acts	Comparative analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	As was evident in the preceding overarching themes, <u>a. intersubjectivity</u> is a construct that also finds expression in participatory communication's assumption about knowledge creation and dialogic praxis. The IBA and Broadcasting Acts state that a community must decide and generate programmes that address its needs, suggesting that community members can address their unique informational needs collectively. Of all the constructs in this theme, neither Act directly addresses <u>b. intersubjective and critical dialogic reflection</u> and <u>e. reflexive understanding</u>. They do not correspond with dialogic action. In all of the other provisions in these two Acts, knowledge creation converges with its associated constructs about <u>d. diversity</u>, <u>e. shared understandings</u>, and <u>g. co-creation</u> of knowledge, and is based on <u>h. human-centred, communal values</u>. As discussed previously, these two pieces of legislation encourage the inclusion of a plurality of social actors, views, cultures and other backgrounds into community broadcasting. These provisions indicate that community broadcasting law has created a framework for knowledge creation that can transpire in a communal setting.
ICASA Act	The ICASA Act does not provide many more stipulations than what have already been specified in the abovementioned two Acts.
ECA	The ECA accepts that diversity of knowledge is essential in community broadcasting (i.e., different levels of interests and kinds of content). It states that historical, social and political issues are all a concern in community programming. This agrees with the notions of <u>a. intersubjectivity</u>, <u>b. intersubjective critical dialogic reflection</u>, and <u>d. diversity of knowledge</u>. According to the law, these kinds of content must be local, <u>i. contextually relevant</u>, and <u>empower</u> community members. As stated in the ECA, knowledge is therefore a communal practice. The Act underscores that previously disadvantaged persons find representation in community broadcasting, which speaks to the notion of <u>j. dynamic and evolving knowledge creation</u>. By including these specific groups in community broadcasting, programming and content can be created that meaningfully addresses the particular and dynamically evolving needs of these social actors. This aligns with the idea that knowledge should be <u>i. contextually relevant to a community</u> and indicates that <u>e. reflexive understanding</u> about including different social identities in community radio is paramount. The ECA diverges from specific provisions about <u>c. intersubjective and critical dialogue action</u>. It does not indicate any particular mechanisms to enact this.

Table 10-8 cont

Acts	Comparative analyses
MDDA Act	The MDDA Act converges strongly on all of the notions contained in the fourth theme. It clearly states that diverse community media must represent different communities (e.g., cultural and language). Such varying communities would represent dissimilar kinds of knowledge systems that members could then share through community broadcasting platforms. This legislation's focus on community research shows an obligation to create knowledge about and for the industry. This includes marginalised communities indicates that the MDDA Act wants to promote individuals and collectives from these communities to share their specific knowledge systems with others via community radio. The emphasis on such inclusions directs that the law aligns with providing and promoting community media that will produce human-centred knowledge that is also contextually relevant to empower specific communities. Again, the research stipulation that is contained in this legislation stresses that knowledge creation is viewed from a dynamic and evolving vantage point.

From the above comparative analyses, the legislative framework strongly aligns with the idea of intersubjectivity in participatory communication. The framework directs community radio broadcasters to ensure that programming represents diverse knowledge systems and beliefs (i.e., expressed in varying views, types of content, and as representative of different social actor identities, etc.). This informs community radio stations that programming should be based on communal, shared understanding and creation practices. It mandates that community broadcasters must create environments that value knowledge generation, in this case specifically focusing on knowledge that is contextually relevant and dynamically responsive to the community in which the broadcasters operate.

These laws could however be more specific on how dialogic action ought to transpire. If the inclusion of social actors' voices in community broadcasting services and programming is valued, then the legal framework has to articulate more specific ways for participatory communication to transpire apart from merely stipulating that communities should select and produce radio programmes.

10.5.1.5 Local knowledge and resources utilisation

Next, the theoretical principle of local knowledge and resources utilisation was used as to examine South African community broadcasting legislation. This fourth principle comprises seven constructs (Table 10-9) They include (a) local, community-based knowledge, (b) indigenous knowledge, (c)

Table 10-9 Principle 5: Local knowledge and resources utilisation

Acts	Descriptions
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	The IBA and Broadcasting Acts both value <u>a. local, community-based knowledge</u>. These two Acts stipulate that community broadcasters must rely on a community's ability to decide for themselves what types of programmes their community radio station must deliver to their community. This recognises the autonomy of community members and listeners in identifying and producing programmes that fit their particular needs. When the community participates in programming, their local knowledge systems and beliefs are incorporated into the aired broadcasting content. The knowledge comes from within the community and in a bottom-up participatory communication manner. Considering the notion of <u>b. indigenous knowledge</u>, the legal framework demonstrates that linguistic, cultural and other social identities and demographics must be included and represented in community radio broadcasting services. While the Acts do not directly mention indigenous knowledge, community radio stations must nevertheless employ local knowledge systems as the foundation for programming creation. This means that local traditions, beliefs, values and rituals inform programming and are based on the shared interests of the associated community. Therefore, this legislative alignment with the participatory communication tool is considered moderate and implied. These requirements thus correspond with the constructs <u>e. access to local resources</u> and <u>g. application of local knowledge</u>. These notions also find legal provisions in the community ownership and control of community radio stations and the different kinds of funding models stipulated by the Acts. By using local social actors' knowledge systems, community radio boradcaters can access local resources and use them to create more authentic programming. Allowing for different kinds of funding models (e.g., donations, sponsorships, advertising, etc.) means that community radio stations can access different capital resources from within a community to assist in their operations. The Acts require that if the stations make additional profits, these moneys should be reinvested into the community. The Acts are however not very explicit about the notion of <u>c. experimental knowledge</u>. In the previous theme, it was indicated that both Acts recognise the importance of including different kinds of groups into the creation of knowledge. The assumption can be made here that, dependent on diverse demographics, programming could be experimental since varying groups would require different kinds of responsive content based on their varying types of knowledge. However, this legal obligation is only implied and will largely depend on how different community radio stations interpret the imperative to incorporate experimental knowledge into their programming decisions and production. These two Acts are ambiguous concerning how <u>d. external, formal knowledge</u> and <u>f. access to external resources</u> should be incorporated into community broadcasting

Table 10-9 cont

Acts	Descriptions
IBA & Broadcasting Acts Cont	services. However, this leaves room for community radio stations to independently decide how they want to use external knowledge systems and knowledgeable actors. On the other hand, the legal framework could integrate more specific conditions about how community radio stations could use established expertise or resources in their operations – specifically from within a community. Such provisions could guide radio stations in creating and improving potential collaborative relationships with external knowledge resources and actors.
ICASA Act	As was stated before, the primary function of the ICASA Act was to establish the oversight role and framework of the regulator concerning community broadcasting.
ECA	As was already confirmed in the discussions on the preceding themes of the participatory communication analytical framework, the ECA places a high premium on local content and the community's interests in community radio broadcasting. Therefore <u>a. local, community-based knowledge</u> is legally prioritised and the notion of <u>b. indigenous knowledge</u> finds expression therein – albeit implicitly – through its insistence on incorporating diverse cultural, linguistic and religious groups in community broadcasting. Like the IBA and Broadcasting Acts, the ECA values the primary place of local content and previously marginalised groups. It also stresses <u>e. access to local resources</u> and <u>g. application of local knowledge</u> in its concern with local content. There is no definite mention of <u>c. experimental knowledge</u> or how community radio stations must incorporate <u>d. external, formal knowledge</u> or <u>f. access to external resources</u> into their services.
MDDA Act	When examining the MDDA Act, the notion of <u>a. local, community-based knowledge</u> is evident in its demand that community media projects such as radio must serve the interests of local communities. It also articulates that <u>e. access to local resources</u> through mechanisms such as funding models should benefit communities if additional profit is made. The notion of <u>g. application of local knowledge</u> is also evident in this Act. Only the MDDA Act requires that community broadcasters use external training opportunities to, for example, enhance the knowledge systems and skills of local broadcasters. These stipulations therefore match the notions <u>d. external, formal knowledge</u> and use of <u>f. access to external resources</u>. As all of the examinations above have highlighted, this legislation also requires researching the community media sector concerning <u>c. experimental knowledge</u>. The MDDA Act's research demand concerning the community media sector shows its acceptance that the creation and application of knowledge in community radio is dynamic. Like the other relevant Acts, the MDDA Act does not directly reference <u>b. indigenous knowledge</u>.

experimental knowledge, (d) external, formal knowledge, (e) access to local resources, (f) access to external resources, and (g) application of local knowledge (see Table 10-4)

From the above comparative examinations, it is evident that the South African legal framework encourages the utilisation of local community knowledge in community radio broadcasting. The above Acts together create an environment where community broadcasters can create programming relevant to their communities' specific needs and challenges. The legal framework reflects participatory communication ideas, namely, that diverse cultural identities and interests should be featured prominently in community programming. Still, it lacks specific references and explanations for how to integrate indigenous knowledge.

Another important shortcoming to remedy is that the legal framework must specify how community broadcasters should utilise external and established expertise and resources. More precisely, it could stipulate that these social actors and resources should originate from within each community, seeing that the Acts already clarify that local content and local knowledge take precedence in community radio programming. Only the MDDA Act makes explicit mention that expertise is needed within the community media sector, articulating at the same time that knowledge on and in the industry can be experimental and dynamic.

10.5.1.6 Empowerment of local communities

The **last theoretical principle** of the participatory communication tool concerns the empowerment of local communities, which comprises nine constructs (see Table 10-4). These are (a) local agency (b) self-determination, (c) local capacity-building building, (d) inclusion of a diversity of and marginalised local identities, (e) access to internal and external resources, (f) access to opportunities, (g) participatory management by local communities, (h) subjective van collective empowerment, and sustained empowerment of local identifies and communities (Table 10-4).

Table 10-10 Principle 6: Empowerment of local communities

Acts	Descriptions
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	The IBA and Broadcasting Acts equally value <i>a. local agency</i> and <i>b. self-determination</i>. As has been established in all the themes examined thus far, these two pieces of legislation emphasise community ownership, community engagement and the ability of communities to select and create the required programming. These notions, therefore, correspond with participatory communication notions that local individuals and communities must be empowered through community radio platforms. These platforms offer community voices the opportunity to articulate their needs – voices that would otherwise not be represented in media leading to needs that would not be met. In this manner, <i>c. local capacity-building</i> is encouraged as well. This notion is supported by the meaningful <i>d. inclusion of diversity and marginalised local identities</i> in community radio broadcasting, meaning that previously overlooked concerns and challenges can be addressed through local programming. If local social actors can articulate their realities and needs on community radio, they can also be empowered to facilitate positive social change at a localised level. These two Acts do align with the idea of <i>g. participatory management by local communities</i>. However, these participatory mechanisms are limited to the demands that community radio is community-owned and community-controlled and that the board of directors must be elected from within and by the radio station’s community. The Acts lack additional specificity concerning <i>e. access to internal and external resources</i>, a shortcoming that was evident in the preceding themes as well. The same applies to the notion of <i>f. access to opportunities</i>. The Acts are somewhat vague on what other participatory communication and empowerment opportunities community radio should provide besides offering diverse and locally knowledge-based programming. These Acts are uncertain about <i>h. subjective empowerment</i> but underline <i>collective empowerment</i> of the community, thereby asserting that local content should serve the community and empower its members. There is no clear focus on specific individual empowerment opportunities. Furthermore, while empowerment is implied in these two Acts, they do not precisely stipulate how the <i>i. sustained empowerment of local identities and communities</i> should transpire. Arguably, this type of empowerment would occur through the oversight function that ICASA has when it must assess whether or not individual community radio stations comply with their licensing conditions.
ICASA Act	The ICASA Act agrees with and diverges from the notions that have been examined in the IBA and Broadcasting Acts.

Table 10-10 cont

Acts	Descriptions
ECA	The ECA's emphasis on local content, the inclusion of marginalised groups and universal access to community broadcasting have been covered in all five of the previously examined sections. The Act strongly agrees with all of the notions contained in the empowerment theme of participatory communication. But it also diverges concerning <i>h. subjective empowerment</i> while emphasising group or community empowerment. Likewise, its legal framework might facilitate <i>i. sustained empowerment of local identities and communities</i> . Still, there are no clear strategies or directions on how community radio stations should achieve this stipulation.
MDDA Act	The MDDA Act legally creates an enabling environment for community radio broadcasters in which they can be empowered as media organisations. Through its various stipulations about the development and diversification of the sectors, the Act, for example, underlines that, as a media sector, community broadcasters should be empowered to ultimately serve their communities better. The Act requires more clarity concerning the <i>g. participatory management by local communities</i> and the <i>h. subjective and collective empowerment</i> constructs. While the communal empowerment aspect corresponds with participatory communication, the subjective element is again lacking.

Even though the comparative analysis demonstrates that South African community broadcasting legislation encourages local agency, self-determination and local capacity-building by including a diversity of marginalised local identities and voices, it is important to stress that it views this empowerment process through a collective or communal optic. These pieces of legislation fail to specify how local resources and opportunities should be accessed and utilised to empower community internships. The legal framework lacks specific guidance or participatory pathways about how individual or personal empowerment might transpire with the help of community radio. Moreover, the Acts omit to explain how to uphold the empowerment of local individuals and communities. Without such specifications, sustainable empowerment benefits may remain unrealised.

10.5.1.7 Participatory communication and South African broadcasting legislation: summary remarks

Having compared the participatory communication framework with communication broadcasting legislation, it becomes apparent that the legal framework emphasises certain participatory communication concepts while being more ambiguous about several others, as is illustrated Figure 10-1 below.

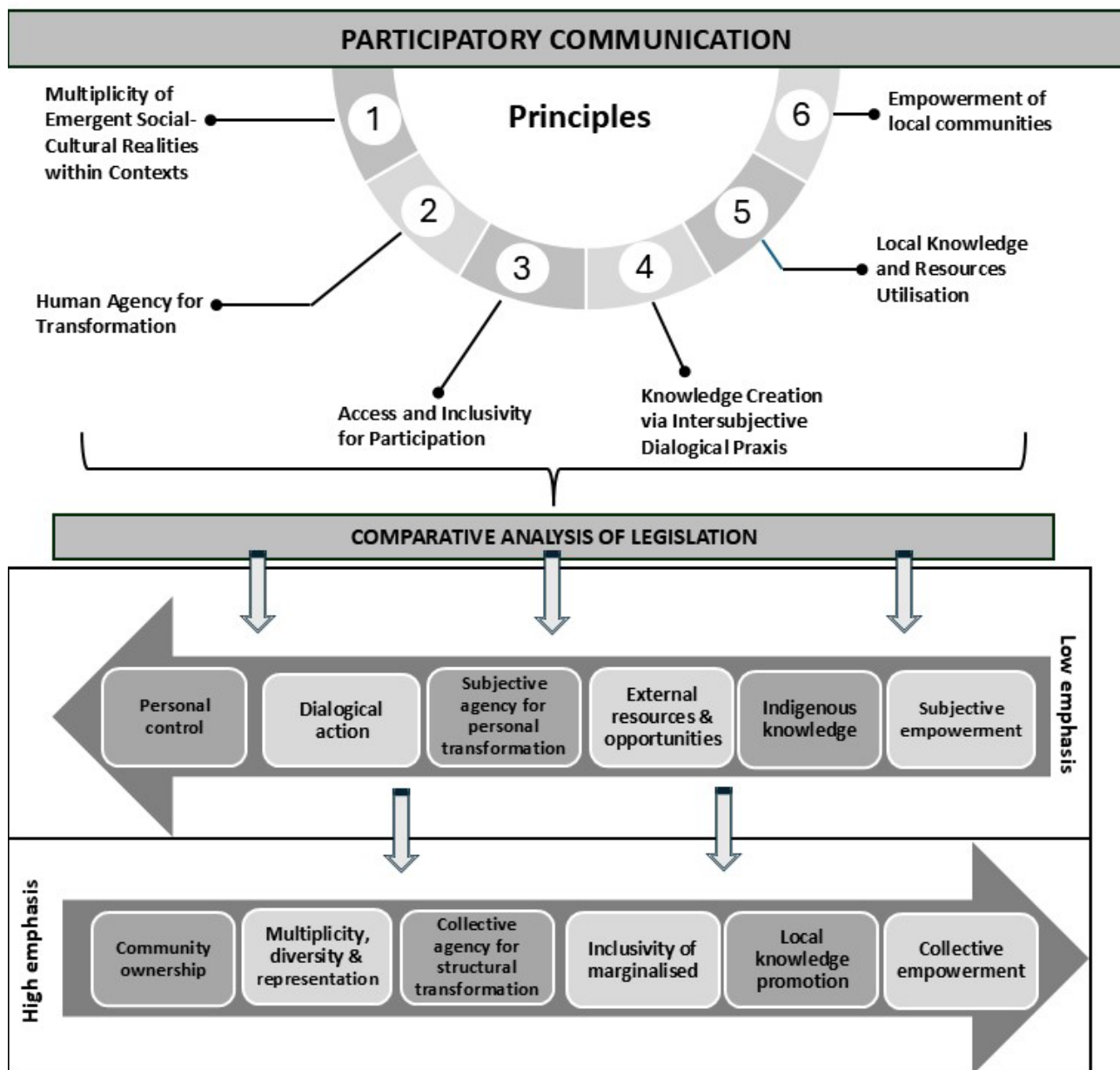


Figure 10-1 Community broadcasting through a participatory communication optic

The local community broadcasting landscape explicitly stipulates that community radio is community-owned and controlled by a plurality of social actors from different social and cultural backgrounds. Community radio converges with the idea of participatory communication that the collective agency of grassroots people to promote structural transformation should be emphasised and incorporated into legislation. It also agrees emphatically about notions of inclusivity, although predominantly focusing on the participation and representation of formerly excluded or marginalised local populations. Under community law, local knowledge is promoted by emphasising that communities must actively participate in choosing and producing the programming content that is broadcast on their radio stations. This underpins the idea that local knowledge is foundational to both frameworks. It is both a theoretical concept and a legal right anchored in the community broadcasting framework. Furthermore, there is a high degree of correspondence between the legal framework and participatory communication's notions about collective empowerment. The community is the clearly primary focus of community radio activities.

Despite these high convergences, several gaps remain between the participatory communication and broadcasting legislation frameworks. Since community ownership and management take primacy in legal terms, it remains unclear how individual members of a community could participate in community radio operations. Whereas individual participation is implied, more specific pathways to personal participation could be explicated. Intersubjectivity is the foundational notion of the participatory communication optic. Even though it is contained within legislation, more exact guidelines should be conceptualised to foster dialogue and intersubjective communication within community radio. Likewise, given the emphasis on collective agency and structural transformation, there is a low emphasis on subjective agency and personal transformation in community broadcasting legislation. For community radio to be genuinely participatory media, it cannot neglect the dialectical tensions between personal and structural agency and transformative actions.

The participatory communication framework underscores that local knowledge is foundational to the true empowerment of people. The legislation acknowledges that different actors can make diverse contributions, but it does not explicitly reference indigenous knowledge and additionally neglects to guide community broadcasters on how they should employ existing expertise and

resources in their activities and services. Since local indigenous knowledge is fundamental to participatory communication, clearer stipulations are required to foster more participatory engagement with different knowledge systems within the community. For example, local expertise may exist in more formalised knowledge systems and must be therefore integrated with indigenous knowledge systems. Finally, given its communal focus, the subjective empowerment of community members is implied in legal terms but valued in specific collective stipulations. This gap must be addressed in a framework that also underscores the value of community members being empowered through community radio.

10.5.2 Communication radio broadcasting legislations: a rhizomatic analysis

Table 10-3's five higher-order theoretical principles include (1) non-hierarchal, decentralised media organisation; (2) multiplicity and diversity; (3) connectivity and networking; (4) alternative media; and (5) and the principle that describes its not-for-profit feature.

In Chapter 8 (see 8.4.4), community media were described as being rhizomatic insofar as they accentuate the alternative and decentralised nature of structure and practice. This study grasps community media as being in service of a community that is not served or represented satisfactorily by traditional commercial or public media models. A non-hierarchical reading allows non-linear interconnections and interactions within and between the community's local social actors and then also interconnects externally with the larger civil society. The enlarged community media network permits different, flexible relationships with a larger variety of social actors – something that would be impossible if the community network had remained localised.

Furthermore, a rhizomatic community network increases the feasibility of cross-community media networks. Unlike a purely antagonistic alternative community media approach that encloses social actors within a local network, the rhizomatic frame encourages complexity because its expanded network includes commercial and public spheres with far more nuance. Table 10-11 below presents the comparative analysis between the rhizomatic analytical tool that was designed for this study and the South African community broadcasting legislation described in Section 10.4. Narrative descriptions will again accompany the tabulated comparisons underneath.

Table 10-11 Comparative analysis: rhizomatic community media and South African broadcasting legislation

	A. Principle	B. Evident Legislative Alignments	C. Evident Legislative Misalignments
1.	Non-hierarchical, Decentralised Media Organisation <u>Constructs:</u> a. Community ownership of media b. Community control of media c. Community governance of media d. Local agency in content selection, provision & broadcasting e. Decentralisation of power & decision-making f. Horizontal communication g. Self-determination	IBA Act: a-g. Broadcasting Act: a-g. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-d, and g. MDDA Act: a-g.	ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: e and f. MDDA Act:
2.	Multiplicity & Diversity <u>Constructs:</u> a. Plurality & diversity of social actors & voices b. Inclusion of marginalised voices c. Media content diversity d. Media content catered for niche audiences & their needs e. Local agency in content selection, creation & distribution	IBA Act: a-e. Broadcasting Act: a-e. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-e. MDDA Act: a-e.	ICASA Act: no comparisons made
3.	Connectivity & Networking <u>Constructs:</u> a. Horizontal & fluid interconnectedness b. Internal community interconnection c. External community interconnection d. Networked interconnections e. Cross-community media partnerships f. Decentralised network expansion	IBA Act: a-b. Broadcasting Act: a-b. ICASA Act: a-b, and f. ECA: a-e. MDDA Act: a-f.	IBA Act: c-f. Broadcasting Act: c-f. ICASA Act: c-e.

Table 10-11 cont

	A. Principle	B. Evident Legislative Alignments	C. Evident Legislative Misalignments
4.	Alternative media <u>Constructs:</u> - Primacy of local community concerns & needs - Alternative local programming & content - Community autonomy in content selection, provision & distribution - Responsive community programming - Dynamic, horizontal interconnection & interaction within the community - Dynamic, horizontal interconnection & interaction between the community & external social actors	IBA Act: a-e. Broadcasting Act: a-e. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-f MDDA Act: a-f	IBA Act: f. Broadcasting Act: f. ICASA Act: no comparisons made
5.	Not-for-profit <u>Constructs:</u> - Non-commercial entity - Non-profit purposes - Serves the community of interest - Alternative funding models - All revenue must be reinvested into the community for its benefit	IBA Act: a-e. Broadcasting Act: a-e. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: a-d MDDA Act: a-e.	IBA Act: a-e. Broadcasting Act: a-e. ICASA Act: no comparisons made ECA: e. MDDA Act: a-e.

10.5.2.1 Non-hierarchical, decentralised media organisation

The **first theoretical principle** used to analyse the communication broadcasting legislation regards the non-hierarchical, decentralised media organisation principle, which comprises seven different constructs. They include seven constructs: (a) community ownership of media; (b) community control of media; (c) community governance of media; (d) local agency in content selection, provision, and broadcasting; (e) decentralisation of power and decision-making; (f) horizontal communication; and self-determination (see Table 10-11). Below are the examinations of the first rhizomatic principle.

Table 10-12 Principle 1: Non-hierarchical, decentralised media organisation

Acts	Comparative Analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	Compared with the rhizomatic framework, the IBA and Broadcasting Acts stipulate that community radio <u>a. belongs to the community</u>, which also <u>b. operates or controls it</u>. This evidently corresponds with the rhizomatic notion of <u>c. community governance of media</u>. As has already been established, the IBA and Broadcasting Acts require that community radio broadcasting operates independently from the other types of broadcasting sectors governed by ICASA, which have different normative media purposes and operate according to a variety of media configurations and practices (e.g., as are evident in profit and public services imperatives) (see 9.3.1 and 9.3.2). The Broadcasting Act moreover requires that the management of a community radio station should originate from within the community and be voted for by community members. Community radio is governed in service of the community interest, a characteristic which is demonstrated in the legal condition of <u>d. the local agency in content selection, provision, and broadcasting</u>. Community radio operates on a grassroots level, making it far more accessible to community members than other types of media. This parallels the rhizomatic characteristic of community media that is underpinned in the <u>e. decentralisation of power and decision-making</u> practices. Instead of centralising it in a more hierarchical media structure, the legal framework places decision-making authority mainly in the hands of community members and community radio station management. This reinforces the <u>f. horizontal communication</u> and participative feature of community radio but it is also supposed to encourage more <u>g. self-determination</u> within a community radio setting.
ICASA Act	The ICASA Act affirms the non-hierarchical, decentralised legal framework in which community radio operates.
ECA	By including previously disadvantaged groups in community broadcasting, the ECA Act implies that <u>a. community ownership of media</u> corresponds to the first rhizomatic principle. Still, it could be argued that, given its strict conditions concerning local content criteria, the ECA reduces the completely autonomous <u>b. community control of community radio</u> and thus the <u>g. self-determination</u> by community members. To an extent, this might also limit the <u>e. decentralisation of power and decision-making</u> practices by community members. These conditions should however be read in conjunction with the Act's concern that community radio must primarily serve the interests of local communities and that <u>d. local agencies in content selection, provision and broadcasting</u> are paramount to the operations of these radio stations. Nevertheless, the apparent tension between these above-stated rhizomatic features and the legal conditions provided by the ECA must be noted. Conversely, the ECA's insistence on universal access to community broadcasting, especially for underserved rural communities and previously excluded groupings on the grassroots level, denotes that the Act forms a legal framework that promotes more egalitarian <u>c. community governance</u> of community radio and community media outlets. Furthermore, the ECA implies the rhizomatic aspect of <u>f. horizontal communication</u>. This could be stated more explicitly.

Table 10-12 cont

Acts	Comparative Analyses
MDDA Act	The MDDA Act strongly agrees with the first theme of the rhizomatic approach. As examined in Section 10.5.1, it focuses on the community media industry sector. Its remit is to create a robust and growing South African community media sector that promotes an enabling environment for community radio – owned and controlled by diverse communities and in the service of the communities where these radio stations function. The Act places high value on all the first theme’s associated constructs.

These comparative examinations show that the community broadcasting legal framework corresponds convincingly to the non-hierarchical, decentralised organisational features of the rhizomatic approach to community media. The Acts demand that community broadcasters differentiate themselves from other traditional forms of broadcasting since community broadcasting is community-owned and managed. This distinction permits the active and horizontal participation of communities in the running of stations. According to the legal framework, the programming decisions must benefit the community’s concerns and needs, confirming a rhizomatic decentralised characteristic. Whereas some stipulations in the ECA could potentially weaken the independent decision-making powers of community radio stations, overall, the Act encourages community members to take responsibility for the types of media content they require and for a diversity of different social actor communities. Therefore, cognisance must be taken of the tension between this particular Act and the independent decision-making powers of community radio broadcasters. The implications of these tensions should be examined further to grasp the operational independence of community radio under the ECA.

10.5.2.2 Multiplicity and diversity

The **second rhizomatic principle** used to cross-examine local communication broadcasting legislation concerns the multiplicity and diversity principle. It comprises five different constructs, namely, (a) plurality and diversity of social actors and voices; (b) inclusion of marginalised voices; (c) media content diversity; (d) media content catered for niche audiences and their needs; and (e) local agency in content selection, creation and distribution (see Table 10-11). Table 10-13 presents the analyses of these constructs.

Table 10-13 Principle 2: Multiplicity and diversity

Acts	Comparative Analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	In Section 10.5.1, it was found that the IBA and Broadcasting Acts encourage the inclusivity of a wide range of social actors and represent a plurality of views and interests. Together, these two Acts make important provisions that previously excluded groups (e.g., youth, women, and people with disabilities) must participate in community radio broadcasting. As was stated in the current principle's fourth construct, these groups can be considered niche groups. The media content in community radio must also reflect diverse content types and pluralistic views. All of these legal requirements converge to a strong degree with the five constructs of multiplicity and diversity (see Table 10-11). According to these two Acts, the community radio landscape in South Africa is defined as highly pluralistic and, hence, rhizomatic in approach.
ICASA Act	Concerning the ICASA Act, it must again be noted that the primary function of this Act was to establish framework in which the regulator could ensure community stations adhere to legal requirements and policy. This Act corresponds to rhizomatic features to the extent that the regulator oversees community broadcasters to foster public interest on a community level while encouraging a representation of pluralistic social actors and views in their programming. The rhizomatic characteristics of multiplicity and diversity are thus emphasised more implicitly than manifestly.
ECA	The <i>a. plurality and diversity of social actors and voices</i> and the <i>b. inclusion of marginalised voices</i> is mandated by the ECA in Sections 50 and 60 of Chapter 9, as well as Chapter 14 (see 9.3.4).#CHECK The Act emphasises that community radio must provide communities with <i>c. diverse media content</i> that caters to <i>d. niche audiences</i> . The participation of local populations in actively exercising their agency to <i>e. select, create and distribute content</i> for community radio has also been discussed in Section 10.5.1. The ECA evidently aligns well with the multiplicity and diversity principle of the rhizomatic community media approach.
MDDA Act	The MDDA Act matches all of the constructs of the second principle of the rhizome approach. As stated in previous examinations, the Act aims to create a vibrant and growing community media sector in South Africa (see 9.3.5 and 10.5.1). Although this legislation does not explicitly mandate community radio stations to act rhizomatically, it forms an overarching and enabling framework that empowers broadcasters to provide for the multiplicity and diverse needs of their listening audiences. By empowering community radio stations through training and research practices (to name one example), the MDDA Act creates a beneficial environment in which such stations can be truly representative and responsive to the diverse and unique needs of their listening audiences.

The legislative environment for community radio reflects the rhizome approach's thematic category that is concerned with multiplicity and diversity. The legislative landscape details in several of the relevant Acts of Parliament how community radio stations must ensure that a plurality of actors,

views and programmes are included in their services. Other acts create a supportive overarching framework that enables managing these stations in a manner that could be described as rhizomatic.

10.5.2.3 Connectivity and networking

The **third rhizomatic principle** used to examine local communication broadcasting legislation concerns the connectivity and networking principle, which comprises six interrelated constructs. These constructs are (a) horizontal and fluid interconnectedness, (b) internal community interconnection, (c) external community interconnection, (d) networked interconnections, (e) cross-community media partnerships, and (f) decentralised network expansion (see Table 10-11). Below follow the analyses of the third rhizomatic principle.

Table 10-14 Principle 3: Connectivity and networking

Acts	Comparative Analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	From a rhizomatic perspective, the IBA and Broadcasting Acts could both be said to encourage <u>a. horizontal and fluid interconnectedness</u>. These Acts' provisions about community ownership and participation in programming align with rhizomatic ideas about how community radio can create horizontal connections and relations between community members through its daily activities and other possible community services. As contained in these Acts' definitions of community radio (i.e., shared ascertainable interest of geographic locale), the interconnectedness of community members is also legally reinforced (see 9.3.1 and 9.3.2). The fact that community radio is a decentralised medium plays into this specific construct as well, since it allows non-hierarchical and more horizontal connections between different social actors in a community setting. The Broadcasting Act also states that community radio should promote the South African democratic culture and a sense of shared purpose, thereby underscoring this construct's historical and independent aspects. The <u>b. internal community interconnection</u> is also foregrounded by the above provision in the Broadcasting Act because community members choose the board members of radio stations. However, this Act and its legislative predecessor seem more internally focused and thus not overly concerned with rhizomatic aspects related to <u>c. external community interconnection</u>, <u>d. networked interconnections</u> or <u>e. cross-community partnerships</u>. While the Broadcasting Act, for example, insists that "community radio stations should promote grassroots community issues" of various concerns, this is perhaps a more implicit stipulation rather than being a directly observable correspondence with the characteristics mentioned above (see 9.3.2). The flexible connectivity that typically characterises a rhizome is not entirely realised in these two Acts of Parliament. Community radio is decentralised by configuration and practice; however, the <u>f. decentralised network expansion</u>

Table 10-14 cont

Acts	Comparative Analyses
ICASA Act	Comparable with the previous examinations of the ICASA Act, this act establishes an overall regulatory framework for ICASA to ensure accountability and compliance in the community radio sector. Given this oversight role, some of the constructs of connectivity and networking are implicit in the Act. For example, ensuring that radio stations comply with their licensing conditions fosters <u>a. horizontal and fluid interconnectedness</u> and <u>b. internal community interconnection</u>. This is because it ensures that, through compliance and responsibility, radio stations commit to the interests of their listenership. This could also connect with the <u>f. decentralised network expansion</u> since the interconnections that the Act promotes between a station and its community through accountability measures encourage radio stations to continue expanding their community network and in a more decentralised manner. The rhizomatic features of <u>c. external community interconnection</u>, <u>d. networked interconnections</u> and <u>e. cross-community partnerships</u> are moderately discernible in this legislation. The Act states, for example, that special interest groups can establish their community radio stations. These groups include student communities, prisons, and hospitals. Establishing stations in these contexts would require several external, networked interconnections and cross-community collaborations.
ECA	All six of the third principle's notions are evident in the ECA. Having established that the Act requires universal access, the inclusion of marginalised groups, and commitment to serving community needs in varied and responsive ways via local content demonstrates that it highly values connectivity and networking in different types of assemblages. Apart from the Act's focus on community ownership, it gives prominence to the relationship between a radio station, its listenership and its community members through their direct participation in local content programming selection and production (see 9.3.4). The Act emphasises that universal access by rural communities is crucial, and it therefore seeks to expand the networked interconnections of the larger community broadcasting sector. Besides, this universal access is only possible if ICASA forges cross-community partnerships on different scales with organisations that are external to its network. For example, collaborations with community leadership would be vital on a micro level, whereas partnerships with infrastructure telecommunications providers are crucial on a national scale. In this manner, the ENCA provides a more nuanced interpretation of connectivity and multiplicity that extends beyond the conditions placed only on community radio stations and their operations.

Table 10-14 cont

Acts	Comparative Analyses
MDDA Act	The MDDA Act further aligns well with the third rhizomatic principle. Since the act seeks to build a thriving community media industry, it gives various mechanisms to create partnerships in the sector (see 9.3.5).#CHECK This enhances networking between community radio stations, which can transpire horizontally and interconnectedly. As an example, its provision that community media research is valuable for the industry show that internal community interconnection is feasible. By ascertaining what issues or concerns exist in the broader sector, the industry can expand in multiple responsive directions of possible partnerships and collaborations. The fact that the MDDA is mandated to offer workshops and training programmes, for example, for community radio broadcasters, shows that networked connectivity is evident, which could potentially further cross-community lineages between different radio stations.

The examinations above indicated that the South African broadcasting legislation shows observable rhizomatic qualities concerning the third principle category. However, these predominantly relate to how connectivity and networking must transpire within the internal communal contexts of community radio stations and, most notably, as expressed in the constructs of fluidity and interconnectedness. These notions are stipulated in the legal criteria emphasising community ownership and community radio participation.

The legislation is, however, not primarily focused on external connections and cross-community partnerships, as only the ECA and MDDA Act align prominently with this rhizomatic aspect of moving beyond internal community boundaries. If community radio is to function in a more participatory and externally oriented manner, this aspect could be expanded on in a more fleshed-out framework of this medium. Such external orientations could expand the existing decentralised, nodal nature of individual radio stations by connecting them with a heterogeneity of other stations to form a more extensive rhizomatic network. These expansions could also include multiple other types of community media and traditional media and even cross other organisational and individual partnership boundaries.

10.5.2.4 Alternative media

The **fourth rhizomatic principle** concerns the alternative media principle, covering six different constructs. These constructs are (a) primacy of local community concerns and needs, (b) alternative local programming and content, (c) community autonomy in content selection, provision and distribution, (d) responsive community programming, (e) dynamic, horizontal interconnection and interaction within the community, and (f) dynamic, horizontal interconnection and interaction between the community and external social actors (see Table 10-11). Table 10-15 presents the analyses of these constructs.

Table 10-15 Principle 4: Alternative media

Acts	Comparative Analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	Requirements about local programming content by and for local communities express the alternative nature of community radio organisations and practices. When local content takes primacy, it can also speak to the needs and concerns that are not traditionally covered by other media. In this manner, community radio can be described as an example of alternative rhizomatic media. The IBA and Broadcasting Acts obligate community radio to provide programmes generated from within the community by the community. This ensures that content has community relevancy. This denotes that the social and cultural aspects of lived realities and contexts at the grassroots level are paramount. Both Acts align well with notions <u>a–e</u> of the fourth principle (described above). It departs, however, regarding <u>f. dynamic, horizontal interconnection, and interaction between the community and external social actors</u> , as has been established in the discussion of the preceding themes.
ICASA Act	The ICASA Act also corresponds well with the fourth principle to the extent that it affects the already existing legal terms of the abovementioned two Acts. Still, as an already-established regulatory framework for the industry, the operationalisation of some of these notions will largely depend on how community radio stations interpret them on a grassroots level in their differing settings. Similar to the connectivity and networking rhizomatic aspect, the Act allows niche groups outside of traditional communal interests and geographical groups to establish stations. Arguably, this points to <u>f. dynamic, horizontal interconnection and interaction between the community and external social actors</u> .

Table 10-15 cont

Acts	Comparative Analyses
ECA	Unsurprisingly, the stipulations of the ECA are in strong agreement with all six of the constructs contained in the fourth theme. To repeat, it places high values on <u>a. local community concerns</u> in <u>b. alternative local programming content</u>. Furthermore, it has legal terms affirming that, as, alternative media community radio must encompass <u>d. responsive community programming</u>, <u>e. dynamic, horizontal interconnection and interaction within the community</u>, and <u>f. dynamic, horizontal interconnection and interaction between the community and external social actors</u>. In Section 10.5.1, it was noted that the Act is stringent in terms of local programming quotas concerning music, local news and other linguistic aspects. These guidelines might limit the self-determination of community members' decision-making capabilities in producing alternative media content that is truly responsive to the niche needs of their communities.
MDDA Act	Similar to the other themes, the MDDA Act relates to alternative media in a larger, less direct community broadcasting framework. Given that the Act primarily focuses on creating an enabling broadcasting environment and the provision of funds for community radio media projects, it indirectly addresses the notions concerning alternative media.

The examinations above show that community radio broadcasting exemplifies alternative rhizomatic media's nature. The Acts mandate community radio stations to reflect the unique concerns and needs of their communities through various legal demands. Given the strict local content quotas, it does however limit broadcasters from making completely self-directed decisions on programming content. Too many and too strict quotas can potentially reduce communities' capabilities to produce alternative content. Apart from the last two analysed Acts, the broader framework also does not guide stations in the creation – beyond internal community networks – of more dynamic interconnections and participation with social actors and organisations.

10.5.2.5 Not-for-profit

The **final rhizomatic principle** used to examine local communication broadcasting legislation concerns the not-for-profit principle, which comprises five different constructs. These constructs are (a) non-commercial entity, (b) non-profit purposes, (c) serves the community of interest, (d) alternative funding models, and (e) all revenue must be reinvested into the community for its (see Table 10-11). Below are the examinations of these constructs.

Table 10-16 Principle 5: Not-for-profit

Acts	Comparative Analyses
IBA & Broadcasting Acts	The IBA Act clearly states that community radio stations are <u>a. non-commercial entities</u> operating for <u>b. non-profit purposes</u> and <u>c. serving the community of interest</u>. It requires that these stations be funded by <u>d. alternative funding models (e.g., sponsorships, membership fees, grants, donations, or even advertising)</u>. It should also be noted here that these two Acts describe “free-to-air-service” as a broadcast service that may be broadcast and received without payment of subscription fees. It ensures universal access to community broadcasting services. Additionally, it means that the community is not legally required to fund community radio stations but can voluntarily do so. Like the Broadcasting Act, it demands that <u>e. all revenue must be reinvested into the community for its benefit</u> (see 9.3.1 and 9.3.2). The Act assert that this reinvestment must be monitored by ICASA, which can also audit the financial records of community radio stations.
ICASA Act	The Act does not make specific references to the notions of the final theme since it only establishes the broader framework in which ICASA operates (see 9.3.3).
ECA	Section 50 of the ECA of 2005 requires that community radio is a fully controlled <u>a. non-commercial entity</u> for <u>b. non-profit purposes</u> that <u>c. serves the community of interest of the relevant community</u> in which it operates. It confirms the different types of sources specified in the IBA and Broadcasting Acts (see 9.3.4).
MDDA Act	As has already been outlined, the MDDA Act does not give specific details on how these broadcasters may fund themselves. Instead, it makes provisions for grants to be given to community media projects. This grant structure encourages the development and growth of such mediated spaces and accordingly also encourages broader access to this sector by all South Africans. (see 9.3.5). From this vantage point, the Act does along with the constraints in the last thematic category of the rhizomatic framework.

In theory, the not-for-profit status of community broadcasters permits, community stations to operate without any concerns about financial interference by external stakeholders. This financial independence allows a community orientation that other funding models would not. The framework legalises various funding sources, which enables stations to pursue different types and combinations of financial support. The latter provision means that community radio stations can find financial means that are truly rhizomatic – that is to say, different sources of income could originate from various kinds of sources and be put to different uses.

Besides, any or all profit made through these mechanisms must benefit the community and its interests. Although these legal terms are supposed to benefit the community radio sector, and ultimately and predominately its grassroots communities, it does not mean that stations are free from financial burdens and financial sustainability challenges. This fact must be acknowledged, but

it is not within the remit of the current examination to study these challenges further.

10.5.2.6 Rhizomatic community media and South African broadcasting legislation: summary remarks

The above comparative examinations demonstrate several observable patterns of strong and weaker alignment between a rhizomatic reading of community media and the South African community radio broadcasting legislation. Figure 10-2 illustrates how these frameworks compare with one another.

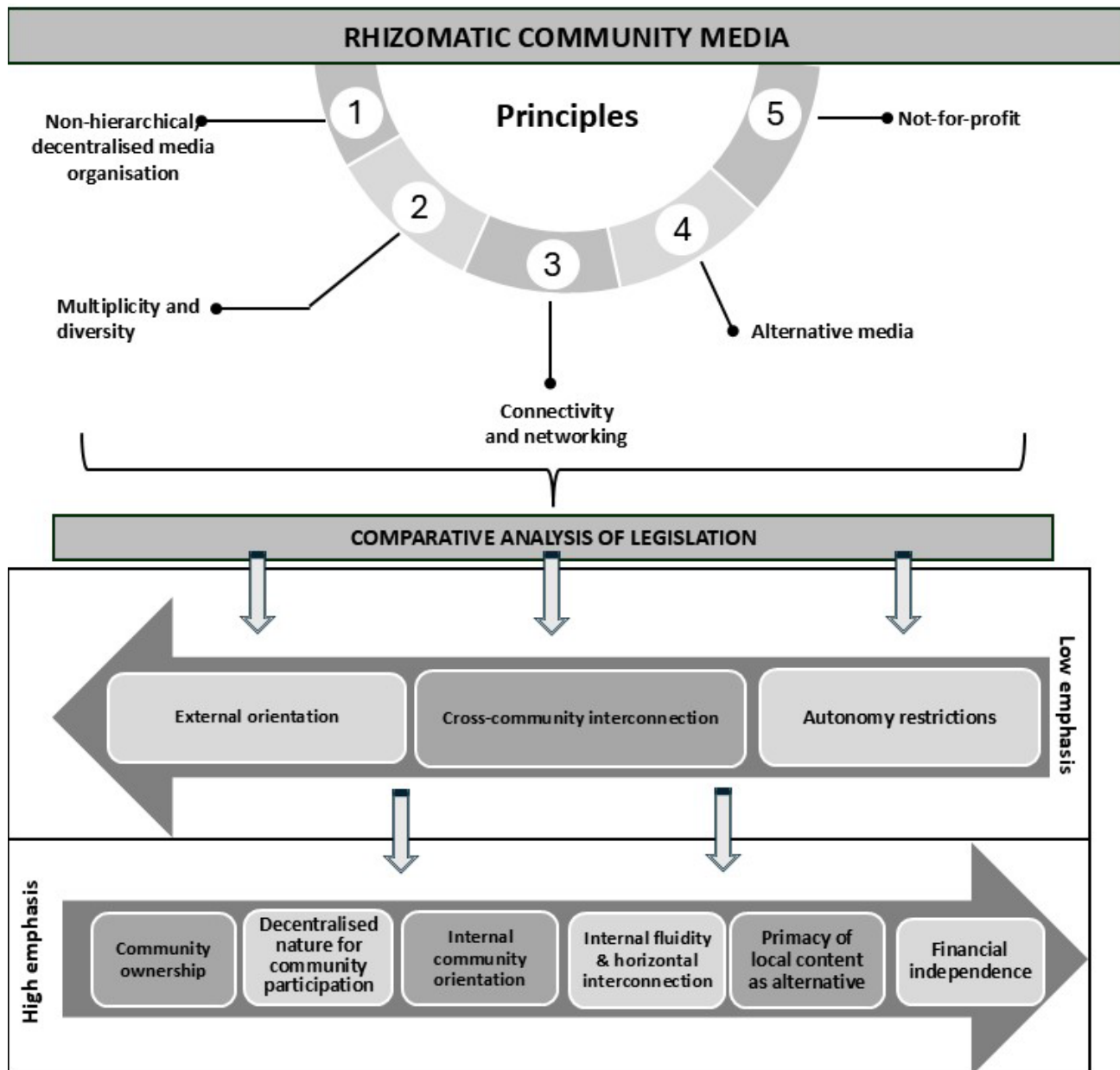


Figure 10-2 Community broadcasting through a rhizomatic community optic

In taking cognisance of the above comparisons, it becomes apparent that the community broadcasting framework corresponds strongly with the proposed rhizomatic framework of community media in several ways. The most observable alignments entail the assumptions about the decentralised nature of community media, the aspects of multiplicity and diversity, and the centrality of active community engagement or participation in producing programming content. The legislative environment similarly enables a level of connectivity and networking within a community that is not always feasible in traditional broadcasting media. Furthermore, its non-commercial funding model strengthens its rhizomatic characteristics.

As community radio is community-owned and its management volunteer-based, it does not embody traditional media's usual hierarchical, top-down organisational structure, processes or practices. Its operation is deeply embedded into the social and cultural community contexts of people on a grassroots level, making it far more accessible to local listenerships and their wider communities. Being decentralised means that community radio has a bottom-up organisational design that permits community voices and their concerns to directly – and therefore more meaningfully – inform how a station is managed and to what ends. This suggests that power is redistributed in the community via the rhizomatic community radio structure.

In South Africa, community radio is required to offer alternative media content. This rhizomatic affiliation is set in several legal stipulations that accentuate how community broadcasting must be responsive to community needs based on varying social identities. This emphasis on plurality facilitates programming content representing alternative viewpoints on matters of public concern that emerge from the unique vantage points of a particular community's interests. This is valuable because traditional media outlets do not necessarily cover the public interest issues that are embedded explicitly in local contexts and experiences. In practical terms, it would mean (for example) that local community members – notwithstanding their expertise or position in society – become the primary sources of programming content, its active creators and distributors, and eventually also its consumers. This gives a legally mandated assurance that community radio content has local relevance.

Decentralisation also permits more horizontal communication within a community network. It accentuates that community radio signifies and forms a rhizome of multiple and diverse nodes, thereby connecting community stations with their community members and concerns in a flatter, more expansive structure. In this manner, community radio provides a more flexible web or network of collaboration and knowledge-sharing about local issues and problems. A horizontal community radio network responds more readily to community needs since interaction transpires in more participatory communicative pathways. Given its non-hierarchic nature, community radio can fluidly interconnect with its members, which in turn allows the community's member to control how the station functions and what it broadcasts. South African community legislation places a premium on internal community orientation, horizontal interconnections and direct communication participation in community radio broadcasting.

South African community radio stations are clearly rhizomatic when it comes to the legal provisions on funding models for the sector. The legislation underscores the importance of community radio stations' financial independence from commercial and other imperatives. It also allows various sources and combinations of funding. By law, all surplus funds must be used to benefit the community – further articulating the alternative, internal focus of community radio.

The legislation, however, departs from the rhizomatic framework in several respects. As the analyses have revealed, the primary focus on local content being tied to strict quotas could potentially reduce the ability of radio stations to supply truly alternative media content. Such constraints may detract from local content producers' autonomous decision-making abilities and processes. In fact, it could weaken local programming to become increasingly homogenous, instead of it being representative of heterogeneous social identities and views.

The legislation's emphasis on an internal community orientation means that externally oriented connections and resource-sharing are also overlooked. The rhizomatic framework accepts that connectivity happens within the community and can extend beyond local interests or geographical boundaries. Apart from the MDDA Act and (to some extent) the ECA, the legislation does not specify how the community radio sector should foster collaborations or partnerships with organisations or social actors outside their local networks. This limits interconnectivity to local spaces and ideas,

meaning that potentially beneficial external connections could be lost. Consequently, there are notable shortcomings in the legislation concerning cross-media community and cross-community connections. Accordingly, an enclosed rhizomatic network can weaken the internal functioning of a community radio station.

10.5.2.7 A NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY RADIO AS PARTICIPATORY MEDIA

This section will present the study's final theoretical-conceptual framework of South African community radio as participatory media based on five newly formulated normative assumptions.

The preceding two sections examined how South African broadcasting legislation relates to this study's participatory communication and rhizomatic theory of community media frameworks. Each framework offers instructive prescriptions on how community radio could function as participatory media, yet none fully encapsulates the complexity of community radio's participatory nature. While there are overlaps between these frameworks, various important misalignments are noticeable as well. Therefore, this section presents a synthesised theoretical-conceptual framework for community radio in South Africa as participatory media, encapsulating the nuanced dimensions of community radio.

The legislations alignments with the participatory communication framework's assumptions include community ownership, multiplicity and diversity, collective agency for structural transformation, the inclusion of marginalised voices, and promoting local knowledge for collective empowerment (see Figure 10-1). Community ownership was again emphasised in relation to the rhizomatic frame, along with the decentralised nature of community participation, an internal community orientation, the primacy of local content, and the assumption of financial independence (see Figure 10-2). The legislation shows low emphasis on the participatory communication frame's assumptions regarding personal control, dialogical action, subjective agency for personal transformation, external resources and opportunities, indigenous knowledge, and subjective empowerment (see Figure 10-1). With regard to the rhizomatic theory of community participation, the divergences between the legislation

and the proposed framework involve the assumptions about community radio's lack of external orientation, low emphasis on cross-community interconnection, and evident autonomy restrictions concerning community broadcasters' decision-making capacities (see Figure 10-2).

Viewing these nine limitations together, there are certain aspects concerning participatory communication and the rhizomatic theory's frameworks that come to the fore. These must be merged into a coherent whole to create a more synthesised framework of community radio as participatory media. As presented in Table 10-17, this framework proposes five major, integrated assumptions for South African community radio to be a genuinely participatory type of community media. Whilst conceptually these statements can be understood and described individually, they are in fact highly interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The table below indicates the core ideas of each assumption. The interconnection between these five assumptions is then presented in narrated descriptions.

Table 10-17 Community radio as participatory media

Assumptions	Core ideas
1. Indigenous knowledge	Community radio must explicitly incorporate indigenous knowledge into its broadcasting services based on the community's social and cultural lived realities and contexts.
2. Subjective empowerment mechanisms	Broadcasters must facilitate the personal or subjective empowerment of individual listeners and not only the community at large.
3. External partnerships	Community radio stations must shift their internal focus to purposefully include and encourage establishing and maintaining external partnerships and collaborations.
4. Cross-organisational collaborations	Community radio broadcasters should deliberately foster partnerships beyond their community radio networks to embrace a diversity of social actors and organisations.
5. Dialogic praxis methods	Community radio stations must utilise dialogic praxis methods to ensure that their programming and services have community relevance and impact.

Having compared the legislation to participatory communication and rhizomatic frameworks, *it is apparent that for community radio to fully operate as participatory media, it is essential that the*

place and role of indigenous knowledge must be heightened. Both of the theoretical frameworks emphasise that the diversity of social and cultural lived realities embedded in local communities are vital to ensuring cultural actions that responsibly address the community needs. This assumption aligns with this study's third theoretical statement concerning culture, which asserted that culture is an embedded participatory communication and social practice aimed at empowering local communities (see 7.1.3). To fully realise the potential of community radio as participatory media, its inextricable and rhizomatic link to knowledge and culture must be stressed. This will lead to cultural synthesis, as Freire (1970:140) described, which values local, indigenous knowledge and experiences in an integrated manner (see 5.4.1).

Furthermore, the analyses in this chapter demonstrated that community radio legislation emphasises communal or collective empowerment above that of the individual. This communal emphasis risks creating an agency-structure binary. However, in its fourth theoretical assumption on empowerment this study asserts that participatory communication necessarily means that groups and individuals must become critically aware of their surroundings to challenge and ultimately transform them (see 7.1.4). While community radio concerns the collective, serving the community and encouraging collective empowerment cannot come at the cost of subjectivity. As the rhizomatic approach confirms (see 8.4.4), a community radio network is configured through multiple diverse nodes that comprise intersubjective social relations *and* subjective or individual ones. ***For a community radio station to function as participatory media, it must balance subjective agency for personal transformation with community agency. In turn, this balancing of subjective and community agency is a requirement for social or structural transformation to transpire.***

This balance can be achieved if community radio stations make explicit use of dialogic praxis methods, as proposed by Freire (see 4.4.1). Since there is a dialectic tension between the subjective and collective aspects of community radio, dialogic communication can be used to intersubjectively encourage internal and external problem-posing and learning opportunities. ***Community radio stations will exhibit a genuine participatory ethos if they allow personal and communal voices to articulate their shared and differentiated needs through dialogic praxis.*** This study's second theoretical statement claims that dialogue permits all social actors—most especially the marginalised

ones – to articulate their views and needs and thereby encourage empowerment and transformation (see 7.1.2). For community radio to be participatory media, this dialogic praxis must also involve internal dialogue *within* the community and *external dialogue* with social actors and organisations. Moreover, this dialogic praxis cannot be limited to local interests or spatiality. Internal and external dialogue can further be enhanced by a rhizomatic approach that *connects internal and external community social actors*.

This ties in with the next normative assumption of this study's synthesised framework: ***For community radio to function as truly participatory media, it is essential to foster external partnerships***. While the participatory communication framework stresses the primacy of grassroots identities and development concerns, community radio stations must forge constructive and dynamic relationships with a multiplicity of partners outside of a community's confines in a genuinely rhizomatic fashion. Despite the participatory ethos of community radio as something that is predominantly internally orientated, in a rhizomatic fashion, it can create external pathways that connect to the regional, national and even global systems. Given the fluidity of rhizomatic community radio, these partnerships are not fixed and can be disrupted or altered at any moment if they are not beneficial to the community interest (see 8.4.4).

This brings the study to its final normative statement: ***Community radio as participatory media can and must exhibit hybridity concerning external relationships that entail cross-organisational collaborations***. This means that community radio must expand its network beyond community radio, community media, or even local community organisations and social actors, including a mixture of collaborations. Community radio stations can forge beneficial relationships beyond their community – for example, with commercial newswire services or local educational facilities that could enhance the broadcasting services of a local station – provided that their communal interest, participatory ethos or financial independence are not compromised. If community radio stations are discerning in choosing external cross-collaborations, such relationships can enhance the participatory communication purposes of community radio. These collaborations will then broaden the participatory ethos of community radio stations and deepen their impact within their communities.

With these five normative assumptions in mind, this study submits its final synthesis of the theoretical-conceptual framework of what South African community radio should comprise. To reiterate: It is essential that community radio integrate indigenous knowledge into its broadcasting services and practices; furthermore, it must encourage not only communal empowerment but also subjective empowerment, establish external partnerships, foster cross-organisational collaborations, and increase the use of diagonal praxis as methods for participatory communication to be incorporated into truly participatory community radio. Together, and cognisant of existing community broadcasting legislation, these elements could ensure that community radio operates according to a participatory media framework.

10.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the current study's theoretical breadth and depth, it must acknowledge apparent research design, purpose and scope limitations. Firstly, the highly theoretical nature of this study remains empirically untested. The study used an integrative, semi-systematic literature review as its primary qualitative research strategy to interrogate available, relevant literature and subsequently theorise and metatheorise the participatory paradigm more coherently (see 1.7.1.1). Notwithstanding this limitation, the current study examined available literature with theoretical and empirical foci. Therefore, while the presented theoretical-conceptual framework remains empirically untested, its development was informed – theoretically and conceptually – by several studies that were based on empirical research. This study considered and examined a broad array of theories from within development communication with which to theorise the participatory paradigm. In many instances, this study included theoretical concepts, approaches and ideas from various external disciplines. However, this study also acknowledges its theoretical limitations. It accepts that other possible instructive theories exist, which could have enhanced the final synthesised framework.

10.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Future research should apply the proposed theoretical framework in empirical settings. First and foremost, the most apparent application would concern South African community radio. For

example, this kind of research could follow a qualitative case study approach where, based on the presented theoretical-conceptual framework, the participatory characteristics and functionality of a specific community radio station are assessed. This kind of research must be conducted from an organisational viewpoint where a selected radio station's management are included as research participants. However, true to the ethos of the participatory paradigm, the subjective perspectives and experiences of the station's local listenership and community should be considered as the primary research objectives. Future research should investigate different community radio stations as case studies to determine if listenerships indeed experience the participatory practices of their stations.

Given the rhizomatic assumptions that were incorporated into this study's final framework, future research could also include exploring the framework from the viewpoint of the social actors in the larger broadcasting industry who are concerned with community radio. For example, the perspectives of community radio networks and associations could inform the framework's continued development. In advocating and further developing the community radio sector in South Africa, both of these associations are directly concerned with the well-being and sustained support of the sector. Their expert views, especially concerning regulatory and policy matters, could greatly enhance this research framework and rectify possible conceptual shortcomings. Whereas this study has explored the legislative environment in which community radio operates, role-players at the regulatory body ICASA could also be included in refining the proposed framework. Furthermore, the viewpoints of other governmental organisations such as the MDDA could also be valuable for the framework's future modification.

All of the above recommendations could greatly improve the validity, reliability and future empirical application of this study's theoretical-conceptual contribution. Their implementation would in turn strengthen the community radio sector in South Africa and give fruition to the democratic and participatory ideals envisioned in the relevant legislation and the country's constitution.

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ANNEXURE A: LANGUAGE EDITING CONFIRMATION

LANGUAGE EDITING CONFIRMATION LETTER

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25 November 2024

To whom it may concern

This letter confirms that I have provided proofreading and language editing services for the PhD thesis of Hannelie Otto, student number 11798777.

The title of the thesis is **A theoretical-conceptual framework for South African community radio as participatory media.**

It is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Communication at the North-West University, South Africa. Her supervisor is Prof L.M. Fourie.

My input was limited to assisting with corrections of typing errors and grammar mistakes, suggestions to improve the language for greater clarity of understanding and technical editing to achieve stylistic consistency.

Please contact me by email for additional information or confirmation.

Etienne Viviers
Research Associate, MASARA Focus Area, North-West University

ANNEXURE B: ORIGINALITY REPORT

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