

**PRODUCING JOURNALISM ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE FOR NEWS AND
AGRICULTURAL RADIO: A CASE STUDY OF MALAWI'S PUBLIC
BROADCASTER**

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DECLARATION RELATING TO PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work. I have acknowledged all other authors' ideas and referenced direct quotations from their work. I have not allowed anyone else to borrow or copy my work.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how radio journalists at the Malawian public broadcaster (MBC) experience the task of producing content that can help their audiences to engage with the local relevance of climate change. This study establishes terms of reference for this research by mapping out international histories of public engagement with the concept of climate change in the domains of science, politics and the media. It describes how contestations around climate change have evolved within these spheres and concludes that such contestation is shaped by relations of power that inform the international economic domain. The study then examines scholarly evaluations of journalism about climate change, concluding that such evaluation is grounded in distinct normative understandings of the social purpose of such journalism. It is argued that research about Malawian journalists' experience of reporting on climate change should draw on knowledge of the role that norms play within this local environment. With this goal in mind, the study reviews tools for the analysis of the normative foundations of journalism within specific socio-historic contexts. It demonstrates the relevance of these tools for the identification of norms and their influence on journalism about climate change in the Malawian context. The empirical component of the study draws on this framework by means of a case study of the experiences of journalists working at the MBC. It examines how these journalists experience the task of producing content that enables their audiences to engage with the local relevance of climate change. It compares such experience as articulated by journalists working for agricultural and news programming. It is concluded that the participants have access to credible knowledge about climate change and its relevance to the Malawian context. Based on such knowledge, they articulate a shared understanding of climate change and its relevance to the Malawian context. However, the study identifies differences in the way that the two groups make sense of the practice of producing journalism about climate change that is of relevance to their audience. In particular, the agricultural journalists incorporate a more inclusive and diverse set of norms into their conceptualisation of such practice. At the same time, the two groups nevertheless respond similarly when commenting on institutional factors at MBC that constrain or enable them to produce journalism about climate change that is guided by such norms. They place emphasis on the need for MBC to provide opportunities for journalists to have access to training, facilitated by organisations that have expertise in climate change journalism. It is concluded that the participants recognise that, despite the entrenched culture of authoritarianism at MBC, such workshops can contribute fundamentally to the shaping of journalistic practice within this broadcaster.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABMA	Association of Business Managers and Administrators
AFORD	Alliance for Democracy
AFFRI	African Farm Radio Research Initiative
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AYISE	Active Youth Initiative for Social Empowerment
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BIU	Blantyre International University
CABS	Central African Broadcasting Services
CAF	British Central African Federation
CCTV	Chinese Central Television
CEPA	Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy
COP	Conference of Parties
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DBU	Development Broadcasting Unit
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
DTR	Development Through Radio
FAMW	Federation of African Media Women
FBC	Federation Broadcasting Corporation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland
GoM	Government of Malawi
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
INC	Initial National Communication
ICSU	International Council of Scientific Union
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LEAD	Leadership for Environment and Development
MACRA	Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority
MBCTV	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Television
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MEET	Malawi Environmental Endowment Trust
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MDGS	Malawi National Development Goals
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NCCIP	National Climate Change Investment Plan
NJS	Nordic SADC Journalism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
RLCs	Radio Listening Clubs
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TVM	Television Malawi
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations International Children and Education Fund
WCC	World Climate Conference
WESM	Wildlife Environmental Society of Malawi
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY	4
Introduction.....	4
1. Histories of public engagement with climate change	4
1.1 Climate change debates within the domain of science.....	5
1.2 Climate change debates in the socio-political domain	8
1.3 Climate change debates and the media	12
2. Evaluating journalism about climate change	16
2.1 The purpose of journalism about climate change: to inform and educate	17
2.2 An alternative conceptualisation of purpose: active and critical engagement	19
2.3 Adding to the alternative conceptualisation: facilitating public participation	21
Conclusion	22
CHAPTER TWO: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	25
Introduction.....	25
1. Analysis at the macro level: media systems and the norms that inform them	25
1.1 Theoretical debates.....	25
1.2 The application of macro-level analysis to the Malawian context.....	29
i) Media in colonial Malawi (1891-1964)	29
ii) Malawi media during one-party state (1964-1992)	31
iii) Malawi media during the multi-party political transition (1993-1994).....	32
iv) Media in democratic Malawi (1994 to date)	34
1.3 Implications of macro-level media analysis for climate change journalism in Malawi	37
2. Analysis at the medium level: journalism practice and the norms that inform it	39
3. Analysis at the micro level: researching newsroom experiences.....	42

Conclusion	46
CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH DESIGN	49
Introduction.....	49
1. Contextualising the empirical study.....	49
1.1 Climate change in Malawi.....	49
1.2 The role of the radio in responding to climate change in Malawi.....	52
1.2.1 MBC Radio news	53
1.2.2 Developmental radio on MBC and the role of listener clubs.....	54
1.2.3 Agricultural radio on the MBC	55
2. The research design.....	57
2.1 Methodology: qualitative research and its philosophical focus	58
2.2 Type of research: a case study.....	59
2.3 Method of research: qualitative interviews	60
2.4. Designing the research instrument: an interview guide	61
2.5 Ethical considerations	62
3. Implementing the research plan	63
3.1 Review of programme content	64
3.2 The research participants.....	66
3.3 Conducting the interviews.....	68
3.4 Analysing the interview content and writing up the research findings	70
Conclusion	71
CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS I: THE AGRICULTURAL JOURNALISTS	73
Introduction.....	73
1. The participants.....	74
2. Conceptualising climate change	81

3. Conceptualising the purpose of journalism about climate change.....	88
4. Evaluating journalism about climate change	92
5. Engaging with enabling and constraining factors at MBC	99
Conclusion	105
CHAPTER FIVE - FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS II: THE NEWS REPORTERS	108
Introduction.....	108
1. The participants.....	108
2. Conceptualising climate change	112
3. Conceptualising the purpose of journalism about climate change.....	117
4. Evaluating journalism about climate change	121
5. Engaging with enabling and constraining factors at MBC	124
Conclusion	130
CLOSING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	132
APPENDICES	136
Appendix 1: The interview guide	136
Appendix 2: The consent form	138
Bibliography	141

INTRODUCTION

There is consensus among experts that climate change poses a major threat to humanity (Bodansky, 2011:25; IPCC, 2007:813; Olmos, 2001:3). This is also acknowledged in the African context, where poor communities are understood to be especially vulnerable to its impact (Action Aid, 2006:2; Giddens, 2009; Hallowes, 2013:25; IPCC, 2007:435; Nangoma, 2007:1; Shackleton et al., 2015). Malawi is thought to be among the top ten countries in Africa worst affected by climate change (Action Aid, 2006:3; Connors, 2011).

Across the world, radio has contributed to projects aimed at addressing climate change (Chikapa, 2011:2; Myers, 2008; Mkwambisi, 2010:22). Its potential is of particular relevance in Malawi given that most households own a radio receiver even in the most rural of communities (Chapota & Manda, 2015:9; Utembe, 2010:84). However, only isolated examples of programmes deal with climate change (Chikapa & Chapota, 2011). One exception can be found in donor-funded agricultural programmes on the state broadcaster (Mkwambisi, 2010:26; Perez-Teran et al., 2015:1). Research in central and southern Malawi suggests that these programmes have made some impact on local audiences (Hara, 2012:16).

However, internationally, journalists encounter challenges in producing content that can help communities to engage with the local relevance of climate change (Bisht & Ahluwalia, 2012; Boykoff, 2011; Shanahan, 2011). One reason is that journalists struggle to make sense of the complexity of debates about climate change in discussions of science and policy (ibid; Harbinson et al., 2006; Harvey, 2011; Russell, 2008; Saleh, 2013:1; Shanahan, 2009). Journalists view climate change as “... confusing because there is a lot of jargon” (Hallowes, 2013:5). For this reason, they battle to pinpoint how climate change debates can influence local decision-making processes (Carvalho, 2010:489; Mukheibir, 2013 in Shackleton et al., 2015:327). This problem is also noted in African contexts, where journalists speak of difficulties in comprehending the jargon generated by climate change experts (Davison, 2012; Harbinson et al., 2006). Similar comments have been made in the Malawian context (Manjawira, 2009:68; Shanahan, 2009; Manyozo, 2007).

This study proposes, however, that in order to address the challenges faced by journalists in explaining the local relevance of climate change, it is not enough to focus purely on improving journalists’ knowledge of the topic and their ability to translate complex information into everyday terms. A central reason for this is that discussions of climate change represent contested terrains, embedded in economic power struggles (Boykoff, 2011; Giddens, 2008; Giddens, 2009; Gosh, 2009; Harvey, 2011). There are, for example, arguments around

whether all nations should bear equal responsibility for climate change effects (Boykoff, 2011; Giddens, 2009; Harvey 2011; Hallows, 2013; Shanahan et al., 2013). Within such arguments, insistence by industrial nations that developing countries should comply with mitigation and adaptation efforts is often interpreted as a way of maintaining the upper hand within global relations of economic power (Harvey, 2011; Boykoff, 2011). Journalists must make sense of such claims if they are to produce journalism that engages with the local relevance of climate change (Manyozo, 2007; Mukheibir, 2013 in Shackleton et al., 2015:327; Saleh, 2013:1). They need to consider how statements made by politicians and scientists can be read against the backdrop of such contestation. In this way, it can be ensured that reports on climate change are not presented as isolated events but rather in relation to socio-political context (Boykoff, 2011; Cross et al., 2015; Panos, 2008; Shanahan, 2009).

However, accepted conventions of broadcast news mitigate against efforts to contextualise climate change (Ward, 2008). The news format limits the duration of items and with this the chance to provide background details (ibid; Fang, 1991; Boykoff, 2011). Furthermore, traditional understandings of newsworthiness mean that items about climate change are featured only when they are based on events such as disasters or statements by high-ranking officials (Mare, 2011). Similar constraints exist in agricultural programmes where the focus tends to be on technical information about farming and little attention is paid to social context. In Sub-Saharan Africa, such programming mostly features content about basic modern farming methods (Farm Radio International, 2014; Manyozo, 2005; Mackie, 1974).

A further challenge is that global climate change debates are primarily located within social environments dominated by English and other international languages (Shanahan, 2013; Miller, 2010; Boykoff, 2011). In many parts of the world journalists therefore need to work across boundaries of language and culture in order to enable local audiences to engage with debates about climate change (Bisht & Ahluwalia, 2012; Lieberman, 2012). This is also true in the Malawian instance, where journalists have to explain such discussions to smallholder farmers who are based in Chichewa-speaking communities (Mkwambisi, 2010:26; Simelton et al., 2013; Shackleton et al., 2015).

In response to these observations, this study investigates how journalists at MBC radio in Malawi experience the task of producing content about climate change. The study compares the experiences of journalists working in news and agricultural programming. The focus is on how these journalists experience the task of producing content about climate change that can enable rural communities to engage with the relevance to their local context. The aim is to gain

insight into the two groups' conceptualisation of the kind of content that they should ideally produce and the challenges that they face in doing so.

Chapter One establishes contextual terms of reference for such a study. It deals, firstly, with histories of public engagement with the concept of climate change in the domains of science, politics and the media. It then builds on this discussion through an examination of scholarship that evaluates journalism about climate change. Chapter Two maps out a theoretical framework designed to engage with these contextual issues. This framework is designed to inform the empirical component of the research, presented in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. As such, it demonstrates the relevance of the conceptual tools discussed to a study of journalists' experience of reporting on climate change within the Malawian context. Chapter Three describes the research project that represents the empirical component of this study. It explains each of the decisions that were made in the design of the research plan. Finally, it provides an evaluative discussion of the implementation of this research plan. Chapter Four and Chapter Five presents major findings generated from the field. It also gives a detailed analysis of the results.

CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

Introduction

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the aim of this research is to investigate how radio journalists experience the challenges involved in producing content that can help their audiences to engage with the local relevance of climate change. This chapter establishes contextual terms of reference for such a study. Section One focuses on the histories of public engagement with the concept of climate change in the domains of science, politics and the media. Section Two builds on this discussion through an examination of scholarship that evaluates journalism about climate change.

1. Histories of public engagement with climate change

It has been noted that the histories of debate about climate change in the domains of science, politics and the media have all been fraught with contestation (Giddens, 2008:1). Discussions of the issue have been a battlefield, with politicians, NGOs, corporations and scientists advancing conflicting perspectives on the nature of climate change and its social significance (Carvalho, 2010:1). This study begins from the premise that, in order to better understand the challenges that journalists face in making sense of the local relevance of climate change, it is important to acknowledge this history of contestation.

The term ‘climate change’ refers to long-term, fundamental shifts in climatic conditions. It is broadly acknowledged that such change is taking place within the current historical moment. A key factor leading to such change is understood to be global warming, described as a rapid increase in the average temperature of the earth’s atmosphere over the past century (Giddens, 2008:1). Global warming is explained as resulting from an increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, particularly carbon dioxide (Neumayer, 2000:187). It is generally acknowledged that this increase results from human industrial activity and this causal correlation can be traced back to the start of the industrial revolution (Behringer, 2010:3; Harding, 2016). However, it has taken a long time for such acknowledgement to emerge, and even more time for an agreement to be established on how climate change is impacting on the world and what should be done about this.

To trace the emergence of this agreement, the discussion below deals with the history of the discovery of scientific evidence for climate change and the growing acknowledgement by scientists of the threat that it poses to humanity. The section then moves to an examination of how such acknowledgement has been taken up within the socio-political domain by activists,

development workers, policy makers and politicians. Finally, it examines the role the media has played in reporting on both scientific and socio-political engagements with climate change.

1.1 Climate change debates within the domain of science

From the late 18th century onwards, there was continued interest within scientific research in the way that the Earth's climate continues to change (Boykoff, 2011:40). As part of such research, scientists took an interest in changes in temperature. By the mid-18th century researchers were drawing conclusions about the role that gases play in climate change. It took some time, however, for such research to be linked to the impact that human beings make on the earth's climate (O'Riordan & Jagger, 1996:12).

In the 1820s, scientists began to gather evidence of a link between climate change and carbon emissions. French physicist and mathematician Jean-Baptiste Fourier was the first to detect this link, as early as 1827. He noted that carbon emissions trap the infrared heat that the Earth's surface radiates as it is warmed by the sun (Mastrandrea & Schneider, 2010:21). This discovery was supported in 1859 by British scientist John Tyndall, who measured the effect in a laboratory. He observed that if heat-trapping gases were removed from the atmosphere the warmth from the earth would rise unhindered into space. Eventually this action would lead to the formation of frost on earth. He suggested that ice ages were caused by a decrease in the amount of atmospheric carbon dioxide (Pearce, 2007:34). Conversely, the increase in carbon dioxide caused by human industrial activity was likely to lead to an increase in the earth's atmospheric temperature (Hulme, 2009:122).

By the late 19th century, Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius was researching the possibility of a link between an increase in carbon emissions caused by human activity and a rise in the earth's atmospheric temperature. In 1896, he published calculations that were intended to demonstrate that rising carbon dioxide content caused by such activity was leading to a rise in global temperatures (Pearce, 2007:35; Boykoff, 2011:41). Arrhenius' work is considered to be the first demonstration of how the burning of fossil fuels and other combustion processes could lead to global warming (Pearce, 2007:36). Other scientists began to contribute further evidence of this causal link and by 1938 British meteorologist Guy Stewart Callender presented the first evidence of rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere (Pearce, 2007:38). He posited that the warming trend experienced in the nineteenth century had been caused by a 10 percent increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels (ibid).

It was only in the late 1950s, however, that scientists began to produce longitudinal studies which involved the rigorous measurement of long-term changes in the earth's

atmosphere with regards to the concentration of carbon dioxide as well as temperature. Charles Keeling led the pack in 1958 when he conducted the first measurements of carbon dioxide at the top of Mauna Loa Mountain in Hawaii (O’Riordan & Jagger, 1996:12). He continued to take regular four-hourly measurements until his death in 2005. Keeling’s contribution was the first serious attempt to continuously monitor carbon dioxide levels in one place and the results of his work proved dramatic. The readings indicated that atmospheric carbon dioxide had been increasing annually since measurement began in 1958 (Maslin, 2004:8). Keeling wrote in 1962 that “... it was possible to deduce that approximately half of carbon dioxide from fossil fuel burning was accumulating in the air,” with the rest absorbed by nature (Pearce, 2007:40).

By the early 1960s, there was growing acknowledgement within the international scientific community that global warming was a reality (Harding, 2016:1). Scientists started tracing the intensification of fluctuations in global weather patterns in the 1970s and attributed this situation to fast-rising carbon dioxide emissions (Pearce, 2007:14). These observations prompted the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) to convene the first World Climate Conference (WCC) in 1979 in Geneva (Wiley, 2010:636). The conference offered a major global forum for an exclusive focus on climate change even though it did not make any calls for policy action on the issue. It is generally given the credit for having laid the foundation for subsequent conferences and the development of better understanding of the climate change problem (Wiley, 2010:636; Agrawala, 1997:607).

Advances in the sophistication of computer software during this time also enabled scientists to devise models of the atmosphere that demonstrate the impact of climate change. The availability of such demonstrations led to more confidence within the scientific community in predictions of global warming. For instance, upon reviewing such models, the US National Academy of Sciences concluded in 1979 that climate change was a reality and was leading to serious effects on the global environment (National Research Council, 1979:vii). Further scientific efforts resulted in a shock discovery in the early 1980s that the Antarctic ozone layer was developing a hole. This discovery brought new fears amongst scientists about the impact of industrial activity on the global atmosphere (Pearce, 2007:15).

It should be clear from this historical summary that, by the end of the 1970s, many scientists around the world were beginning to speak with one voice about the threat that climate change posed to humanity. It was, however, only fifteen years later that this conversation migrated outside the realm of science, into the socio-political domain (Bodansky, 2011:23). Commentators regard the period from 1985 to 1988 as the phase when climate change was first

transformed from a purely scientific concern to an issue that is recognised to be of socio-political relevance (Pomerance, 1989:259).

A significant moment in this process of transformation took place at a conference in 1985 in Villach, Austria, where an international scientific consensus about the social significance of climate change was reached (O’Riordan & Jagger, 1996:14). The Villach Conference represented a collaboration between three international scientific organisations¹ and was the culmination of a series of meetings held between 1980 and 1985 (Agrawala, 1997:607). Participants were invited from 30 countries and included environmental scientists and research managers with expertise in climate change. The aim was to assess the role of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in climate variations and associated effects (Maunder, 1994:237). The conference agreed that climate change due to greenhouse gases should be considered as a serious current and long-term global environmental problem (Hecht & Tilpak, 1994:9). It was further resolved that it was high time that scientists brought the climate change issue to the attention of politicians and policy makers (O’Riordan & Jagger, 1996:17). Participants articulated an appeal to governments and intergovernmental organisations to incorporate climate change and understanding of the impact of rising greenhouse gases into their policy development strategies (Jaeger, 1988:1). In this way, the Villach conference increased the salience of climate change as a serious problem that needed to be confronted internationally by policy makers and politicians (Torrance, 2006:30; Agrawala, 1997:608).

The Villach conference also led to the establishment of an Advisory Group on Greenhouse Gases in 1986. The aim of the group was to sustain academic and public interest in the impact of increasing levels of greenhouse gases on the ozone layer and on climate change (Agrawala, 1997:609). Their work inspired further concerns and calls for action regarding the climate change problem. Eventually, in June 1988, a scientific conference to discuss the changing atmosphere and implications on global security was convened in Toronto, Canada. The conference concluded that the earth’s atmosphere is being changed at an unprecedented rate by pollutants resulting from human activities. It further warned that climate change represents a major threat to international security (Gleick, 1989:333). Participants also put together an international call for 20 percent reductions in carbon emissions (Harrison, 2004:113). The Toronto conference prompted further recognition of the climate change

¹ These organisations included the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). Conference participants also included scientists from reputable institutions such as the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and from Harvard University.

problem and led to the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in November 1988 (IPCC, 2007)². The aim of the panel was to assess available information on climate change (Agrawala, 1997:606).

By the early 1990s, scientists had ensured that climate change was firmly on the international agenda for discussion by a wide range of decision-makers within the socio-political domain. Since this time, the scientific community has continued to contribute to such discussion through the circulation of reports on the growing impact of climate change and calls for international efforts to respond to this problem (IPCC, 2007). This has helped, over time, to ensure that consciousness of climate change is weaving its way into the general consciousness of people globally (Tadesse, 2010:1). Most recently, however, top climate scientists, including James Hansen from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have published evidence that climate change is worsening at a pace much faster than predicted, which makes it even more urgent to rapidly reduce carbon emissions (Hansen et al, 2016:2). Scientists have noted with concern that, despite this urgency, humanity has not yet responded adequately to current evidence of climate change (Urry, 2016:1).

1.2 Climate change debates in the socio-political domain

From the early 1970s onwards scientific evidence of global warming and its impact on climate was circulating outside the realm of science, leading to ongoing discussions by politicians and policy-makers (Bodansky, 2011:24). Nevertheless, participants in the discussions were slow to accept that climate change represents a serious problem that political leadership needed to respond to (Norgaard, 2011:8). By 1979, attempts by the organisers of the First World Climate Conference to entice participation from policy makers still did not yield positive results (Bodansky, 2011:24).

It was, indeed, only in the mid-1980s that climate change became more broadly acknowledged as a significant political issue. As we have seen in the previous section, an important catalyst for this shift was the 1985 conference of scientists in Austria. There were, however, many skeptics who were slow to accept the credibility of the science behind this emerging threat. Numerous political leaders and business executives argued that they needed more time before they could articulate a response because more evidence was required. More time was also needed to examine the potential economic and ecological impact (Cass, 2006:1).

Nevertheless, from 1985 onwards, public concern about scientific evidence of climate

² The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) were behind the formation of this intergovernmental grouping.

change was growing, particularly within industrially advanced nations. By the end of this decade, in context of such pressure, the leadership of a number of countries had articulated a position on climate change. America, for example, acknowledged the issue but was not yet ready to engage in political debate on the matter (Cass, 2007:28). In response to public interest, Reagan's administration supported the continuation of more studies of climate change, in order to gather further evidence of the phenomenon (Sunstein, 2012). The United Kingdom's response was also initially cautious; indeed, Thatcher's administration pushed climate change to the bottom of the policy agenda (Cass, 2007:40). However, this action created a backlash of accusations of lack of seriousness from the British public and environmental organisations. By 1988, Thatcher's administration had recognised climate change as a high priority environmental issue (Harding, 2016:1). In Germany, parliament responded in 1987 by instituting a commission of inquiry to produce a review of the relevant evidence and to provide policy advice (Hatch, 2007:43). The commission concluded that there was massive and unequivocal scientific evidence that climate change was happening and represented a serious threat (Enquete Commission of the German Bundestag 1990:24).

The next stage involved discussions on what to do about the climate change problem. As we have seen in the previous section of this chapter, it was in 1988 at the Toronto World Conference on the Changing Atmosphere that the first call was made for governments to commit to emission reduction (Bailey, 2015:55). By 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) had negotiated an international environmental treaty known as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The objective was to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and to reduce emissions to agreed levels by the year 2000 (O'Riordan & Jagger, 1996:17). From 1995 onwards, participants to the convention met annually in Conferences of the Parties (COP) to assess progress in dealing with climate change. However, the framework developed in this context set no limits on emissions for individual countries and contained no enforcement mechanisms. Efforts to convince stakeholders to commit to the treaty also did not progress fast (Mehlenbacher, 2010:5).

Commentators have pointed out that a central reason for the reluctance to accept responsibility for climate change is that key participants in the climate change debate are invested in maintaining those industrial activities that are most implicated in global warming (Behringer, 2010:3). Because of this, advocates for the recognition of climate change have argued with increasing urgency that the value of investment in these industries is outweighed by the threat posed by climate change to humanity in general (IPCC, 2007; Mastrandrea &

Schneider, 2010:3; Hallows, 2013:7). In his encyclical on the environment in 2015, Pope Francis spoke of the need for change – both at the individual level of lifestyle choices, and in context of industrial production methods that aggravate climate change effects (Laudato Si, 2015:18). Such statements imply that developed countries need to make dramatic commitments to carbon emission reduction as a way of mitigating climate change effects (Norgaard, 2011:57).

Since the early 1990s, international discussions have repeatedly reached points where stakeholders did commit to agreements that would involve changing their approach to industrial production in order to mitigate against climate change. However, the countries most deeply implicated in the causes of climate change because of the advanced level of industrial activity within their economies remained resistant to such agreements. They continued to resist effective and radical responses to climate change, despite any agreements that may be reached. A typical example is that of resistance from industrially powerful nations to submit to resolutions of the 1997 Climate Change Conference held in Kyoto, Japan. The world's nations convened for a discussion on how much each country should commit to reduce greenhouse emissions (Palfreman, 2006:30). The United States was reluctant to ratify the Kyoto protocol, and Canada retracted an earlier promise to ratify this treaty (Baer, 2012:147; Robinson, 2010:13). Another example can be noted in context of the Sixth UNFCCC, which was intended to clarify details of the Kyoto Protocol. Agreement about these details could not be reached by participants. In context of such resistance, international debates have centred on who should take responsibility for the problems caused by climate change, and for appropriate remedial measures. At this level, negotiations have been characterised by accusations of failure to abide to agreed commitments to mitigation and adaptation (Cross et al., 2015:5).

For much of the history described so far, the main participants in the discussion were representatives of countries with advanced industrial economies. However, over time, the perspectives of developing economies have also come to play a central role in the discussion. Indeed, of special interest within the contestations about responsibility for climate change has been the tension that has emerged between developed North and developing South (Hurrell & Sengupta 2012:480; Gosh 2009). In context of such contestation, developing countries have accused the West of failure to implement mitigation commitments, despite being the major contributors of carbon emissions (Shanahan et al., 2013:10; Okereke, 2010:57). In this regard, suggestions for a fair sharing out of responsibilities between the developed and developing world have been put forward. This has included arguments in favour of historical accountability on the basis that global warming is not caused by current emissions of any particular year but

an accumulation of emissions over a long period (Neumayer, 2000:187). This approach posits that the highest polluter should pay the highest price for compensating the damage. Developing countries, who are mostly the victims of pollution, ought to be exempt from such burden (Ibid; IPCC, 1996:218). The developing nations have also supported the argument for ‘common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities’ as stipulated by the UNFCCC (Hurrell & Sengupta, 2012:474). Within such an approach, developing nations are tasked to concentrate on adaptation. The assigned share of responsibility for developed nations has been to concentrate on mitigation efforts (Draft Paris Outcome, 2015).

Secondly, developing nations have placed on the agenda the need for developed nations to provide technical and financial assistance for adaptation programmes (Giddens, 2009:177; Nangoma, 2007:7). They have also continued to challenge the terms that are established for such assistance. It is noted, firstly, that support from industrially advanced countries for their participation in responses to climate change continues to be insufficient. A further concern is that richer nations have provided ‘climate finance’ in the form of loans instead of the preferred grants. This form of assistance is widely viewed as tasking developing countries to fix a problem created by developed countries (Shanahan et al., 2013:10). For this reason, the South has argued that the North must embrace the burden of mitigation and take a lion’s share of the responsibility for adaptation (Giddens, 2009:164). In some cases, countries with emerging markets such as South Africa, Brazil and India have countered attempts to declare common goals of emission reduction across all countries. They have described such moves as unequal and ‘imperialist’. Some commentators have even called such efforts ‘...an excellent example of environmental colonialism’ (Agarwal & Narain, 1991:1).

The 2015 COP 21 meeting held in Paris outlined a global action plan as a way forward in avoiding dangerous climate change. The meeting resolved that member countries should commit to limit carbon emissions below Two Degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. It further requested efforts to limit the temperature increase to over One Degree Celsius (Draft Paris Outcome, 2015). The meeting also reiterated the need for developed countries to be in the forefront in sourcing climate finance for developing nations (UNFCCC, 2015:26). A total of 195 countries are currently party to the Paris agreement. For this reason, COP 21 is understood to have achieved the first ever widely accepted, legally binding global agreement on responses to climate change. Resolutions from this agreement are scheduled for enforcement before 2020. However, the enforcement would happen only after at least 55 countries that are responsible for an estimated 55 percent of global emissions have ratified the agreement. Meanwhile, member states were expected to begin their pledges of commitment through

signing of the agreement at the UN headquarters in New York between April, 2016 and April 2017 (European Commission Climate Action, 2016).

Most recently, however, concerns have been raised about the implications that the election of Donald Trump as US president may hold for the consolidation of this process. It is thought that his influence on America's involvement in negotiations may derail this country's commitment to the ratification of the Paris agreement on climate change (Johnson, 2016; Greshko, 2016). It is well known that Trump has repeatedly denied the need to regard climate change as one of the crucial global issues of the 21st century (Greshko, 2016). Several of America's leading scientists have openly criticised Trump's stance on climate change and his suggestion that the U.S. should withdraw from international climate change agreements (Responsible Scientists, 2016; White, 2016). Other commentators have also expressed fears that Trump's election could be one of the factors to that will accelerate global warming and humanity's 'race to disaster' (Chomsky, 2016 in Johnson, 2016).

Nevertheless, in November 2016, the requirements for the formalisation of the Paris Agreement were met, the agreement was ratified, and significant progress was made in transforming this agreement into a detailed blueprint for action (Yeo, 2016:1). The official outcomes of the Marrakech meeting comprised diverse resolutions such as climate change financing of adaptation efforts and where and how future negotiations would be held. By the end of this meeting, 111 of the current 197 member states ratified the agreement and reaffirmed their commitment, regardless of Trump's election (UNFCCC, 2016; Yeo, 2016:1).

1.3 Climate change debates and the media

Studies indicate that news media make reference to climate change as far back as the 1930s. For instance, in America, the New York Times wrote in 1932 about the slow but inevitable changing of the earth's environment, including changing climatic patterns (New York Times, 1932:4 in Boykoff & Roberts, 2007:4). Detailed studies of journalistic attention on climate change in other parts of the world in the 1930s are generally sparse. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify single case studies of journalistic attention in countries like Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, India and Switzerland (Schmidt et al., 2013:1235).

From the 1950s onwards, more frequent mention of climate change began to occur in news media in countries such as USA, UK and Germany. Such journalism responded to the increased scientific commentary, at this time, about the relationship between global warming and industry. However, from the 50s to the 70s, journalism about climate change remained sporadic (Boykoff, 2011:30). Early examples can again be found in the American context. In

1950, the *Saturday Evening Post* published a story about growing speculation and scientific research on global warming (Abarbanel & McClusky, 1950 in Boykoff & Roberts, 2007:4). In 1956, a *New York Times* reporter wrote an article about accumulating scientific evidence that technological processes were playing a role in the generation of increased levels of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere (Kaempffert, 1956:191 in Boykoff & Roberts, 2007:4). A similar article appeared in a 1957 publication of *The Christian Science Monitor* (Cowen, 1957 in Boykoff & Roberts, 2007:4). Some attention to scientific research about climate change could also be spotted in the 1970s in mainstream media in Canada, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mexico and the Netherlands (Schmidt et al., 2013:1235).

However, media attention to climate change only became a regular feature of journalism from the mid-1980s onwards, when discussion of the issue became more central to the socio-political domain. Furthermore, such regularity could, at first, only be observed in media in North America and Western Europe. Again, particular attention was paid to the phenomenon in context of American media. Indeed, in the late 1980s, climate change regularly became front page news in this country (Bailey, 2015:55). Some of this coverage resulted from statements made within the political realm by scientists. There was, for example, a surge of media interest in NASA scientist James Hansen's testimony to the US Congress in 1988. Hansen argued that the dramatic warming of the world's oceans was clear evidence of climate change. He posited that there was a 99 percent possibility that the warming trend was not a natural variation but a result of an accumulation of carbon dioxide and other artificial gases in the atmosphere (Shabecoff, 1988:1). Hansen presented this testimony at the time of an extreme heatwave and drought over large parts of the US, which is thought to have encouraged media awareness (Pearce 2007:15; Harding, 2016:1).

A further factor was the increased visibility of debates about appropriate responses to climate change within political circles, particularly in context of election campaigns. In America this focus was influenced by public interest in the 1988 election campaign rhetoric, in which presidential candidates for the first time claimed that they would approach climate change as a serious issue (Bailey, 2015:55). At the same time in the UK, British media focused on Thatcher's public recognition of climate change as a priority issue, and in this context focused on how their government would tackle the issue of emission reduction commitments (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007:6). UK news coverage of the issue would continue to fluctuate over the next decade (Carvalho, 2007:3). In Germany, articles and cartoons commenting on how society would be affected by climate change appeared commonly in newspapers and television drama during the 1980s (Weingart et al., 2000:261). From 1988 onwards, levels of coverage in

German news media rose, reaching a peak in 1992 due to the UNCED conference in Brazil. Media interest remained at a high up to 1995 when Germany hosted the Berlin Climate change conference (ibid, 276). Throughout such coverage in all of these countries, there was little attempt to develop strategic approaches to journalistic investigation of climate change. Instead, this journalism was a reaction to statements made about climate change by scientists and politicians in context of conferences and reports (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007:5).

From the mid-1990s onward, increase in news coverage could also be observed outside the context of Western Europe and the UK, in Australia, New Zealand and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, news media based in developing countries such as those in the Middle East, Asia, and South Africa were now also reporting on climate change. By the time the Kyoto Protocol came into existence in 1997, it was widely covered in a broad range of media across the world (Carvalho & Burgess, 2005). Close to 4000 accredited journalists from over 400 media organisations in 160 countries attended the meetings in Japan (Legett, 2001 in Boykoff & Roberts, 2007:5). By the turn of the century, then, journalism was playing a pivotal role in sensitizing the general public around the world about international negotiations on climate change. Since this time, such media has continued to play this role on a consistent basis. This is evident in how the media has covered the Conference of Parties. The focus has, however, remained on the coverage of official reports and conferences rather than more strategic journalistic investigation of the significance of climate change in, for example, the lives of ordinary people (Boykoff, 2008:3).

The discussion, above, has focused on coverage of climate change as it exists in mainstream news media, both in the context of print and broadcast journalism. Such journalism typically presents itself as objective, and therefore as not taking sides in the contestations that inform debates about climate change. It is, nevertheless, possible to identify examples of the emergence, in recent years, of journalism about climate change outside the context of mainstream news. Such examples of journalism often openly locate themselves within the processes of contestation. One tradition of such journalism is produced by activists who aim to raise awareness of the threat posed by climate change. Former US Vice President Al Gore's 2006 video documentary 'The Inconvenient Truth' stands out as one such effort. The documentary is thought to have played an important role in shifting public opinion around the world towards an acceptance of climate change as a global problem (Norgaard, 2007:180). Another example is Annie Leonhard's 'Story of Stuff', a short animated documentary launched online in 2007, dealing with the impact of the production of material goods on the global environment. The film was funded by the Tides Foundation, which directs money towards the

advancement of progressive policies, including those that relate to the environment. It is currently used in educational programmes around the world to promote awareness of the impact of global production systems on the environment (Leonhard, 2010: xvi). Further advocacy media on climate change have been produced by non-governmental organisations such as Greenpeace International to create awareness about environmental issues, including climate change (Deluca, 2009:264).

Another tradition of climate change coverage, which overlaps in some instances with climate change journalism, can be observed in context of specialised environmental journalism. A focus on climate change began to increase within this genre of journalism in Western Europe and America from the early 2000s onwards (Belgrez, 2011:450). In this context, it is possible to observe journalistic research on the way climate change is impacting on different communities in a variety of environments around the world. In some instances, such journalism has formed part of attempts to mobilise communities to publicly protest against industrial pollution and its effects on climate change (Berger, 2002:15). Other examples of environmental journalism locate themselves more ‘objectively’, concentrating only on explaining the link between the daily experiences of ordinary citizens and climate change policy (ibid).

The rise of the digital domain has also come to play an important role in providing public access to both of these forms of journalism about climate change – that is, advocacy journalism and specialised environmental journalism. This can be seen, firstly, in the growth of websites dedicated to the topic of climate change (Betts & Gibson, 2012:382)³. In addition, web-based journalistic platforms such as *The Guardian News & Media Online* devote considerable space to contributions from columnists writing about climate change periodical news campaigns (Rusbridger, 2015).

Further contributions to journalism about climate change have come from developmental media. One important example of such media, in context of this study, is represented by radio programming in developing nations (Chikapa, 2011:2; Myers, 2008). Stations belonging to the UN as well as international services such as that of the BBC have provided education and planning tools to local communities regarding appropriate responses to climate change (Mkwambisi, 2010:22). Specific initiatives have also been established to strengthen the role that agricultural radio plays in engaging with the impact of climate change on farming. One example is the Canadian Project Farm Radio International which supports agricultural programming in many African countries through training of broadcasters and

³ Notable contributors in this regard include Climate Central (www.climatecentral.org), Real Climate (www.realclimate.org) and Skeptical Science(www.skepticalscience.com) (ibid).

provision of basic content (Farm Radio International, 2014). Their work includes the African Farm Radio Research Initiative (AFRRI) which facilitates agricultural programming for rural communities in Uganda, Mali, Tanzania and Ghana (ibid).

It is possible to observe the emergence of a range of different approaches to the coverage of climate change when one considers the various media initiatives as outlined above. On one hand, there is the classic approach of mainstream news, which foregrounds scientific and political debate rather than producing new knowledge about climate change. This news tends not to deal adequately with local relevance. On the other end of the spectrum is the work by environmental journalists, which demonstrates how climate change is impacting on communities in different parts of the world. In addition, there are contributions from alternative traditions of media such as participatory journalism where local communities are involved as co-producers of knowledge about climate change.

2. Evaluating journalism about climate change

The previous section referred to literature dealing generally with the history of media coverage of climate change. This next section serves as a review of literature that focuses in greater detail on contemporary journalism about climate change. It teases out debates within this literature regarding the role that such journalism should play in society. It also deals with the commentators' assessments of the extent to which existing traditions of journalism are succeeding in fulfilling these roles.

The journalistic coverage of climate change is considered to be a controversial and politicised process (McFarling, 2006:243). Interest groups within climate change debates have conflicting expectations of journalists with regards to the role that they should play in covering this topic. On one hand, environmentalists are concerned with the destructive impact of climate change and expect journalism to play a role in creating awareness of this problem. On the other hand, many politicians and stakeholders in industry fear that restrictions on carbon emission will place limitations on economic growth (Behringer, 2010:3). Such groups are quick to reprimand the media for coverage that is not in support of their particular interests (McFarling, 2006:243). Given these contesting expectations, and in context of the complexity of the topic of climate change, journalists face daunting challenges in reporting on this topic (Wilson, 2000:209; Boykoff, 2011:2).

In the discussion below, it is proposed that literature on environmental journalism offers guidelines that may enable journalists to make sense of these challenges. The discussion

demonstrates that the spectrum of approaches to such guidelines are informed by different understandings of the social purpose of journalism and of how this purpose can be achieved. It is proposed that it is important to draw on each of these understandings in order to develop a comprehensive set of guidelines for journalism about climate change.

2.1 The purpose of journalism about climate change: to inform and educate

In literature dealing with the role that media should play in covering climate change, it is often argued that journalists should provide the general public with access to the debates on this subject that are taking place amongst scientists and policy makers (Moser & Dilling, 2011:162). Such journalism should, firstly, ensure that audiences are made aware of the issues being discussed. Secondly, journalism should demonstrate the relevance to people living in different localities by explaining the issues in everyday terms and also placing them in context (Bauer & Smith, 2015:4; Voiland, 2016). In this way, journalism can disseminate information about climate change debates and educate people about the relevance to their lives (Detjen, 1997:37-38; Rodgers, 1999:198).

It is generally argued, in this literature, that journalism in different parts of the world has at least partially achieved these goals. News media have increased awareness of climate change debates, both in the industrial West and in developing countries. It is noted, for example, that nearly everyone in surveyed populations in America acknowledge that they have been made aware of issues relating to climate change through news media (Leiserowitz 2005:11). Furthermore, by means of such media exposure, they have been convinced of the existence of climate change as a serious problem (ibid). Research conducted in developing nations such as Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Sudan indicates similar findings, with audiences of news media demonstrating awareness of and concern about the question of climate change (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2001:533; BBC Africa Talks Climate 2010:3). Such consciousness is observed in most parts of Africa, where survey populations indicate awareness that weather patterns are changing and that such changes are having an impact on human life (BBC Africa Talks Climate 2010:3). Participants in such studies have, again, cited the news media as a major source of information about climate change (ibid).

Commentators argue that one reason why news media have succeeded in creating such awareness is that scientists and politicians make an effort to provide journalists with information that can increase public understanding of climate change (Moser & Dilling, 2010:165). The IPCC, in particular, has been instrumental in this exercise through publication of reports about climate change negotiations and scientific findings. These reports are

considered by many participants in the climate change debates as the most credible sources of information about global climate change and its effects on the environment and society (Edwards & Schneider, 2001:220). The general suggestion seems to be, then, that such publications are enabling journalists across the world to access trustworthy information about climate change.

Furthermore, some organisations have attempted to ensure that journalists from all parts of the world – including developing nations – are present at debates about climate change. One such attempt is represented by the Climate Change Media Partnership, a project facilitated by the US-based non-profit organisation Internews, which has funded journalists from developing nations to attend climate change conferences since 2007. The aim has been to improve journalists' knowledge of climate change in areas that are of relevance to their own social contexts (Internews, 2015). Other organisations, often funded by the UNFCCC, have played a role in providing training for journalists, focusing on strengthening their competence in the coverage of climate change debates (UNFCCC, 2014).

Nevertheless, commentators note that journalists continue to face challenges in ensuring that the public is well informed on the topic of climate change. A key challenge is represented by journalists' lack of sufficient knowledge, resources and experience to mediate information about climate change (BBC, *Africa Talks Climate*, 2011:3; Fahn, 2008:88; Shanahan, 2011). It has been observed that most journalists struggle to make sense of complex environmental concepts in general and climate change in particular (Boykoff, 2009:431). As a result, although the mainstream news media has succeeded in raising awareness of issues relating to climate change, they have been less able to explain and contextualize these issues (Betts & Gibson, 2012:382).

Commentators also note that traditional formats of news in print, television and radio are insufficient for dealing with the complexity of topics relating to climate change. It is proposed, in this respect, that formats of journalism that are emerging in the digital domain may be better suited to this purpose (Boykoff, 2011:15; Bauer & Smith, 2015:103). One reason for this is that within the online environment, journalists have the opportunity to produce substantial coverage without facing the limitations of space associated with traditional media platforms. Web-based platforms also allow journalists more freedom to tailor information for specific audiences with in-depth contextual stories supported by visuals, audio, graphics and charts (Flew et al., 2012:159; Scott, 2005:122).

It is, then, possible to identify within the literature an assessment of journalism about climate change that is framed by this emphasis on 'informing and educating'. Such assessment

begins from the assumption that the primary purpose of journalism is to provide audiences with information from credible sources, and to help them to understand this information better. The sources of such information, in the context of climate change, are understood to be scientists and policy makers. Commentators who understand the purpose of journalism about climate change in this way seem generally to conclude that although journalists are able to disseminate such information, they are less successful at assisting their audiences in understanding the significance of that information.

2.2 An alternative conceptualisation of purpose: active and critical engagement

Within the literature, it is also possible to identify commentators who are critical of the above assessment of journalism about climate change. It is noted, within such commentary, that the emphasis on ‘informing and educating’ is representative of the standard conceptualisation of journalism that frames mainstream journalistic practice (Ward, 2008:33). This conceptualisation begins from the assumption that journalism is primarily concerned with the objective representation of ‘factually correct’ information (ibid). Critics of the ‘inform and educate’ approach to climate change journalism accept the importance of such factual correctness. They argue, however, that this approach does not acknowledge that claims about climate change made by even the most credible of scientists and politicians must be critically scrutinised. All participants in debates about climate change, whether they are regarded as authoritative sources of information or not, do so from positions of vested interest (Belgrez, 2011:452). For this reason, if ‘factual correctness’ is to be achieved, journalists need to be more than conduits for information. They should adopt a skeptical stance towards all claims and all evidence put forward in support of such claims (Bauer & Smith, 2015:40; Mcfarling, 2006:244). Instead of simply reproducing the content provided to them, they should scrutinise it, identifying the objectives that inform it (Shanahan, 2011). The emphasis on sharing ‘facts’ is therefore not, on its own, enough to provide them with guidelines for reporting on climate change (Wilson, 2000:207, Shanahan, 2011). In addition, journalists need guidelines that enable them assess the interests that inform all claims about climate change, even from so-called ‘credible’ sources (Belgrez, 2011:452).

Within this commentary, it is assumed that journalism about climate change should do more than create public awareness of the serious implications that climate change has for human society. In addition, journalists also need to create awareness that debates about climate change are located within processes of contestation. They should, as part of their journalism, identify the stakeholders and standpoints that form part of such contestation. Furthermore,

rather than taking on a stance of objectivity, journalists should themselves adopt a position within these processes of contestation. It is generally suggested, in this respect, that it is a journalistic responsibility to represent the interests of the general public – and more particularly of the least powerful groups that form part of this public (Bavadam, 2010:6). Journalists should also represent the interests of the audiences that they serve within their local environment. As part of this responsibility, they should demonstrate to their audiences how global environmental issues are of relevance at the local level (Betts & Gibson, 2012:382). Furthermore, they should report on ways in which climate change is impacting on particular aspects of social life in these environments, such as tourism, health, education and agriculture. In this way, journalists can help to make visible how climate change affects the well-being of particular interest groups within their own societies. They can, as part of this, help to raise awareness within local interest groups about the need to take civic action around issues that affect them (Ward, 2008:33; Boykoff, 2009:431).

Viewed from this perspective, journalism about climate change is generally found wanting. It is noted that journalists often draw on reports and press releases about climate change without being conscious that such material is necessarily informed by agendas (Ward, 2008:30). As a result, the journalism that they produce often ends up unconsciously furthering the interests of politicians and public relations agents rather than serving the interests of audiences (Dryzek et al., 2011:8). It is noted, at the same time, that journalists from developing countries are more likely to adopt a critical stance. In context of the 2015 COP 21 climate change negotiations held in Paris, for example, such journalists repeatedly questioned the relevance of the negotiations to their countries (Internews, 2015: Finnan, 2015).

This commentary, with its emphasis on ‘critical engagement’, does not reject the notion that climate change journalism should ‘inform and educate’. However, in comparison to the first assessment of journalism about climate, it requires an active involvement from journalists in the process of producing knowledge about climate change. Within the first approach, journalists are described as neutral conduits of information, who simply share ‘facts’ about climate change provided to them by scientists and politicians. In contrast, the expectation within this second approach is that journalists should scrutinise the claims made by such sources of information and do their own research to establish a credible approach to the coverage of climate change. The emphasis is therefore on an investigative approach to journalism and on representing different interest groups within the general public – including those people who are based in the journalist’s local environment.

2.3 Adding to the alternative conceptualisation: facilitating public participation

It is possible to identify a second critique of the 'inform and educate' conceptualisation of climate change journalism which also argues that journalism should not merely serve as a conduit of expert and official knowledge. This critique can be seen to add to the alternative conceptualisation of climate change journalism outlined in the previous section. It challenges the assumption that journalism about climate change should serve as a top-down process in which information is handed down to a passive audience (Zuma-Netshiukhwi et al., 2013:389; Einsiedel & Thorne, 1999: 50-53 in Koro, 2015:12). It argues that, besides reporting on the claims made by scientists and politicians, climate change journalism should also capture contributions that so-called ordinary people can make to discussions of climate change (Stocking, 1999:25-26). Also, journalism should draw attention to particular communities' experiences of climate change and to their efforts to adapt to dramatic environmental changes (Reid et al., 2007:24). 'Ordinary people' are understood, within this commentary, to refer to general members of the public, and it is assumed that communication about climate change requires active participation from this public (Moser & Dilling, 2011:162). The traditional understanding of news reporting as a process of disseminating information to a passive audience is understood, within this analysis, to be inadequate as an approach to reporting on climate change (Moser & Dilling, 2010:169).

The emphasis on participatory journalism is understood to achieve at least three different goals. Firstly, it is argued that active engagement by audiences is more likely to lead to a better understanding, by the public, of the relevance of climate change to their own lives (Moser & Dilling, 2011: 169). Secondly, such journalism contributes to the facilitation of public dialogue and structured deliberation around emerging issues related to climate change (ibid: 165). As such, it ensures a more active involvement by the general public in making decisions around approaches to climate change. It enables communities, for example, to become involved in developing strategies for living with climate change (Ward, 2008:33). It can also help members of one community to learn how other communities mobilise themselves to deal with climate change (Bauer & Smith, 2015:4). Thirdly, and as a related point, such journalism can play a role in mobilising civic action meant to resolve community problems caused by climate change (Berger, 2004:4; Moser & Dilling, 2011:166). Such arguments posit that at the heart of environmental journalism about climate change should be the realisation that ordinary people are part of the ecosystem and therefore their involvement in environmental issues matter (Bavadam, 2010:11).

Stakeholders who represent the interests of developing countries are generally supportive of this participatory conceptualisation of the purpose of journalism about climate change. Such support can, for example, be observed within discussions that took place in the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. It was noted, in these discussions, that there is a need for an approach to environmental journalism which relocates people's concerns and development at the center of its objectives. It was envisioned that such journalism should engage audiences through capturing their attention, voices and interests (Berger, 2002:1).

Commentators propose a range of guidelines that journalists can follow in order to achieve this participatory approach to journalism about climate change. In the context of print publications, sidebar pieces could be used to capture discussions with readers on how communities can take action in order to deal with climate change. Such content could help to place the views of local communities within the public domain (Ward, 2008:28). Publications could also include personal accounts from members of the community about their experience of climate change. It is noted that radio is particularly suited, as a medium, to capture and share such content. It can do so through recorded interviews as well as live participation in on-air discussions. Such content could enhance public understanding of how communities can adapt to climate change in a way that is not possible by simply referring to reports of scientific facts and figures (Ward, 2008:28).

Commentators note that contemporary examples of journalism are still primarily guided by the 'inform and educate' approach. An emphasis on critical engagement with knowledge about climate change and the inclusion of the voices of ordinary people is largely missing. Instead, such journalism continues to amplify only the voices of scientists and policy makers (Fahn, 2008:89). In addition, there continues to be an over-emphasis on a 'scientific' framing of climate change stories, on the assumption that this angle is the most compelling. Commentators suggest that this contributes to a superficial engagement with climate change issues among the public (ibid).

Conclusion

Section One of this chapter describes how contestations around climate change have evolved internationally both within the realm of scientific discovery and the socio-political sphere. It can be concluded, from this description, that this history has been shaped by the relations of power that inform the international economic domain. Throughout the history of negotiations

around climate change, economically powerful countries have resisted recognition of the reality of climate change and acknowledgment of responsibility for its impact. Furthermore, within such processes of recognition and acknowledgement, it is possible to observe a 'north versus south' divide. This becomes evident in contestations around the commitments that different countries should make in order to address the problem of climate change. Of particular significance, within such contestation, are negotiations that have taken place around mitigation, as well as those that relate to strategies for adapting to the impact of climate change. Representatives of the developing world argue that wealthy economies should take primary responsibility for mitigation efforts, and should in addition assist developing nations in adapting to climate change. They argue, further, that industrial nations have not responded adequately to such arguments. It would seem, then, that industrially advanced and developing nations are differently located in relation to these two areas of debate.

These contestations are of relevance to this study, given that the research project deals with the challenges that journalists in Malawi face in helping their audiences to engage with the local relevance of climate change. Malawi ranks among the world's least developed countries, with an economy that depends on substantial inflows of economic assistance from international donors. For this reason, it can be concluded that media about climate change within the Malawian context should include a strong focus on content that help audiences how to access such assistance. Acknowledgement of this goal would need to inform how journalists in this country engage with the topic of climate change.

Section One also highlighted how media has engaged with climate change issues that have emerged within each of the two domains mentioned above (that is, the scientific and socio-economic). It is explained that regular coverage of climate change can be observed from the late 1980s onwards, within mainstream news in different countries. Such journalism focuses primarily on debates amongst scientists, politicians and policy makers, in context of prominent international consultations and conferences. The observed trend is also that the focus of news agendas in such international negotiations has been on mitigation efforts rather than ordinary people's experience of climate change. This emphasis is of significance to this study, given its focus on the role that journalists play in teasing out the local relevance of climate change. It could be argued that journalists based in Malawi would face challenges in teasing out the direct local relevance of such debates to the audiences that they serve.

However, the discussion also identifies alternative forms of media about climate change outside the domain of mainstream news in context of advocacy journalism, specialised environmental journalism and developmental media. It may be that such media can provide

more appropriate platforms for producing content about climate change that are of direct relevance to the needs and interests of a Malawian audience. These proposals will be pursued in more detail in the empirical component of this study.

Section Two examined the scholarship that evaluates journalism about climate change. It was argued, in this section, that assessments of journalism about climate change are grounded in at least three distinct normative understandings of the role that it should play in society. It would seem, then, that normative understandings of the purpose of journalistic practice represents a key term of reference in an examination of journalism about climate change. In the context of this research project, it is therefore important to consider which normative understandings of the purpose of journalistic practice is of relevance to the Malawian context. This goal will be pursued in the context of Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter articulates a theoretical framework designed to engage with the contextual issues mapped out in Chapter One. This framework will inform the empirical component of the research, presented in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. It provides terms of reference for examining the way radio journalists in Malawi experience the challenges involved in producing content that can help audiences to engage with the local relevance of climate change.

In Chapter One, it was concluded that this research project should be based in a sound understanding of the relevance of normative conceptualisations of the purpose of journalistic practice to the Malawian context. With this goal in mind, this next chapter reviews literature that offers conceptual tools for the analysis of the normative foundations of journalism. Section One focuses on theories that are of value to such analysis at the macro-level, with regards to comparing media systems and the conceptualisations of the social purpose of journalism that inform them. Section Two moves to analyses that can be applied at the more detailed medium level, to a discussion of traditions of journalistic practice that emerge within these media systems. Section Three focuses on analysis at the micro-level; that is, on the study of journalists' conceptualisation of the normative foundations of their own practice, and their experience of putting these norms into practice within specific institutional environments. Each section demonstrates the relevance of the conceptual tools discussed to a study of journalists' experience of reporting on climate change within the Malawian context.

1. Analysis at the macro level: media systems and the norms that inform them

1.1 Theoretical debates

One of the earliest contributions to the study of the normative frameworks that inform the media is that of the Four Theories of the Press. In this book, Siebert, Peterson and Schramm identify four distinct conceptualisations of the social purpose of journalism that underpin different media systems in the Western world (Siebert et al., 1956:6). They refer to these conceptualisations as 'theories of the press', and label them respectively as 'authoritarian', 'libertarian', 'social responsibility' and 'soviet communist'. They argue that the normative principles that inform each of these conceptualisations are shaped by the social and political system from which they emerge (Siebert et al., 1956:1).

A brief review of these conceptualisations is of value here, given that Siebert et al.'s thesis continues to represent a central reference within contemporary discussion of the

normative foundations of media. According to the authors, the 'authoritarian' conceptualisation of journalism is associated with media systems that emerged in Europe in the 16th and 17th century. Within these media systems, the press existed under the control of a repressive regime and the dominant understanding of journalism was one that served the interests of an authoritarian state (Siebert et al., 1956:10). This theory is regarded as one that has been most influential worldwide as compared the other four (ibid:9). In contrast, the 'libertarian' conceptualisation emerged in context of the growth of democracy in England in the late 17th century and early 18th century (ibid:44). It rejects the authoritarian understanding of a media that should exist to serve the interests of government and the powerful. Instead, it is argued that media should be free from such controls and concentrate on the role of establishing an informed citizenry, who are able to participate in rational decisions about their own future (ibid:51). The 'social responsibility' conceptualisation emerged in mid-20th century America as an elaboration of the libertarian approach (Peterson, 1956:75). It particularly responded to an apparent abuse of the right to freedom of the press within this period (ibid:100). It emphasises that press freedom is not an absolute but limited right (Siebert, 1956:54). For that reason, the social responsibility approach, has an aspect of moral duty attached to the freedom of expression (Peterson, 1956:97). This is different to the understanding of the nature of the right in the libertarian approach where no duty is attached (ibid:96). As such, the social responsibility theory acknowledges that the media will not necessarily make responsible use of their right to freedom, unless they are regulated (Siebert, 1956:29). There is, therefore, a need for a system of professional self-regulation within the media, so that freedom of the press can be balanced against other rights and responsibilities (ibid). This is to ensure that journalism is practiced responsibly in the interest of the public's right to information and democracy (Peterson, 1956:74). The last of the theories, the 'soviet communist' discusses how journalism operates to maintain the ascendancy of a ruling party through strict control (Schramm, 1956:121); Nerone, 1995 in McQuail, 2010:151). This theory was articulated in the early twentieth century in the Soviet Union.

The Four Theories of the Press sparked an ongoing debate within journalism and media studies about the historical specificity of the normative foundations of media systems and the media practices that form part of them. There have, as part of this, been repeated attempts to modify and extend Siebert et al.'s analysis so that it can be applied to contemporary media environments (McQuail, 2010:151). A seminal contribution to this work was made by Hallin and Mancini who challenged the assumption, inherent to Siebert et al.'s arguments, that their work represented a scheme for analysing media systems that is of 'universal' relevance. They

proposed, instead, that this scheme is strongly grounded within the historical context of the mid twentieth century in the industrial West. They went on to argue that, instead of claiming the status of universality, theorisation of the normative foundations of any media system needs to be informed by empirical investigation of its particular context (Albuquerque, 2012:72; McCargo, 2012:202). This should involve an exploration of the nature of the state, the political system, the relationship between economic and political interests and the development of civil society within that context (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:6). The authors demonstrated the validity of this argument by conducting research in fourteen countries located, respectively, in Northern Europe, Southern Europe and North America. Based on this research, they identified three ‘models’ of communications systems that are of relevance to these regions and four ‘dimensions’ along which these systems could be compared (Albuquerque, 2012:74).

This work was initially criticised for being too strongly based within research conducted in industrially advanced environments. There was, for example, an absence of empirical evidence drawn from emerging democratic nations. The resulting framework was not regarded as sensitive enough to variations between systems located within different cultural, social, and political contexts (Hadland, 2012:96). In response to this critique, the authors have since presented empirical case studies which compare media systems beyond the Western World (Hallin & Mancini, 2012; Hadland, 2012:97). The central argument is, again, that comparative analysis of media systems and with this the identification of the normative foundations that inform them is best achieved through historically specific empirical investigation (Hallin & Mancini, 2012:280; McCargo, 2012:202).

Hallin and Mancini’s contribution, in this context, can be observed in the articulation of a rigorous approach to research methodology and as part of this the provision of an analytical framework for the assessment of media systems. Of particular value, in this respect, is their identification of four dimensions for comparing media systems. The first of these dimensions is described as the ‘structure of media markets’ in a particular region. It includes variables such as newspaper circulation and the relative significance of newspapers and television as news sources (Albuquerque, 2012:78). Secondly, there is the dimension of ‘political parallelism’ which concerns, for example, the nature of the relationship between a media system and political structures. This relationship is scrutinised through an examination of media content, the political involvement of media personnel and journalists’ conceptualisation of the role that political interest can play in the process of reporting (ibid:80). The third dimension is represented by the degree of so-called ‘professionalisation’ that can be observed in journalism. This signifies the extent to which media practitioners can be regarded to be autonomous, ethical

and oriented towards public service (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:34-36; Schudson & Anderson, 2009:93). The fourth dimension is represented by the role that the state plays in relation to a particular media system. This includes the state's role in the censorship of the media; in exerting political pressure; in providing subsidies to media houses; in the ownership of media and in regulating the media in the interest of the public (Albuquerque, 2012:85).

Hallin and Mancini demonstrate the value of this analytical framework by identifying three ideal 'models' of media systems, each closely associated with geographical regions in which they conducted their research. It should be noted that the concept of a model, as it is used here, is representative of the 'ideal types' that Max Weber refers to in his approach to social analysis. Within this approach, a model does not refer to an ideal or normatively desirable situation. Instead, its purpose is to offer summative categories that can help to describe and explain social structures and processes observable in a historically specific context (Veltmer, 2012:226). It is in this way that the models of media systems that Hallin and Mancini identify provide valuable terms of reference for the purposes of media research.

The first model, which is closely associated with Britain, Ireland and North America, is referred to as a 'liberal' media system (Albuquerque, 2012:74). It is characterised by the dominance of market structures and a commercial media (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:75). It accommodates medium newspaper circulation and an emphasis on the independence of a commercial and politically 'neutral' press, which operates without taking an explicit stance in support of any political party or ruling government (Peri, 2012:19). In such environments, media practitioners take on the identity of 'professionals', which is understood to mean, for example, that they claim responsibility for their own regulation rather than accepting institutional regulation from the state. Public service broadcasting generally has a weak presence, except in Britain and Ireland (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:75).

The second is described as 'democratic corporatist', and can be observed in Northern Europe (Albuquerque, 2012:74). Within this model, commercial and 'partisan' media which may favour political groupings can be seen to co-exist, with the state playing a relatively active but legally limited role (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:11). As in the liberal model, an early development of mass circulation press is identifiable and, within the contemporary context, a high newspaper circulation. Although the press exhibits party affiliation and is not self-regulated, there is a well-established culture of professionalism amongst journalists and with this an emphasis on the right to freedom of the press, autonomy and a responsibility for neutrality (McCargo, 2012:207; Albuquerque, 2012:72). The state is seen to strongly intervene

with subsidies to ensure diversity, and there is a strong emphasis on the importance of public broadcasting (Hadland, 2012:105).

The third model, which can be observed in Southern Europe, is described as ‘polarised pluralist’ (Albuquerque, 2012:74). Within this model, the media landscape consists of a weaker commercial sector and a strong presence of state-owned media. This landscape is generally characterised by strong state intervention (Hadland, 2012:100). The media is mostly controlled by the elite and newspaper circulation is low (ibid:101). There is a high emphasis on political parallelism and journalists do not tend to claim professional identity. Journalistic coverage includes commentary from openly politicised perspectives (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:132).

Hallin and Mancini point out that, within the history of the assessment of media systems, the liberal model has traditionally been adopted as a taken for granted term of reference (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:306). Commentators also note that the alternatives to the liberal model, as provided in these authors’ analytical scheme, provide media researchers with a wider spectrum of options for such assessment. In addition, it is pointed out that empirical investigations may indicate conformity to a combination of traits from each of the models. For instance, contexts such as that of South Africa are thought to be representative of a mix of all three models (Hadland, 2014:111). It is also noted that in context of globalisation, there is a growing tendency towards ‘convergence’ or ‘homogenisation’, in which particular models of media systems can be seen to operate separately from the socio-historic contexts in which they were originally articulated (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:251). In such contexts, the liberal model is understood to be of increasingly international relevance (ibid:252; Voltmer, 2012:231; Albuquerque, 2012:72; Hallin & Mancini, 2004:294).

1.2 The application of macro-level analysis to the Malawian context

The discussion below demonstrates that, in applying Hallin and Mancini’s scheme of analysis to the Malawian media landscape, it is of value to remember that this country has experienced dramatic shifts within their political environment (Banda, 2005:79). In order to explore this argument, the discussion deals with Malawi’s political history as this applies to four distinct phases; the colonial era (1891-1964), the independence one-party period (1962-1992), the political transition phase (1992-1994) and multi-party democracy (1994 to date) (Manjawira, 2009:9).

i) *Media in colonial Malawi (1891-1964)*

Malawi, which was first known as British Central Africa and later as Nyasaland, was declared a British Protectorate in 1891 (Baker, 1976:1; Tenthani & Chinsinga, 2016:35). The country was integrated into the British Central African Federation (CAF) in 1953 alongside Northern and Southern Rhodesia, which would later become Zambia and Zimbabwe (Chingaipe & Leftwich, 2008:148). By the early 1890s, no significant media existed except for a few Christian missionary journals that targeted local Christian converts in order to expose them to religious messages (Chitsulo & Mang'anda, 2011:2). In 1894, the colonial administration introduced the *British Central Africa Gazette* in order to promote awareness of government activities in areas such as agriculture and health (ibid:3). The *Central African Planter* was introduced a year later as a commercial venture by two European settlers, Robert Spence and Robert Hynde (Schwarz & Hynde, 1983:10). Unlike the earlier publications, the *Planter* distanced itself from the agendas of the missionaries and government and concentrated on the farming interests of the European settler community (Hynde & Stark, 1895:3, Chitsulo & Mang'anda, 2011:3). The paper adopted various titles over subsequent years, and now remains well known for being the longest surviving commercial newspaper in Malawi (ibid). During the colonial era, however, it formed part of a print sector that was strictly controlled by an authoritarian government (Manjawira, 2009:9).

The development of radio during this era is linked to events in broadcasting in the CAF. Northern Rhodesia established its official broadcaster in Lusaka in 1941, mainly to circulate updates on World War 2 (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:24). After the war, the Central African Broadcasting Services (CABS) – later the Federal Broadcasting Corporation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (FBC) – was established in Southern Rhodesia as a regional broadcaster (Banda, 2005:80). The station broadcast propaganda in service of the British protectorate (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:26). In 1956, a studio was established in Malawi to produce local programmes for broadcasting in Lusaka and in 1963 this studio became Radio Malawi (ibid:27). The resulting broadcast network was fully controlled by the state, and operated with the overall aim of advancing British colonial interests (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:26).

The media landscape during the colonial era, as it is described above, can to some extent be said to be representative of the Hallin and Mancini's polarised pluralist model. As noted, this model refers to a landscape of a weak commercial media sector with a strong presence of state-owned media and state intervention. However, it also differs from this model given that, while there was a single print publication that supported commercial interests, a true mass-circulation press never fully emerged. The political system that existed during this period seemed to have a direct influence on the kind of journalism that became established in Malawi

particularly at the state broadcaster. Professional journalism practice was almost non-existent because such journalism is ideally possible in the context of an independent media.

ii) *Malawi media during one-party state (1964-1992)*

When Malawi became independent in 1964, the country adopted a parliamentary system of government based on the British Westminster model (Tenthani & Chinsinga, 2016:35, Patel & Meinhardt, 2003:3). Kamuzu Banda, who became prime minister, was the leader of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) which had been emerging as a force against colonial rule (Chingaipe & Leftwich, 2008:148). The following year, Malawi became a republic with Banda as its first president. Banda went on to rule the country for 30 years as a one-party dictatorial state (Patel, 2014:20; Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2005:145; Tenthani & Chinsinga, 2016:35).

After independence, no independent media was allowed to operate in Malawi (Chitsulo & Mang'anda, 2011:9). The MCP took over ownership of the *Planter* and began to publish the newspaper under a new title, the *Daily Times*. They also brought out a new weekly, the *Malawi News* (Manjawira, 2009:10; Chitsulo & Mang'anda, 2011:8; Chipangula, 2003:21). During one-party rule, these newspapers represented the only two print publications in Malawi, and they primarily featured stories in support of government and the ruling party (Manda, 2006:7; Chitsulo & Manga'anda, 2011:9). The new government also founded the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) under the MBC Act, which placed the broadcaster under firm control of the state (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:29). For the next thirty years, the MCP used the MBC as a propaganda tool to support Banda's autocratic rule (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:29, Manda, 2005:62). The station's programming also included developmental content on health, education and agriculture (Ntaba, 2011:29; Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:30).

As in the colonial era, the Banda regime ensured that government control of media was maintained by law. Banda kept in place many of the repressive media laws of colonial times, and also expanded on these laws (Manjawira, 2009:10). Any attempts to pursue independent journalism were suppressed by means of harassment and imprisonment (Kanyongolo, 2004:16).

It would seem, then, that during the period of one-party rule, the Malawian media was still part of the apparatus of authoritarian rule. The normative foundations of this media system was a continuation of the legacy established by British colonial powers. Now, however, this legacy was being sustained not by colonialists, but by fellow Malawians. Once again, Hallin and Mancini's polarised pluralist model can be seen to be a fitting description of the

relationship between society and media at this stage in Malawi's history. The control of media by government and lack of press freedom which characterised this era is typical of this model.

iii) Malawi media during the multi-party political transition (1993-1994)

In the early 1990s, the Malawian political environment underwent a brief period of radical change. Due to pressure from the donor community, local political groups and churches, a referendum was held in 1993 and Malawi adopted multiparty democracy (Patel, 2014:20). At this point the country adopted a new constitution based on principles of democracy and human rights. The next two years led to the drafting of legislation that protected freedom of the media and freedom of expression (Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung, 2003:130). This period of political change signaled a crucial turning point in the development of the Malawi media (Patel, 2000:164). As a result of the new commitment to press freedom, more than 20 independent newspapers were registered to compete with the *Daily Times* and *Malawi News* (Patel & Meinhardt, 2003:39, Chitsulo & Mang'anda, 2011:10). The content in these publications was driven by the need to balance political stories and provide variety (ibid).

In context of the newspaper industry, then, there was some indication that the establishment of an independent community of journalistic practice could be possible. For a very short period, the newspaper industry flourished, and used the opportunity to publish without restrictions. The state did not interfere, for example, when newspapers published critical stories about voter education and the impending elections. In this context, some newspapers were able to produce journalism that maintained impartiality from the interest of government.

Commentators noted, however, that the content produced by these new publications was of a low standard, and not adequately guided by principles of ethical journalistic practice. One criticism that emerged, for example, was that journalists' response to the euphoria produced by the experience of press freedom under democracy was often to produce sensationalist coverage of political events (Jamieson, 2001:116). Commentators suggested that such problems resulted from the lack of an established tradition of journalistic independence within the local media community (Jamieson, 2001:14). They also noted the absence of local educational institutions specialising in journalistic training (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:44). In addition, Malawian journalists did not have the benefit of a professional code of conduct that could guide them in their practice (Patel, 2000:158). It was felt that this situation existed because of the vacuum created by the rapid transition from an era in which media organisations were guided by loyalty to a one-party state to one guided by democratic principles. The new,

diversified media landscape that resulted from this change required of journalists to claim their own independence, and as part of this, to regulate their own practice (Manjawira, 2009:14). Within the Malawian context, however, the resources that would enable them to achieve these goals were not well developed. Commentators argued that in order to ensure the development of such resources there was a need to establish a professional identity for the Malawian community of journalistic practice (Jamieson, 2001:116). International journalism trainers such as the Mozambique-based Nordic SADC Journalism (NSJ) Centre made an effort to respond to this need (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:13). Unfortunately, these interventions were not enough to ensure the emergence of a robust independent press. With the exception of the *Nation*, most of the early post-independence publications have since folded. Much of the promise of an independent press in this transitional period has, therefore, remained unfulfilled (Lwanda, 1996:157; Gunde, 2015:27).

Within the broadcasting sector, the period of transition also suggested the possibility of transformation. In the run-up to the 1994 general elections, MBC programming included relatively independent and impartial reporting (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:32). This was made possible by an intervention into the MBC's programming guidelines by the Electoral Commission, who devised rules to ensure equal access for all electoral players. Journalists at MBC followed these guidelines, providing coverage for all candidates and parties throughout the campaign period. As a result, the 1994 elections demonstrated that MBC had the capacity to report hard news in a balanced and critical manner (Patel & Meinhardt, 2003:39). However, this balanced reporting faded away immediately after the 1994 elections as the newly elected government re-established strict control of the MBC (Manda, 2006:6). Furthermore, Malawi did not see the emergence of commercial or community stations to counter the control of state broadcasting at this stage (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:23). For this reason, the radio industry remained dominated by MBC.

It can be argued that the socio-political environment of Malawian media during this period of transition from one-party rule to multi-party democracy bore a brief resemblance to the liberal model of a media system, as described by Hallin and Mancini. As we have seen, this model foregrounds the existence of an independent commercial press which does not take an explicit stance in support of political parties or government. At the same time, it is also possible to identify, within this moment of transition, some resemblances to the democratic corporatist model. This model refers to a landscape where commercial and 'partisan' media which may favour political groupings are seen to coexist. Furthermore, the state plays a relatively active but legally limited role within such a landscape. MBC radio performance can, for example, be

seen to have operated in conformity to these characteristics since the state was still providing financial support but temporarily refrained from interfering in editorial content.

In context of the return to control of the MBC and the briefness of diversity in print, neither the emergence of the liberal model nor that of the democratic corporatist model have come to full fruition. Instead, Malawi can be said to have reverted to the polarised pluralist model. It may be that the long history of adherence to this model, first in the colonial era and then under one-party democracy, had entrenched it within the socio-political landscape so that transformation has proved difficult to achieve. This may help to explain why investments in alternative models have been slow to take root, despite the efforts of interventions from stakeholders for democracy. In addition, there are the challenges involved in establishing new approaches to media within a social context that is economically fragile. No doubt, the failure to establish an independent press also had to do with a lack of access within the local journalistic community to the resources that would make this possible.

iv) Media in democratic Malawi (1994 to date)

The United Democratic Front (UDF) won the 1994 elections and Bakili Muluzi, a former minister during Banda's rule, became Malawi's first democratically elected president. He served for two presidential terms, and his ten-year rule was considered democratic by commentators within the local context. At the same time, however, this period was characterised by allegations of corruption in which government officials were suspected to have been involved (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2005:157). The former deputy Reserve Bank of Malawi governor, Bingu Mutharika, was then elected president in 2004, also on a UDF ticket (Kadima & Lembani, 2006:130). During his first term, Bingu initiated various development projects and also led an anti-corruption drive (Dionne & Dulani, 2012:112). However, his second term was beleaguered by deepening economic problems and dictatorial tendencies (Cammack, 2012:375). He was constantly challenged both by local civil rights activists and the donor community, who were becoming displeased with his increasingly autocratic style of governance (ibid:114). Donors eventually reduced support to Malawi and in response to this, local activists organized nationwide demonstrations in 2011 (Cammack, 2012:386). Bingu died the following year after a heart attack, and vice president Joyce Banda was sworn in as the next president of Malawi (Dionne & Dulani, 2012:112). Her early reforms included the formation of an inclusive government as well as the restoration of donor support that had been lost during Bingu's reign (Cammack, 2012:386). However, Banda's popularity dwindled after the discovery of massive looting of public funds during her rule (Chikapa-Jamali & Dzimbiri,

2015:444). The 2014 elections were won by the DPP which this time had appointed the late Bingu's younger brother, Peter Mutharika, as its presidential candidate. Some commentators note that the political system that has emerged from this history does not, as yet, have the characteristics of a stable democracy (Hartmann, 2014:4; Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung, 2014:2). One reason for this is thought to be the fact that the country's constitution and presidential system of government still gives too much power to the presidency (Hartmann, 2014:4; Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung, 2014:2; Svasand, 2014:276).

Within the media landscape that took shape in this context, newspaper circulation remains restricted to the urban areas of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba. The country has two daily newspapers, the *Daily Times* and the *Nation*, each owned by different publishing companies. These companies also run weekend editions, which include the *Saturday Nation*, *Weekend Nation*, *Malawi News* and *Sunday Times* (Manjawira, 2009:11). Observers point out that there has not been significant interference with the editorial independence of any of these papers (Patel & Meinhardt, 2003:17). They also note that it is possible to observe improvements in content produced by these newspapers, which suggests the strengthening of journalistic practice. It has been argued that such improvements are at least partly due to the establishment of training institutions and media associations in Malawi (Chitsulo & Mang'anda, 2011:17; Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:45).

The broadcast sector has also expanded, with the introduction of a second MBC channel in 1997. The original channel, which is now referred to as MBC Radio 1, has always targeted a rural audience and continues to do so. For this reason, it broadcasts in vernacular languages and deals primarily with developmental and political programming. In contrast, MBC Radio 2, which targets a youthful urban audience, features music and entertainment-driven content (Manda, 2006:7). Malawi also introduced state television (MBCTV) in 1999, which makes them one of the last nations in Southern Africa to achieve this goal. Television Malawi (TVM) began by broadcasting within the main urban cities of Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu, although its coverage has since expanded to rural areas (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2003).

In contrast to the print sector, the production of journalism at the state broadcaster has not been characterised by the establishment of an independent and professional identity. A central reason for this is that Muluzi's administration soon assumed tight control of MBC, similar to the relationship that existed in the period of one-party rule. In this context, the balanced and critical coverage that characterised the 1994 elections was short-lived (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:32). In contrast, the state broadcaster's performance in the 1999 elections failed to provide a level playing field for parties other than the UDF (Patel & Meinhardt,

2003:40). The tendency for MBC to favour ruling political parties in its coverage has continued since this time (Svasand, 2014: 282, Patel, 2013:4, Manda, 2006:6; Lwanda, 2014:21). The state radio and television channels have been a source of controversy as those in power have never loosened their grip on the institution (Manda, 2006:6).

Another significant factor within the Malawian broadcast sector was the establishment of the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) in 1998 (Manjawira, 2009:12). The body is mandated to regulate the licensing of broadcast services, with licenses falling into four categories: public, private, private religious and community (Macra Website, 2014). The establishment of the regulator allowed for the diversification of the broadcast sector (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:31). About 20 radio stations covering the various spectrum of license categories have since been established in the country (Macra Listenership Survey, 2012:1). These newly established radio stations mostly broadcast non-partisan content and are free from state control. At the same time, MBC has been reconstituted to become a public broadcaster (Manda, 2006:12). The radio station broadcasts local content, but the television section complements programming with relays from international channels such as BBC, CCTV and Aljazeera (Magalasi, 2015:23).

Commentators nevertheless note that the broader regulatory environment in Malawi is not conducive to the establishment of a free press, either within the broadcast or print sector. A central reason for this appears to be that the Malawi government remains reluctant to support critical and independent journalism. This reluctance is demonstrated, for example, in an ongoing negotiation around policies relating to freedom of information. On one hand, the right of access to information is recognised and entrenched in the Malawi constitution (Malawi Constitution, 1994: Chapter 36). On the other hand, this right cannot be exercised, due to the absence of a comprehensive freedom of information law (Ojo, 2010:1; Manda, 2005:63; Reyhana, 2016). This situation resulted from the fact that the Malawian government continued to delay the tabling of an Access to Information Bill in Parliament (Ojo, 2010:2). If passed into law, the bill would oblige public officers to provide information to the media (ibid). The current president, Peter Mutharika, has been promising to facilitate the debating of the bill but no action has been taken up to date (Nyasatimes, 2016). Government's stance on the issue has raised questions about its rhetoric regarding the commitment to provide an enabling condition for media practice in the country.

The observations about the state of media during each of the periods discussed in this section makes it possible to point out ways in which Hallin and Mancini's analytic scheme can be applied to an assessment of the Malawian media system. As we have seen, the colonial

period saw the establishment of a system that is representative of the polarised pluralist model, where the state controls the media and intervenes at will in the media. This system was entrenched during the period of one-party rule, despite the establishment of independence. Then, for a brief moment, in the transition to multi-party democracy, alternative models seemed possible. This period showed evidence of emerging characteristics associated with either the liberal model or the democratic corporatist model. However, as we have seen, the values associated with the polarised pluralist system remained entrenched. For this reason, in the years since transition, the Malawian media landscape has largely remained characterised by aspects of this model.

In spite of the apparent entrenchment of the polarised pluralist system during the various political periods in Malawian history, it is still possible to observe the potential for transformation to another kind of media landscape. This is evident in the brief emergence of approaches to journalism that are more typical of the liberal model in the political transition period from 1993 to 1994. Furthermore, it could be argued that aspects of the liberal model have, since then, continued to form part of the Malawian media landscape. The private radio industry and the print media can be seen at least to some extent as operating according to the principles of this model, given that the government does not interfere directly with their operations. At the same time, the government continues to pay ‘lip service’ to principles such as that of freedom of information and freedom of expression, even though this claim does not translate into practice. This would suggest that within the Malawian context, at least at a rhetorical level, the liberal model is imbued with some level of authority.

1.3 Implications of macro-level media analysis for climate change journalism in Malawi

As we have seen in Chapter One, scholarship about journalism dealing with climate change identifies three roles that such journalism should ideally fulfill. Firstly, there is the idea that journalism should provide the public with access to authoritative information about climate change, as represented by statements made by scientists and politicians. It is argued that as part of facilitating such access journalism needs to play an educational role, ensuring that members of the public understand the information provided to them. Secondly, there is the argument that journalists should actively and critically engage with the claims made by authorities on climate change and should, as part of this, identify the vested interests that inform such claims. In addition, journalists should make explicit their own investment in representing the interests of the general public and should participate actively in generating knowledge about climate change that can be seen to serve these interests. Thirdly, journalism about climate change

should facilitate public participation in the discussion of the topic. Such journalism can help members of the public to gain insight into the impact of climate change on their lives, and to mobilise strategies that enable them to deal with this impact.

It can be argued that journalists' ability to put into practice any or all of these roles may depend on the kind of media system that they are based in, and the model that this system is associated with as per the scheme provided by Hallin and Mancini. In context of a media system that is strongly characterised by aspects of the polarised pluralist model, the media would be able to perform the first role. Journalists can do so, at least, if this role is understood to involve disseminating and explaining information or knowledge about climate change that has official sanction. Under such circumstances, the task of informing and educating is not in conflict with the interests of those in authority and the state may, indeed, benefit from it. Interference would only be necessary if this role is fulfilled in a way that undermines such authority.

As noted, the polarised pluralist model seems to be the most firmly entrenched within the Malawian context. For this reason, journalists should be able to achieve the role of informing and educating audiences about climate change. Indeed, observations indicate that the media has been able to fulfill this role in Malawi to a considerable extent. Most communities in Malawi acknowledge hearing or reading about climate change (Hara, 2012:16). Journalists have also been able to access climate change information from experts, particularly through the assistance of NGOs (Mkwambisi, 2010:23). Evidence of this can be seen, for example, from the extent to which the local media tend to quote experts from NGO's in their coverage of climate change (ibid). The broadcast sector, particularly MBC radio, also regularly feature NGO-based experts who share their knowledge of climate change (Chimala, 2011:77).

The second role, that of facilitating critical engagement with information or knowledge about climate change, becomes more difficult to attain in context of the polarised pluralist model. Interest groups in leadership positions are likely to consider the critical role to be one that undermines their authority, given that it involves the scrutinising of the policies and actions of public officials and institutions. The same is true for the third role – that of facilitating active public participation; within the polarised pluralist model, the machinery of state is not invested in the ideal of a media that enables ordinary citizens to voice their opinions and perspectives.

Indeed, based on personal observation, this researcher sees limited evidence in the Malawian context of media that fulfills the second and third requirement of journalism about climate change. Indeed, trends point to a situation where journalists do not often challenge official statements made about climate change, or critically engage experts to explore the objectives behind their messages. This researcher's informal scrutiny of journalism in Malawi

indicates that the tendency is to present statements made about climate change by experts and officials with no further analysis or comment.

It has been noted that this tendency is particularly strongly represented within the public broadcaster, where journalists do not typically provide interpretations and critical assessments either of international or local debates about climate change (Kachirwa Interview, 2016:18). They do not adopt investigative approaches to reporting about climate change or question government policy on the topic. Instead, the content of programming about climate change tends to comprise the views of climate change experts and comments from officials (ibid). Furthermore, there has been no significant effort to foreground critical perspectives and opinions of members of local communities in climate change news and debates (Khonje, 2011:30).

The liberal and democratic corporatist models are based in norms that are more encouraging of the second and third requirements for journalism about climate change. Due to the relative freedom exercised by the media in environments characterised by these models, it is likely that journalists would be able to go beyond the task of disseminating official information to also facilitate critical engagement and public participation. As noted above, minimal aspects of these two models can be observed within the Malawian context. However, as we have seen in the previous section, the aspect of the liberal model is nevertheless accorded a degree of ‘rhetorical authority’ within the Malawian context. This may signal the possibility for the fulfillment of the second and third roles required in the coverage of climate change.

2. Analysis at the medium level: journalism practice and the norms that inform it

Scholarship about the normative foundations of journalism also includes discussion of the wide spectrum of traditions of journalistic practice that have emerged within different social contexts around the world. Of particular relevance has been the work of Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White, which presents possible distinctions between the way in which different traditions of journalism define their own social purpose (Christians et al., 2009). The authors use Siebert et al.’s Four Theories of the Press as their point of departure, in order to consider what the role of journalism ought to be in a democratic society. They argue that it is possible to identify four roles that journalism has come to perform in a democratic society (Christians et al., 2009:121). Their description of these roles clarify the relationship between such journalistic practice and the dominant political and economic powers within that social

space, and also their relation to civil society (Nordenstreng, 2007:2). The authors refer to these roles as ‘monitorial’, ‘collaborative’, ‘facilitative’, and ‘radical’.

It is assumed, within the monitorial conceptualisation, that the task of journalism is to collect, process and disseminate all kinds of information that is of relevance to the public (Christians et al., 2009:125). As part of this task, journalism is expected to monitor the performance of people in positions of authority on behalf of the public. It should achieve this role by investigating any activities that show abuse of power or negligence by elected authorities (ibid:142). In contrast, within the collaborative conceptualisation, journalism works in partnership with the state and other institutions of power (Nordenstreng, 2007:2). A key contribution that journalism makes within this context is that of disseminating information that supports social development (Christians et al., 2009:201). The third, facilitative conceptualisation calls for media to support the strengthening of civil society, by encouraging the public’s participation in processes of deliberation that are geared to resolving shared social problems. While the first two conceptualisations of journalism can be seen to locate members of the public as passive spectators to discussions that take place between officials and experts, there is space within this third approach for them to be conversational partners in such discussions (Christians et al., 2009:158). Finally, the radical role of journalism works to challenge injustices perpetrated by power systems. It further aims at introducing a new order that supports civil organisations that fight such injustices (Nordenstreng, 2007:2).

It is possible to trace a relationship between each of these conceptions of journalism and the examples of Hallin and Mancini’s models which have been identified, above, as being of relevance to the Malawian context. Firstly, it can be argued that journalism within the liberal model is conceptualised in terms of the monitorial role given that the main purpose of journalism, within this conceptualisation, is to strengthen democratic governance. The collaborative role can, similarly, be seen to be accommodated within the polarised pluralist model of society. The emphasis within the collaborative conceptualisation is on a partnership between journalism and the state that contributes to the achievement of developmental goals, and this resonates with the norms that inform the polarised pluralist model. The facilitative approach to journalism can, in turn, be seen to resonate with the normative foundations of both the liberal and the democratic corporatist model. These models support media that involve the inclusion of public voices in discussions of national importance.

Furthermore, it is possible to trace a connection between Christian et al.’s normative roles of the media and the roles that have been identified earlier in this chapter for journalism about climate change. The conceptualisation of collaborative journalism can be seen to resonate

with the task of informing and educating audiences about climate change. The monitorial role, along with the radical role, can be seen to overlap in their intensions with the second task expected of climate change journalism – that of critical engagement. The facilitative role, in turn, can be linked to the third task of encouraging public participation in deliberations about climate change.

It is possible, then, to trace clear links between Hallin and Mancini's systemic models of media, Christian et al.'s normative conceptualisations of journalistic purpose and the roles that journalism should play in dealing with climate change, as articulated in journalism studies. These links provide the basis for a conceptual framework that can be applied to the examination, in this study, of the role that broadcast journalists play in reporting on climate change in the context of Malawi. A key strength of this framework is that it challenges the assumption that journalism as it exists in advanced industrial democracies necessarily provides the template against which the study of all media should be evaluated. Instead, it acknowledges the existence of the broad spectrum of traditions of journalism that exist in different social contexts.

One such tradition that is of particular relevance to a study of the normative foundations of traditions of journalism in Malawi is that of development journalism. Commentators explain that different versions of this tradition have found purchase within developing countries and emerging democracies across the world. Development journalism responds, in the articulation of its normative foundations, to the political, social and economic concerns that are of relevance within these environments. As such, it places emphasis on contributing to social and economic development (Banda, 2007:158; Shafer, 1998:42). The practice of development journalism tends to be based in a collaborative relationship with the state. As such, it does not adhere to the principle of journalistic objectivity to the same extent as can be observed in, for example, the monitorial tradition of journalism. Since its origins in the 1960s in Asia, normative guidelines for such journalism have evolved into a popular transnational framework that has been applied particularly within the context of developing nations (Christians et al., 2009: 200). It is, indeed, also possible to identify aspects of the developmental tradition of journalism in the Malawian context. It can, for example, be observed in the role that the public broadcaster has played, since independence, as part of the government's communication strategies in support of agricultural and rural development (Manyozo, 2005:3; Mackie, 1971:106).

Some commentators have suggested that the commitment within development journalism to collaboration with the state opens up the possibility of an abuse of such media by the state. It is argued that postcolonial governments use such journalism to bolster their own

power, rather than ensuring that it operates in the interests of poor and vulnerable people (Wasserman, 2011:795). In response to such critique, a modification of development journalism can be identified in traditions of reporting such as ‘emancipatory’ journalism. As in the case of development journalism, this tradition is defined by a commitment to development and a collaborative relationship with the state (Carpentier, 2005:207). However, it places a far more deliberate emphasis on the empowerment of ordinary people. Such empowerment is understood to require media to facilitate the participation of ordinary people in processes of public debate (Shah, 1996:146 in Banda, 2007:158-60). We see, in this tradition, a much stronger articulation of the facilitative role of the media.

To some extent, the emancipatory approach to development journalism can also be observed within the Malawian public broadcaster, particularly in the form of radio listening clubs (RLCs). Such clubs comprise small radio listening and discussion groups that meet regularly to discuss radio programmes, such as that of agricultural radio. The discussions are recorded, and the broadcaster then draws on this material in order to generate content for subsequent programmes (Manyozo, 2012: 29). The purpose of this system is to facilitate participatory radio programme production aimed at social development (ibid). It is proposed that broadcast journalism that includes such listening forums can contribute to the transformation of ordinary people’s lives in the rural areas in Malawi (Mhagama, 2015:844). Indeed, this form of broadcast journalism has been credited with facilitating participation of rural communities in identifying strategies to improve their livelihoods in some areas in Malawi (Manyozo, 2012: 144). It would, therefore, be of interest to this study to explore the role that this tradition of radio programming can play, within the Malawian context, with regard to journalist’s attempts to report on climate change in ways that show the local relevance of the topic.

3. Analysis at the micro level: researching newsroom experiences

Research dealing with the normative foundations of journalism can also be identified in studies in which journalists themselves speak about the principles that guide their practice. A seminal contribution to such research is represented by the work of Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel. Their publication was a response to a perceived crisis in the credibility and purpose of journalism as a profession in the United States (Kille, 2009:1; Dickson & Topping, 2001:73). The authors noted that journalism’s credibility and traditional values were facing significant challenges brought about by various structural dynamics. They proposed that there was a need

to reclaim the integrity of journalism by producing scholarship that articulates guidelines for credible journalistic practice. They argued, furthermore, that such research required a process of consultation with journalists themselves, in order to find out how they would define normative guidelines for journalistic practice (Kille, 2009:1, McDonald, 2006:754; Halberstam, 2001: Rudenstine, 2001 in Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:1). In *The Elements of Journalism*, they demonstrate the value of this approach by drawing on interviews with journalists in the United States. The research participants were asked to describe the goals and guidelines that define their practice (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:97). Based on these interviews, the authors identify nine⁴ normative ‘elements’ which the journalists they interviewed regard as key to ‘professional’ practice (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). A brief review of this work and the debate it has sparked within the field of journalism studies demonstrates the value of such research to understanding journalism as it exists at the level of individual experience.

The first element identified by the research participants is described by the authors as journalism’s ‘obligation to the truth’ (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:37). It is explained that journalists need to ensure that their accounts of events are truthful because that is what differentiates their practice from other forms of communication, such as public relations (ibid:42). Secondly, professional journalism requires a commitment to the collection and dissemination of information in the service of public interest. This commitment is informed by journalists’ loyalty to the ‘citizenry’ – a social obligation that can at times take precedence over the immediate interests of the media institutions that they work for (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:51-52). Thirdly, journalists’ claim to a system of truth-telling can only be ensured through a practice based in the discipline of verification (ibid:73). This discipline enables journalists to demonstrate to the public that the work they produce is credible and reliable (ibid:77). Fourthly, journalists must exercise and sustain their independence from the sources or events which they have featured (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:97). This implies adopting a non-participatory approach when presenting different sides of a story, an opinion or commentary (ibid). Fifth, journalists are obliged to serve as independent monitors of power (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001: 112). This ‘watchdog’ role applies not only to the government and state, but also other powerful institutions in society (ibid). Sixth, journalism must provide a platform for discussing public

⁴ However, there is an additional tenth element in the Revised and Updated 3rd Edition. It calls for journalists to acknowledge that citizens too, have rights and responsibilities to news. This is particularly in form of social media where the average person can post information. The journalists should therefore be aware that they no longer have control on what information reaches the public. In order for journalists to maintain relevance, they must endeavour to verify information which may already be in the public domain and help in providing meaning and proper use of such information (Dean 2016:1).

concerns (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001: 136). This forum must enable all members of society to freely engage in debates that can contribute to both individual and community development (ibid:143). Seventh, journalists should endeavor to "... make the significant interesting and relevant" (ibid :148). This means that they should try to creatively engage with their audiences so that they are able to appreciate the social significance of the issues being reported on (ibid). Eighth, journalists must ensure that the news is comprehensive and proportional (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:164). They must therefore strive to include diverse perspectives on any issue that they are reporting on and at the same time consider what most members of the audience would regard as relevant (ibid: 165). Finally, journalists should adhere to a personal sense of ethics and responsibility as their moral compass in order to ensure the validity and legitimacy of their work (ibid: 181). This means that newsrooms should operate as environments that encourage journalists to give voice to such personal conscience (ibid: 183).

Kovach and Rosenstiel explain that the journalists who participated in their study considered these elements as essential because they articulate the societal obligations required of the practice of journalism as a profession (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:42). Commentators have confirmed that these elements are, indeed, representative of principles that journalists in the American context refer to in their conceptualisation of professional practice (Pihl-Thingvad, 2015: 395; Macdonald, 2006:754; Giles, 2001:2; Dean, 2016:1). It is thought that these principles have the status of 'collective knowledge' that journalists in this country regard as core to the credibility and legitimacy of their practice (Deuze, 2005:447, Zelizer, 2004:101). Indeed, it has been suggested that they are in fact more representative of the professional norms that guide journalists in their practice than formal policies outlined by institutions that they work for (Russo, 1998 in Deuze, 2005: 447; Witschgen & Nygren, 2009:41). Journalists tend to define their professional identity through commitment to these shared norms rather than loyalty to the official guidelines of the institutions that employ them (Singer, 2007:81).

Commentators have at the same time found fault with the emphasis, in *Elements of Journalism*, on the responsibility that the individual journalist bears for restoring journalism's credibility (Macdonald, 2006: 755; Gans, 2003:36). It is pointed out that such an approach ignores the influence that overall structural factors play in ensuring that the ideals that journalists have articulated in context of Kovach and Rosenstiel's study can be lived out in practice. Such factors include, for example, the availability of resources and time and the role that market forces play in influencing decisions that are made in newsrooms (ibid). As observed by some commentators, journalists' experiences of implementing journalistic ideals are necessarily framed by these factors, which play a role both in constraining and enabling their

attempts to do so (Pihl-Thingvad, 2015: 407; Wien, 2005:3). Empirical studies of the normative foundations of journalistic practice need, therefore, to include not only an engagement with the individual journalist but also with the social and institutional context in which they are located (Zelizer, 2004:8). Such an engagement with social context is necessary, if one is to achieve the goal of strengthening the credibility of journalism as a practice. Research about journalism that draws on the knowledge of individual journalists needs, for this reason, to incorporate reference to their experience of institutional context (Zelizer, 2004:8). In the absence of such an emphasis, the suggested elements of journalism will remain an abstract framework, with little chance of being implemented in practice (Gans, 2003:36).

Kovach and Rosenstiel do, in fact, emphasise that institutional context can both constrain and enable journalists in their attempts to put journalistic ideals into practice. Both these authors and others have identified a range of institutional factors that play this role. One important area of work, in this respect, is represented by the investigation of the role played by conventional formats of journalistic production (Tuchman, 1972:678; Schudson, 2001:150). Observers note, for example, that news formats place limitations on the space that is available for the inclusion of in-depth content, and also on the kind of stories that can be covered (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:164; Altheide, 1997 :650).

A second and equally important area of work focuses on the processes of journalistic production in particular organisational environments, and the decision-making processes that form part of this. Such research deals with the role played by policies and institutional practices in, for example, the pitching of stories, the selection of news sources, the treatment of stories and the editing of stories (Gans, 2003:21; Tuchman 2002:87; Murdock, 2005:137-138). Reference is made to the role that such practices can play in frustrating journalists in their attempt to be ethical in their practice (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:183). Indeed, it is generally argued that newsrooms tend to be dictatorial spaces where decisions about production are carefully policed (ibid; Soloski, 1997:143). Studies of so-called ‘gate-keeping’ by editorial staff have, for example, demonstrated how institutional context can play this role (Schudson, 1989:264; Schudson, 2000:177). Studies of ‘news values’ have also contributed to understanding of the role that shared understandings of the ‘newsworthiness’ plays in determining the selection of news (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O’Neill, 2001; Kheirabadi & Aghagolzadeh, 2012; Manning 2001:63). It is generally demonstrated, in such work, that while individual journalists may have well-developed approaches to the production of credible journalism, institutional realities can make such ideals difficult to achieve (Gans, 2003:36 in Macdonald, 2006: 755).

Kovach and Rosenstiel propose that it is time for journalists to recognise their obligation to challenge editors, advertisers and other institutional authorities about the need to adhere to elements of journalism practice (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:181). They posit that it is only through posing such firm challenges to authorities and adherence to the professional elements that journalism would be able to present fair and accurate accounts of events (ibid).

A third area of research regarding contextual factors that shape journalists' experience of their own practice is represented by scholarship that deals with the broader social environment in which journalism is located. Of particular interest, in context of this study, is research dealing with the challenges that journalists face in responding to the growing complexity of that context (Tuchman, 2002:90; Curran et al., 2005:15). This is understood to be among factors exerting pressure on practicing journalists, who are often left in suspense about the appropriate way to adapt to changing times without compromising their professional identities (Tuchman, 2002:89-90; Curran et al., 2005:15).

In context of this study, the complexity associated with journalism about climate change can be seen as an important example of this phenomenon. As noted already in this dissertation, it has been observed that in the context of journalism on the topic, journalists have had to respond to the challenges of confronting complex debates about climate change (Fahn, 2009:1). Climate change can, in other words be seen as a distinct aspect of a radically changing environment that journalists need to adapt to (Chen, 2016:1).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a review of scholarship that deals with three different levels of analysis of the relationship between normative conceptualisations of media and the social context of media. The examination of each of these areas of scholarship provide terms of reference for the examination, in the final part of this study, of Malawian journalists' experience of reporting on climate change.

Section One focused on studies of media at the macro-level, with a particular focus on Hallin and Mancini's identification of 'models' that can describe different media systems and the norms about journalism associated with each. Of particular value to this study is the emphasis, within this work, on grounding the comparison of media systems within an empirical examination of context rather than assuming that 'universal' models exist. Such study also demonstrates that aspects of multiple models can in fact be present within one social context.

Hadland's empirical study of South Africa, for example, shows how multiple models can be identified in the context of this country.

Section One applied this scheme of analysis to a discussion of the conceptualisation of the purpose of media that has, at various points in history, informed the Malawian context. It was concluded that one can observe an entrenchment, within this context, of a system that resembles Hallin and Mancini's polarised pluralist model, and with this an authoritarian vision of the role of media in society. At the same time, however, one can observe evidence of the presence of aspects of the liberal model, particularly at the level of rhetoric or 'lip service' guarantees from political authorities.

The discussion teased out the implications of this analysis for the extent to which different approaches to the coverage of climate change is possible within the Malawian context. It was argued that the prominence of the polarised pluralist model makes possible an approach to journalism about climate change that fulfils what has been referred to in Chapter One as the 'inform and educate' role. At the same time, even if the liberal model is only present in limited terms, acknowledgement of its authority within the Malawian context signals the possibility of climate change journalism that can fulfil both a critical and facilitative role.

Section Two again dealt with the study of the relationship between normative principles and media, this time dealing with the body of scholarship that examines traditions of journalistic practice. The discussion focused on one seminal contribution that has been made to such study, represented by Christians et al's discussion of conceptions of the social purpose of journalism. The authors draw distinctions between the 'monitorial', 'facilitative' and 'collaborative' approaches of journalism as an analytical scheme against which to assess normative approaches that may exist in a particular environment. It was proposed that this work has helped to broaden acknowledgement, within journalism studies, of the spectrum of approaches to journalism that exist in different parts of the world. Such acknowledgement provides researchers with empirically grounded terms of reference for describing the kind of journalism that may exist in a particular space.

In drawing out the significance for Malawi, the section focused on traditions of journalism that can be seen to be of relevance to this context. Particular attention was paid to the presence of development journalism as a dominant tradition within this context. It was noted that, since independence, such journalism has played an important role within the MBC's programmes, particularly those concerned with rural development and agriculture. Such radio can be described as performing the 'collaborative' function referred to in the analytical scheme developed by Christians et al. This again suggests an enabling environment for the first of the

three purposes of climate change journalism as described in Chapter One – that of ‘informing and educating’. At the same time, given the role played within such radio programming by listener clubs, it may be possible to observe aspects of the Christians et al.’s ‘facilitative’ role. One can conclude, from this then, that there is also scope for the achievement, within the context of the MBC, of the third of the purposes of climate change journalism: that of ‘facilitating public participation’.

As a final examination of research about the normative foundations of journalism, Section Three focused on studies that deal with journalists’ experience of putting journalistic ideals into practice within specific institutional environments. The discussion focused on Kovach and Rosenstiel’s *Elements of Journalism*, as a key example of such scholarship. These authors, and other commentators who have expanded on their contribution, again argue that empirically grounded research is crucial to the production of a valid and reliable approach to a study of the relationship between normative ideals and journalistic practice. They point out the importance of such work in context of studies of the way journalists articulate journalistic ideals. At the same time, they refer to the importance of studying journalists’ experience of implementing these ideals, focusing on the role played within this experience by aspects of their context that either enable or constrain them.

It is possible that a similar research project to that of the *Elements of Journalism* could be conducted with journalists in the Malawian context, in order to explore how they understand the norms that define professional journalistic practice. Such a study could attempt to establish the extent to which their conceptualisations of journalism is similar or different from those of the American journalists in Kovach and Rosenstiel’s study. It could also explore Malawian journalists’ experience of institutional factors that constrain or enable their ability to put their journalistic ideals into practice. The remaining chapters of this dissertation describe an attempt to contribute to such research, through a study of MBC journalists’ experience of producing journalism about climate change.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The previous two chapters presented the theoretical and contextual framework that informs the empirical component of this study. This next chapter deals with the design and implementation of this empirical project. Section One serves as a contextualisation of this project, taking into consideration that it is a study of journalists' experience of reporting on climate change for the Malawian public broadcaster. The discussion of contextual issues in this section provides a backdrop against which the empirical project can be evaluated. Section Two describes the research plan, mapping out the decisions that were made with regards to methodology, the choice of methods, and the design of research instruments. Section Three explains how the implementation of this plan worked out in practice, in order to evaluate the validity and reliability of the final research project.

1. Contextualising the empirical study

In order to contextualise the study, this section deals, firstly, with the state of climate change awareness in Africa in general and how the same can be observed in the Malawian context. It then explores the role that radio has played in raising awareness of climate change in Malawi. It deals with this topic in general terms, and then in the more specific context of the MBC's approach to news, developmental programming, and agricultural radio.

1.1 Climate change in Malawi

The growing international awareness of climate change and its social significance, as captured in Chapter One, can also be observed within the context of Africa. One reason for this is that the impact of climate change is making itself felt across this continent. Research shows that people in many African countries are observing dramatic shifts in weather patterns related to climate change such as extreme weather events and greater unpredictability in weather patterns (Tadelera, 2010:1). These shifts in weather are leading to growing desertification in the Sahara region, deforestation and soil erosion in various parts of the African continent (ibid).

Research conducted across ten countries in Africa indicates, however, that although many people have direct experience of extreme changes in weather patterns, they remain uninformed about the possible link to climate change. For instance, a research project conducted in South Africa in 2008 indicated that 28 percent of participants could not answer specific questions about climate change. A further 27 percent of respondents had not heard

about the subject (South African Social Attitudes Survey, 2008). Surveys conducted in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa indicate that most members of the population of these countries are unfamiliar with terms such as ‘climate change’ and ‘global warming’ (BBC World Service Trust, 2009:18). It has also been suggested that within many African countries, lack of knowledge about climate change can be identified not only amongst ordinary people, but also at the level of government (Tadesse, 2010:1).

Climate change has also been observed in the Malawian context. It is, indeed, generally acknowledged that the country is among the top ten nations in Africa worst affected by climate change (Action Aid, 2006:3; Connors, 2011). Accordingly, the climate in the country is considerably highly variable. In the past two decades, the country has been experiencing droughts, excessive rainfall, flash floods and crop failure (Hara, 2012:10). In a study conducted in 2006, it is noted that close to 40 weather related disasters have been recorded over the past three decades. About 16 of these disasters had been drought or flood events after 1990 (Action Aid, 2006). Further extreme weather conditions have included six very wet and five very dry summers between 1997 and 2011 (Norwegian Church Aid, 2015). Finally, the recent floods in 2014 killed nearly 300 people and displaced 230 000 others while over 63, 000 hectares of farmland was destroyed (Unicef, 2015). This is devastating, particularly considering that 80 per cent of the country’s population of 13 million relies on rain-fed agriculture and other natural resources for their livelihood (Action Aid, 2015; GoM, 2008). Furthermore, global forecasts locate Malawi among countries likely to continue experiencing climate change effects (Hara, 2012:11; Theu et al., 1996:98). There are pointers to possible increases in weather uncertainties which are likely to negatively affect planning that is dependent on weather conditions (ibid). Current analyses indicate that future scenarios could include more dry spells and floods, that would lead to food insecurity for larger parts of the population in Malawi (Norwegian Church Aid, 2015). These uncertainties will also require expensive adaptation mechanisms that are currently not known to local communities (ibid).

Commentators have pointed out that responses to climate change in Malawi have so far been inadequate (Nangoma, 2007:2). It is noted, in particular, that not enough effort has been made to support climate change community sensitisation projects (ibid). Furthermore, there has been little attempt at the systematic analysis of the impact of climate change-related disasters on local communities. Such analysis is crucial to the articulation of appropriate responses designed to mitigate the impact of climate change. In addition to this, not enough research is done to assist in the timely prediction of such disasters (ibid). For example, the 2002 hunger crisis in Malawi is largely attributed to poor understanding of agro-meteorological

relationships as well as a failure to incorporate climatic forecasting in strategic planning around the economy and food security (Clay et al., 2003: xiii).

In the end, the overall observation has been that both the general public and decision-makers in Malawi have inadequate knowledge of climate change and its impacts (Daud, 2013; Zulu, 2016:24). One reason for this is a general lack of access to the knowledge about climate change that needs to inform decision-making by community members (particularly farmers) and policy makers (Zulu, 2016: iv). Commentators also note that a majority of the local population have no clear idea of where and how to access climate change information (Daud, 2013; Zulu, 2016:24). This situation is made worse by a lack of adequate research on the impact of climate change in Malawi (Zulu, 2016:27). In addition, few people within the context of Malawi have the necessary knowledge and skill to analyse the little information that may be available (Nangoma, 2007:2). Reference is also made to a lack of ‘political will’ amongst those in leadership positions to address the matter (Nangoma, 2007:2). It is observed that government does not seem interested to invest in research infrastructure or provide adequate support to existing research institutions (ibid: Zulu, 2016:26).

Commentators have suggested approaches on how best the Malawi government (GoM) and other stakeholders can develop and implement measures that can guarantee the country’s resilience to the impact of climate change. Within these discussions, it is suggested that a key component of such a strategy should be the promotion of learning about climate change (GoM Strategy on Climate Change Learning, 2013). It is envisaged that if the public is equipped with adequate knowledge about climate change, this would help to facilitate a better appreciation of the subject (Daud, 2013). A better understanding of climate change by various stakeholders such as policy makers would be essential in enhancing adaptation strategies in the Malawian context (Zulu, 2016:25).

It has been proposed that decisive national leadership is a prerequisite for achieving progress in dealing with climate change in developing nations such as Malawi (Giddens, 2008:3). In response to such statements, GoM is on record to have asserted its awareness of the implications facing Malawi as a developing nation vulnerable to extreme climate change effects (GoM National Climate Change Policy, 2012). The government is engaged in various initiatives as a response to the effects of climate change. This includes the signing of international treaties aimed at developing climate change policies and legislation. The treaties include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) signed in 1992 but ratified in 1994 and the Kyoto Protocol signed in 2001. The GoM has made steps towards fulfilling the obligations of the UNFCCC such as implementing both the Initial

National Communication (INC) and the Second National Communication (SNC) strategies.⁵ Furthermore, GoM has devoted particular attention to climate change in the country's 2011-2016 National Development Strategy (MDGS II). The MDGS places particular emphasis on the need to enhance local resilience to climate change risks and impacts. In this regard, the country has formulated a National Climate Change Policy intended to support the implementation of climate change programmes in the country (GoM National Climate Change Policy, 2012). Indeed, GoM has developed a Six-year National Climate Change Investment Plan (NCCIP 2013-2018) to increase and coordinate climate change investment in Malawi. The priorities of NCCIP are: adaptation; mitigation; climate change research and systematic observation, technology development and its transfer.

1.2 The role of the radio in responding to climate change in Malawi

In Malawi, attempts to harness the power of media in order to respond to the realities of climate change have drawn particularly on the use of radio. This is not surprising, given that this medium remains a major source of information for Malawians due to its affordability and ease of use among the illiterate majority (Manjawira, 2009:12). Radio continues to represent the most accessible media platform in this country, with most households owning a receiver even in the most rural of communities (Chapota & Manda, 2015:9; Utembe, 2010:84). Rural audiences in particular still depend on the public broadcaster for news and programs. The fact that 80 percent of MBC's programming is in the local Chichewa⁶ language makes it particularly suited as a vehicle to reach these audiences (ibid).

However, the general practice in producing programme content for the public broadcaster seems to be that of a 'top down' approach, in which journalists are expected to follow directives from authorities (Manyozo, 2005:2). This may place certain restrictions on the extent to which journalists can fully realise the potential of the broadcaster, as a resource for generating and distributing knowledge about climate change. At the same time, as will be discussed below, the role that such constraints play can be observed to operate at a more acute

⁵ These are policy documents which outline activities that Malawi has undertaken and other future strategies as a national response to climate change. The policies are presented to the UNFCCC by member nations as an obligation to provide updates of their respective climate change communication initiatives (Initial National Communication of Malawi, 2002:vi).

⁶ Chichewa has been the primary local language that MBC uses, alongside English, in broadcasting. Other local languages such as Tumbuka, Lomwe and Yao are also used, particularly in context of minor news bulletins (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:29; MBC Website, 2016).

level in MBC News, while development programming allows scope for different kinds of content.

1.2.1 MBC Radio news

MBC broadcast news bulletins at designated times in English and Chichewa (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:29). Three major newscasts (of between 20 and 30 minutes in length, with both national and international content) are broadcast at 7 am, at mid-day and at 7pm (MBC News Website, 2016). During the remainder of the day, minor news bulletins (of about three to five minutes in length) are broadcast on the hour. English news appear first on top of the hour and are immediately followed by a Chichewa version of the same news content (ibid).

During the period of one-party rule, news and current affairs programming at the state broadcaster comprised two distinct components; content about politics and content on social development (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:29). Political content was dominated by updates on the activities of president Kamuzu Banda, government officials and the ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP). Developmental content focused on issues related to social progress, health and agriculture productivity in the country (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:30). There was heavy censorship of all news content in the name of national security and no opposition views were tolerated (ibid). During this time, the broadcaster virtually operated as a department of the Ministry of Information instituted to serve the political interests of the president and the ruling party (Chiyamwaka, 2009:2).

After the transition to democracy, the succeeding UDF government was interested in maintaining the propaganda functions of MBC News as established by their predecessors (Lush: 1998: 56). For this reason, the UDF did not amend the MBC Act of 1993 which empowers the Minister of Information to interfere with news programme content (van de Veur, 2003: 91-92). Indeed, since this time, MBC News has continued to operate under tight government control (Kayambazinthu & Moyo, 2002 in Englund, 2007:302; Chiyamwaka, 2009:2; Meinhardt & Patel, 2003:17). As a result, news bulletins on MBC are characterised by bias in favour of the party in power (Chiyamwaka, 2009:1). Indeed, news programming is subjected to heavy censorship which disregard any dissenting views against a ruling party. The MBC Act which sanctions direct interference with editorial content is seen to be a catalyst for such inherent interference of editorial content (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:29).

This description suggests that journalists working for MBC news face certain challenges in putting into practice all three of the ideal roles of journalism about climate change referred to in Chapter Two. They should be able to achieve the role of ‘educating and

informing’, but only within the confines of the dissemination of officially sanctioned information. Given the strong presence of censorship and bias, combined with the imperative of covering the activities of leadership at the expense of other news, it may be that journalists would be less able to fulfill the second role of ‘critical engagement’, and the third role of ‘facilitating public engagement’.

1.2.2 Developmental radio on MBC and the role of listener clubs

As in the case of news, developmental radio programming on MBC has traditionally been based on “... top-down information from government to the citizens with little room for alternative viewpoints and little dialogue with end users” (DANIDA, 2000:10). However, over time, this approach has been heavily criticised by experts in developmental broadcasting. They argue that for developmental radio to empower its audiences, it needs to encourage their involvement in sharing knowledge of how to improve their social and economic growth (Librero, 1985:1; Manyozo, 2005:2; Osman, 2008:21). In 1999, in response to such criticism, the MBC established the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU), with the task of facilitating programming about national development issues by making use of participatory communication activities (Sisya, 2003:3). The aim was to provide a platform for empowering marginalised communities by enabling them to define themselves and articulate their understanding of the world (Manyozo, 2005:4). Particular emphasis was placed on encouraging discussion within such communities of issues relating to their civil rights and citizenship (Chapota, 2009:10; Dzinkambani, 2002:1).

In 2000, the DBU observed that effective listener participation was difficult to facilitate when audiences were being addressed as large groups (Dzinkambani, 2002:1; Chimala, personal interview, 2016 16 November). They recognised the need for the establishment of coordinated listener participation structures that engaged with audiences in smaller, localised groups (Chimala & Chikapa, 2016:67). With the support of international aid, they were, in the same year, able to introduce radio listening clubs (RLC) across the country (Dzinkambani, 2002:1; Osman, 2008:21). The clubs consist of small groups of people who regularly meet to listen to a special radio programme and thereafter discuss the content (Manyozo, 2012: 29). To a larger extent, the DBU RLC approach was also borrowed from Zimbabwe where the Federation of African Media Women-SADC (FAMW) had successfully piloted a Development through Radio (DTR) project which involved rural women making their own radio programmes (Manyozo, 2005:4). Representatives from MBC DBU had earlier on in 1999 gone on a study tour of the development radio concept in Zimbabwe. While the approach there had some

political involvement of the ruling ZANU PF Women's League, the DBU RLC approach was modified to be strictly developmental and participatory to suit the Malawi context (Nkata, personal Interview, 2016 17 November). The DBU assumes the role of a facilitator by connecting the listening clubs with appropriate specialists on a particular topic. It also makes arrangements for a larger forum during which community members engage in a dialogue on related topics. The recordings for such discussions are later taken to MBC for editing and broadcasting (Chimala & Chikapa, 2010). So far, members from such clubs have been able to participate in developmental programs such as '*Ndizathuzomwe*' (These things are ours) and '*Kanthu Nkhama*' (Hard work pays). These 30-minute weekly programmes allow listeners to discuss issues such as food security, health, gender and HIV/AIDS (Manyozo 2005:5). By the end of the year 2000, over 40 RLCs had been established (Chapota 2009:10; Manyozo, 2005:1). The numbers have been increasing yearly as demonstrated by the establishment of 56 of such clubs in 2010 with at least one in each of the 28 districts in the country (Wood, 2010:6). Currently the unit manages close to 150 of these clubs in the country (Shale, personal interview, 2016 16 November).

DBU's use of listener clubs is generally thought to represent an effective approach to empowering rural communities to voice out their concerns (Dzinkambani, 2002:1). Stories demonstrating the success of the project are well documented. It is noted, for example, that social amenities such as clinics, water kiosks and health centers have been constructed in rural communities after interventions facilitated through this initiative (Chimala & Chikapa, 2010:67). In some cases, rural communities have been able to summon public officials in prominent positions, such as cabinet ministers, to come to their villages to account for lack of services meant to be provided by their respective ministries (Manyozo, 2005:1). The unit continues to use the radio listening clubs to produce programmes for broadcasting on MBC Radio.

One can conclude, from this description, that development broadcasting offers a more fruitful environment in which to pursue journalism that responds to all three understandings of the purpose of reporting on climate change. Nevertheless, observers note that despite the efforts to enhance developmental broadcasting in the country, only isolated examples of programmes deal extensively with climate change (Chikapa & Chapota, 2011).

1.2.3 Agricultural radio on the MBC

One area of developmental programming in which more coverage of climate change journalism can reasonably be expected is in agricultural radio. Indeed, MBC's agricultural radio does

sometimes deal with issues relating to climate change (Mkwambisi, 2010:26; Perez-Teran et al., 2015:1). Furthermore, there is evidence that such programming has contributed to awareness of climate change amongst some listeners. Research in central and Southern Malawi notes, in this respect, that 71 percent of people who claim knowledge of climate change noted that they first heard about the topic through such programmes. The remaining percentage was exposed to such information primarily through extension workers in forestry and agriculture (Hara, 2012:16).

Agricultural radio has a long history in Malawi, dating back to the time when MBC was established in 1964 (Chapota, 2009:9). Since that time, the broadcaster has operated largely in support of the government's efforts to improve agricultural and rural development (Mackie, 1971:106 in Manyozo, 2005:3). The Ministry of Agriculture, therefore, collaborated with MBC in planning and production of agricultural programmes (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011:30). The pioneer programmes which were featured on MBC were 15 minute weekly editions. The notable examples of such programmes are '*Kalimanzeru*' (wise farming) and '*Mphala ya balimi*' (farmers' ground) (Chapota, 2009:9).

In fact, agricultural radio on the MBC has a far longer history of participatory radio methodology, which developed separately from the interventions of the DBU. After two years of the initial programming, it was observed that a majority of farmers lacked the understanding and motivation to implement the agricultural messages on their own, without further assistance (Chapota, 2009:9). For this reason, in the late 1960's, the Ministry of Agriculture's Communication Branch initiated the 'farmers' forum listening group project in order to facilitate interaction with agricultural extension workers and thus strengthen farmers' knowledge and understanding of agricultural concerns (Manyozo, 2005:3). Unlike in the later DBU structure of radio listening clubs where the aim was to provide a forum for discussions of development issues between the electorate and duty bearers, the earlier farmers clubs concentrated on dialogue about farming methods to increase food sustenance (ibid). In addition, while the DBU programmes are in-house productions, the earlier agricultural editions were being produced at the Ministry of Agriculture studios and brought to MBC for airing. The programmes ran for 30 minutes, and included advisory messages on farming methods from agriculture experts, interviews with exemplary farmers and updates of activities within the farmers clubs. The recorded programme would conclude with a 10-minute discussion facilitated by a coordinator who was often identified among the members of the club (Manyozo, 2005:3-4).

Subsequently, the duration of agricultural programming was increased from less than an hour of weekly editions to more than three hours per week. The farm radio project, with its use of listening clubs, has since the 1960s served as a model for the Ministry of Agriculture to implement radio listening clubs for smallholder farmers in the country (Chapota, 2009:9). Over the years, such recorded agricultural programmes featuring farmers club discussions have been part of the programming at MBC. Indeed, by June 2009, the Ministry's Department of Agricultural Extension Services was able to sponsor five more agricultural programmes of the format that includes farmers club discussions (ibid). However, commentators note that the earlier formats of such programmes were not adequately interactive (Chapota et al., 2014:2).

It has been argued that a more interactive approach to communication about climate change within the MBC's agricultural programming can be facilitated by emphasising the use of listening clubs. As pointed above, such clubs have proved to be an effective forum for community dialogue on pertinent developmental issues (Chijere-Chirwa et al., 2000:6; Manyozo, 2007:16; Khonje, 2011:5; Manda, 2015:206). There is, however, little evidence that agricultural radio in Malawi has served as a key forum for discussion on issues of climate change (Khonje, 2011:15; DANIDA, 2000:10). Instead, the coverage of climate change that has occurred on such radio, as mentioned above, has generally been delivered to audiences as part of programming that is more 'top-down', without the possibility of listener interaction (Khonje, 2011:15).

With these contextual issues in mind, the empirical component of this study explores how journalists who report on climate change for the MBC experience the challenges of doing so. As part of this, the study deals with both MBC News and agricultural programming as environments that may either be constraining or enabling journalists in achieving this task.

2. The research design

This section describes the research design which guided this study. Firstly, it describes the decisions that were made with regards to the paradigmatic location of the study. Secondly, it identifies the research as a case study, and discusses the value of this design choice for the research project. Thirdly, it deals with the use of qualitative interviewing, as the key method of research utilised in this study. As part of this discussion, it outlines how the researcher prepared for the facilitation of the interviews and dealt with factors that would ensure the success of conducting the interviews. Fourth, it explains the design of the interview guide and finally, it summarises the ethical considerations that were kept in mind in designing the study.

2.1 Methodology: qualitative research and its philosophical focus

This study is located within the qualitative approach to social research. The qualitative paradigm is appropriate to this research because it enables an emphasis on a meaningful engagement with the specificity of social context (Richie & Ormston, 2014:33).

It should be remembered that this study is informed by an interest in understanding how a specific group of journalists experience the coverage of climate change within a particular social context – that of the Malawian public broadcaster. Qualitative research provides an appropriate framework for such a study, because it is interested in understanding, interpreting and providing rich descriptions of social phenomena in specific contexts (Silverman, 2010:139; Bryman, 1984:78; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:2; Moores, 1993:33).

It is also of relevance that the study intends to understand such an experience of reporting about climate change from the perspective of the individual subject. As already explained, the study deals with journalists' experiences of the constraining and enabling factors of putting their professional ideals into practice. Qualitative research is particularly suited to such a task, because it acknowledges the imperative of studying human subjects from a perspective of human subjects themselves. This approach is often associated with a constructivist or interpretivist theory of knowledge because it is usually aimed at understanding experiences and environments from the point of view of those who live them (Rudestam & Newton, 2007:32; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271). This understanding foregrounds the actors' perspective as a crucial starting point for increasing one's understanding of social experience (Bryman, 1984:77; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28; Flick, 2007:x ; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3).

It should, however, be acknowledged that qualitative research tends to disregard the need for immediate generalisation of findings to wider populations and their causal explanations (Silverman, 2010:139). The purpose of this research will, indeed, not be to generalise from the specificity of the study of MBC to a broader reality of public radio as it exists in developing environments. It is not assumed that the experience of Malawian journalists is representative of a broader experience of, for example, African journalists. Rather, the focus is on gaining insight into how journalists in Malawi, in particular, experience issues, given the specifics of their historical and social location.

2.2 Type of research: a case study

Case studies are identified with qualitative research designs because of their emphasis on understanding a single unit of study within a complex setting (Rudestam & Newton, 2007:50). This study deals with two such units of study – that is, news and agricultural programming, as distinct contexts in which journalists at the MBC experience the task of reporting on climate change. The case study method enabled a close investigation of the way journalists experience the challenges of producing such journalism within the complex institutional realities represented by these two programming environments.

The decision to select MBC for this case study is motivated partly by the convenience of doing so. Having worked with MBC, the researcher is familiar with editorial and news gathering processes within this broadcaster, and also has a network of contacts amongst its staff of journalists. The researcher was therefore well placed to pursue a research project based in this institution. Furthermore, the researcher expected that permission to interview journalists would be easily granted by MBC because, in his observation, the institution appreciates research and is open to people who conduct research there. One reason for this could be that many members of staff at this institution have for the past five years been enrolling for tertiary education, in order to upgrade their qualifications. This has included enrollment in the Malawi Institute of Journalism and The Polytechnic which are situated close to the offices of the MBC. The strengthening of relationships between the MBC and these institutions has led to a gradual cultivation of a culture within MBC management in which the importance of research is appreciated.

The decision to focus on radio news and agricultural radio was motivated by the researcher's knowledge of the differences in approach to the production of content that characterise these two programming environments. In his observation, the MBC newsroom is an environment characterised by close editorial supervision, which often operates as a form of censorship. This, together with the limitations posed by the news format, is likely to pose severe challenges for journalists who wish to pursue stories that are not prioritised by their editors. They are therefore likely to struggle to find space on the news agenda for climate change news, and if they do, it is likely to be framed only by the first goal for such journalism – that is, the dissemination of authoritative information. On the other hand, MBC agricultural programming tends to operate as a space in which there is far less close supervision of journalists' activities. For this reason, such programming has the potential to provide space for the achievement of the other two goals for climate change journalism – that of critical engagement, and that of facilitating public participation. The empirical component of this study is designed to explore

these possibilities, by gaining further insight into how these two programming environments differ from each other as spaces in which to pursue journalism about climate change.

2.3 Method of research: qualitative interviews

This study used one-on-one, qualitative interviews as its main fieldwork method. Qualitative interviews of this kind generally refer to in-depth, loosely organised or semi-structured conversations with individual research participants (Mason, 1996:38 in Bryne, 2004:181). Semi-structured interviews were also preferred for this study because of their goal to promote an active and open-ended dialogue (Deacon et al., 1999:65). Such interviews are suitable to this study because they enable the researcher to gain a more detailed understanding of the individual's perspectives of events in their own world which are not easily discernible through third-party observation (Lindlof, 1995:5). The achievement of such understanding is implied by the aim of this study – that is, to gain insight into the journalists' understanding of the ideal purpose of climate change journalism and their experience of putting this purpose into practice. In making the decision to focus on individual, one-on-one interviews rather than focus groups, the researcher also took into account that MBC journalists often work on field assignments. For this reason, it would not have been easy to assemble them for a group discussion.

It was also decided that the identification of research participants would be purposive, based on the deliberate judgment of the researcher (Deacon et al., 1999:50). Scholars explain that the purposive selection of interviewees is characteristic of qualitative research, given its avoidance of claims to generalisability (Silverman, 2010:139). The researcher therefore resolved to identify 10 respondents comprising equal numbers of journalists working on an agricultural programme that regularly features climate change issues and those working in the MBC newsroom. Final details about the individuals selected as research participants are provided in Section Three.

In addition, it was decided that participants would be interviewed within the premises of MBC. One reason for this decision was that the process of capturing interpretations in qualitative research is well achieved when it is conducted in natural settings of subjects under study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271). Secondly, the location was preferred for conveniences' sake as it is close to the workplace of the researcher and therefore easy to reach for both the researcher and participants.

Finally, it was decided that the researcher would allow for the flexibility of using both English and the local Chichewa language during the interviews. This was meant to encourage the participants to freely express themselves. It is noted that scholars recommend the flexibility

of using a local language or ‘mixing’ languages to enable better communication around concepts in qualitative interviews (van Nes et al., 2010:315; Filep, 2009: 64).

2.4. Designing the research instrument: an interview guide

Commentators emphasise that the key element in formulating interview questions in social research is to ensure that they generate answers to the research question (Bryne, 2004:190). Furthermore, qualitative interviews should be designed to generate information that serves the central goal of qualitative research, which is to enhance understanding of a social phenomenon (Richie & Ormston, 2014:33). For this reason, the focus should be on formulating open-ended questions which demand elaboration rather than closed ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses (Deacon et al, 1999: 65). Furthermore, to achieve depth and consistency with the research question, the interview guide should also be organised around themes (Deacon et al, 1999:65). Indeed, most qualitative interviews are known to follow a structured topic guide (Bryne, 2004:190; Bryman, 2004; Jensen, 1982; Merriam, 2002; Henning, 2004).

With these guidelines in mind, the interview guide developed for this study (see Appendix 1) comprised open-ended questions using short and clear sentences that were seen to be easy to understand for the respondents. The guide was organised into five sections. The first section seeks to generate information on the educational background and experience of the respondents in journalism as a whole and reporting on climate change in particular. It also required of the participants to explain how they acquired their knowledge about climate change. The second section examines the participants’ knowledge of climate change. This included an inquiry into the participants’ interpretations of the relevance of such debates to the Malawian context. The third section probes the participants’ conceptualisation of the role they should ideally play in reporting on climate change. It probes participants’ understanding of the main aims of journalism that deals with climate change and the particular themes that it should address in the Malawian context. The fourth section explores participants’ assessment of the state of journalism about climate change in Malawi. It first focuses on an evaluation of such journalism in general and then dealt with participant’s assessment of their own contribution to such journalism. The aim was for such assessment to draw on the criteria that the research participants had themselves articulated in the previous section, with regards to the ideal approach to climate change journalism. The final section deals with the participants’ perceptions regarding the challenges that they face in attempting to put an ideal approach to the coverage of climate change into practice. Questions included in this section prompted the participants to elaborate on how they were constrained or enabled in such efforts by contextual

factors. This section also required of the research participants to describe how such contextual factors can be dealt with. Lastly, this section required of participants to comment on reporting skills and knowledge that they would need to enable them perform in a way that they considered as ideal reporting about climate change.

In order to provide concrete details about journalistic work at MBC that could be referred to during the interview process, the researcher decided to review programme content both in the context of MBC agricultural programming and MBC News. The aim was to identify content in which climate change themes are featured. A sample of four recorded agricultural programmes that featured topics on climate were collected for the researcher to listen to (see discussion in Section Three). It was hoped that the programme content review could enrich the conversations with journalists, and in particular to allow the researcher to encourage interviewees to speak in concrete and detailed terms about their experience of producing such content.

Interviews were designed to run in single sessions, with a duration of close to an hour. The researcher also arranged to record the interviews in audio form, in order to capture verbatim responses for transcribing and analysis. In calculating the duration of this interview session, the researcher also took into account that he would need to ensure that the respondents were properly briefed regarding the purpose of the study.

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher engaged one respondent as a subject in a pilot study in order to have a picture of how the interviewees would respond to the questions in the guide. The pilot interview proved essential in improving the structure and wording of some of the questions in the interview guide. For instance, the researcher noted that the respondent in the pilot interview mostly gave short answers and could not elaborate on some crucial questions. It was, therefore decided that respondents in the actual interviews would require prompting for questions which were initially assumed to be straight forward. It was further observed that there would be a need to capture every response in detail when transcribing as opposed to summarising the same. This was concluded in order to capture every important aspect of the interviews.

2.5 Ethical considerations

In order to ensure that research meets the requirements of ethical practice, researchers must ensure the safety of respondents in the research process and consider questions of disclosure, consent and anonymity (Bryne, 2004:185; Babbie, 1992:148; Hansen et al., 1998:264). The researcher acknowledges and understands the importance of adhering to such ethical

requirements, and designed the research process accordingly. More particularly, in planning this process, the researcher followed ethical research guidelines as prescribed by the Rhodes School of Journalism, the institution where the researcher is based. These guidelines prompted the researcher to seek permission from MBC management to conduct interviews with journalists within this broadcaster. The researcher regarded such permission as necessary, out of respect to the institutional culture at MBC. Furthermore, the researcher recognised that employees of this broadcaster may be fired if they were to participate in the study without management's authorisation. For this reason, full permission was sought from the MBC, to ensure that they approved the research project. A letter was obtained from Rhodes University as the institution where the researcher was based, and used to seek permission from MBC radio to do this study. In addition, the researcher designed the interview process so that it was ensured that respondents participated voluntarily.

Rhodes University's ethical guidelines also stipulate that respondents need to be provided with a consent form and append their signature before taking part in the interviews. The process is meant to ensure that the researcher obtains informed consent from research participants, in support of their right to participate voluntarily in research while acknowledging any associated risk in the research process (Ali & Kelly, 2004:121). In this regard the researcher drafted a consent form (see Appendix 2), to be signed by both the researcher and participants at the beginning of the interviews (Searle, 2004:121).

The researcher also recognised the need to ensure anonymity of research respondents where necessary (Bryne, 2004:185). Commentators note that concealing names of respondents through the use of pseudonyms is one way of ensuring the privacy of participants (ibid). For this reason, the researcher decided to use pseudonyms as identifications for respondents. He also resolved that interview material would be stored securely so that it could only be used for the designated academic purpose⁷.

3. Implementing the research plan

This section explains how the implementation of this plan worked out in practice. It outlines how the particular decisions made were applied on the ground and how the eventual process adhered to or differed from the original plan. The first subsection describes MBC programmes

⁷ The interview transcripts are stored in both hard and soft copies. They have been filed in the researchers' office at his place of work and can be made available on request for researchers who would wish to look at them on the understanding that the participants' identities will remain anonymous.

that were selected for review, focusing on the format and content of the programmes. The section also clarifies why it was not possible to review content of news programmes on climate change. The second subsection provides details about the participants who were finally identified and selected for the interview process. It includes justification for the identification of the candidates as appropriate participants in the study. The third subsection provides an evaluation of the process of conducting the interviews. The final subsection is a discussion of the researcher's experience of analysing the interview material and writing up the research findings.

3.1 Review of programme content

As per the research plan, the field work commenced with a review of programme content as a term of reference for the interview process. As noted in Section Two, the researcher had been successful in identifying examples of agricultural programmes dealing with this topic. This included three 30-minute recordings and one 15-minute recording of such programmes. The names of the programmes reviewed were '*Kusintha kwa Nyengo Special 2016*' (Climate Change Special edition 2016), '*Nyengo ndi Chilengedwe*' (Climate and the Environment), '*Phindu Mu Mkaka*' (There is profit in Dairy Farming), and '*Liwu La Mlimi*' (The Farmer's Voice).

While all four programmes generally made reference to climate change and its effects, the researcher observed that '*Climate Change Special 2016*' was particularly concerned with international climate change negotiations. The 30-minute programme featured a panel discussion with three representatives from Malawi who attended the Paris COP 21 in December 2015. The producer of the programme had decided to produce a special edition to highlight issues discussed at the COP 2. The producer further indicated that he wanted to find out how Malawi officials would explain the relevance of the outcome of the conference to local communities in Malawi. He chaired the panel discussion, which included officials from Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA), Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) and the Forestry Institute of Malawi. They articulated the various aspects of COP 21 such as the commitments made regarding the reduction of gas emissions and the commitment of funding for adaptation programmes in developing nations. The programme explored how local communities in Malawi can benefit or contribute in the overall efforts to deal with climate change.

The second programme, '*Nyengo ndi Chilengedwe*', always features issues aimed at sensitising local communities on how to conserve the environment and adapt to climate change.

The particular show reviewed for the purpose of this study highlighted issues relating to the importance of crop diversification. It focused on how local communities in Zomba district can switch from overreliance on maize as their main food crop and start planting resistant crop varieties as a way of adapting to climate change. As part of this discussion, it focused on how farmers can benefit if they decided to start growing Paprika pepper due to the growing demand of this crop from processing companies. The programme featured interviews with farmers who are switching to growing the Paprika pepper as a way of diversifying crops. Other interviews contained voices of farmers who are so far benefiting from adapting new farming technologies that result in high yields despite climate change. There were further interviews within the programme with officials from LEAD, which is one of the organisations that supports environment and climate change programmes in local communities around Zomba district.

The third programme reviewed, '*Phindu mu Mkaka*' highlights how local farmers are benefitting from adaptations in dairy farming. The particular edition focused on how farmers in Machinga district are benefitting from consuming and selling goat milk as a healthier alternative to milk from cattle. The 30-minute programme also highlighted how dairy milk production is affected by climate change. It highlighted how cattle and goats fail to produce a lot of milk in very hot temperatures. For this reason, the programme aimed at sensitising communities to notice how some of their activities such as the cutting down of trees would affect their dairy farming. It featured interviews with one particular family who rear goats and sell the milk. The family was interviewed on how they came up with the idea, how they are benefitting from the business and on their understanding of how climate change is likely to affect their business.

The last sampled programme, '*Liwu la Mlimi*', generally deals with how farmers are implementing forestation projects in local communities in Malawi. The particular episode focused on how a village leader spearheaded reforestation activities in a village called Wotala in Blantyre rural. This 30-minute edition included interviews with the village Chief Wotala who explained how she ensures that every villager adheres to the reforestation project. She also explains how she gained support and training from organisations to embark on the reforestation programme in the area. The central message was that community leaders can take a leading role in reforestation programmes just like Chief Wotala had done. Apparently, the chief insisted that she should be interviewed in the forest, where the villagers are replanting trees that were cut down in the past as evidence of the villagers' efforts in the reforestation exercise.

The researcher also made an effort to inquire about past MBC Radio news bulletin copies in which climate change content was featured. The bulletin copies were also meant to

be used as a term of reference for interviewing newsroom journalists. Unfortunately, it was not possible to retrieve the climate change news bulletin copies as the institution does not have a reliable archiving system that would specifically identify climate change news copies or inserts. Nevertheless, the agricultural programme content reviewed proved relevant as a term of reference in conducting the interviews. Of particular interest was the enthusiasm in the local communities' leaders and selected farmers in articulating how they are responding to climate change. The review also provided an opportunity for the researcher to examine the questioning approach used by the interviewers towards both local people and official sources. This was necessary to determine if the approach is consistent with the ideals of reporting about climate change or not. This review was, therefore, important as a basis to observe if the participants' explanations would be consistent with what was observed in the programmes.

3.2 The research participants

The researcher purposively selected interviewees whom he considered capable of providing appropriate responses to the research question. In this way, he managed to identify 10 respondents, comprising five journalists working on agricultural programmes that feature climate change issues and five journalists working in the MBC newsroom.

Upon receiving the letter seeking permission to conduct interviews at MBC, the institution's Director of Programmes thought he would have to identify the journalists himself. However, the researcher asked to be allowed to visit the institution and take responsibility for the identification and selection himself. This was done to avoid possible selection bias on the part of the director. In addition, the researcher hoped to avoid delays in the selection process as the director planned to pursue this matter at a later date during his free time. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to personally meet the prospective respondents, brief them about the study, ensure that they were the appropriate respondents for the study and that they were also willing to be interviewed. The researcher therefore visited MBC's programmes department and met various agricultural programme producers and journalists. After explaining the study purpose and the specific type of interviewees that the researcher was looking for, the producers and journalists were able to recommend appropriate respondents for the study.

A similar process was followed on visiting the MBC newsroom. Specific reporters who work or have worked on climate change stories were identified and approached. The researcher then met with the respondents who were available and also collected contact numbers for those who were absent at the time. Eventually, the researcher booked appointments and made

arrangements about the dates, time and location for conducting the interviews with each respondent.

However, contrary to the initial plan to interview ten participants, the researcher was only able to conduct interviews with eight journalists. This included four journalists working on agricultural programmes that feature climate change content and four journalists who work on climate change stories in the newsroom. The researcher could not meet the remaining two journalists because they repeatedly changed the dates of their availability. One of the respondents eventually said he would not be able to make time for the interview because he was always busy.

The first group of participants comprising agricultural journalists included two male and two female interviewees. All of these participants were considered suitable for the interviews because their experiences in journalism ranged from three to eight years. The researcher considered such durations of experience as adequate for one to provide appropriate responses to the aims of the study in the Malawian context. Furthermore, their experience included the production of journalism on climate change.

The second group, that of newsroom journalists, had one female representative and three males. Again these participants were preferred based on their background in journalism and reasonable involvement with climate change reporting. Most of them had three to five years of newsroom experience both from other radio stations and the Malawian state broadcaster.

The majority of the participants in the two groups indicated a reasonable grounding in journalism in general and climate change in particular. It was observed that the various backgrounds and experiences of the participants was adequate in providing responses that would address the aims of the study. Despite not assembling the targeted number of five respondents from each group, the researcher was convinced that these two groups provided a reliable representation of journalists who report on climate change both in agricultural programmes and in the newsroom at MBC. Furthermore, as will be explained below, the researcher observed that the selected respondents provided material that was rich enough to meet the objectives of the study. This was upon the understanding that qualitative research literature acknowledges that the quality of responses in some cases is more important than the number of respondents (Adler & Adler, 2012:8).

3.3 Conducting the interviews

The researcher proceeded to conduct recorded interviews with each respondent on an agreed date. The interviews were conducted in offices that were free on a particular day. As planned, the respondents were briefed on pertinent issues, such as the purpose of the study and issues of informed consent. Thereafter, they were requested to voluntarily sign a consent form. Furthermore, the participants were informed that the interview would be recorded and used strictly for academic purposes. The researcher further emphasised that only pseudonyms would be used in the final write-up of the study findings should there be need to protect the respondents' identities. All these procedures were followed in recognition of the ethical consideration that a researcher in face-to-face qualitative interviews is supposed to take into account, in order to ensure informed consent and confidentiality (Corbin & Strauss, 2015:13).

The interviewees were requested to provide detailed information and concrete examples in their responses. The researcher also rephrased questions whenever a respondent did not seem to clearly understand and prompted them whenever they seem to have forgotten useful information. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the interviewees were at ease during the interview and had enough time to freely express their views or reflect on the responses. The researcher ensured that these requirements were adhered to throughout the interview and only interrupted where necessary. All the interviews lasted slightly above an hour.

In line with the original plan, all respondents were asked the same research questions following a structured interview guide. The interview guide provided for a logical order and flow of questioning the respondents. The researcher also allowed the respondents to take long pauses while responding, so that they could have enough time to think before responding. There were even some instances when a respondent would request to answer a question later or have a second attempt at a question which they felt they had not given a satisfactory answer earlier on. The researcher allowed for all that flexibility for the study respondents. This enabled the respondents to give detailed responses which were also carefully thought about.

As a result, it is the view of the researcher that the interviews were interactive enough and produced valuable information which mostly responded to the research question. The researcher was able to obtain the respondents' various distinct conceptualisations of climate change journalism as an ideal as well as it is currently practiced. These interactions with the journalists allowed the researcher to explore the respondents' conceptualisation of climate change, climate change journalism and its ideals and other practical aspects of their work as journalists who report on climate change. This included the respondents' views about the individual performance of journalists and institutions in reporting about climate change and the

social and institutional constraining or enabling factors in achieving the ideal practice of such journalism. Overall, the researcher observed that the interviews provided a platform for the two groups of journalists to assume the role of neutral critics of their own performance in climate change journalism.

However, there was one major observation regarding disruptions to the flow of the conversations with respondents. The researcher noted that some of the interviews were being interrupted by mobile phone calls to the respondents and frequent knocks on the doors of offices. The researcher further noted that it was generally difficult to find an office that would not be disturbed for an hour within MBC premises. This was because most of the journalists and producers at MBC do not have specific individual offices. Instead, they share offices with one or two other people. The phone calls were coming in despite the researcher asking the respondents to switch off their phones or put them on silent. Often the respondents would say they needed to attend to some urgent calls.

Nevertheless, the researcher feels the individual in-depth interviews were generally successfully conducted. Most of the appointments with the respondents were fulfilled and the respondents answered all the interview questions. This was so because the researcher insisted that the interviews be conducted on days when the respondents were very free to take part in the interviews. Some planned appointments were being rescheduled when the respondents were indicating that they would only be available for less than an hour or they seemed to be rushing to another activity. The researcher therefore emphasised to the respondents that the interviews would require close to an hour. The respondents were, therefore, asked to be honest about their availability and the need to give full attention to the interview process. This was carefully done while also bearing in mind to respect the participants' wishes, freedom and rights.

The recording of the interviews was also a success. The researcher used Adobe Audition Software for recording the interviews on a laptop computer. The laptop was preferred because it was easy to monitor the correct interview audio levels during the interview processes, pre-listen and ensure that the material is saved before parting ways with the respondents. The interviews were, therefore, conducted in a relaxed atmosphere without having to constantly place a recorder on to the mouth of a respondent. In the end, both the researcher and the interviewees had enough space to relax or use gestures during the interview.

The interviews were primarily conducted in English. Nevertheless, both the researcher and respondents could mix English with the local Chichewa language in order to articulate some concepts in the process. The use of both language was made clear to the participants at the beginning of each session. It was observed that this allowed for a smooth flow and free

expression of issues particularly for the respondents. All the eight interviews were eventually transcribed for proper examination of the verbatim responses during the analysis stage of the study. The researcher also endeavored to translate responses made in the local Chichewa language into the English language. The original texts and their translations are indicated one after the other in the transcripts while it is only the translations that are reflected in the findings and analysis chapter (Interview Transcripts 3.1 to 4.4).

The researcher further recognised the need to tease out the diversity in the responses from interviewees in order to avoid the impression that all responses were the same. For this reason, the researcher encouraged the respondents to comment on views that may differ from those of their fellows. This ethical requirement was considered crucial to this study as a way of drawing comparisons between the two groups' conceptualisations of climate change journalism.

Overall, it is the estimation of the researcher that the interviews solicited valuable responses from the two groups of journalists that participated. The participants themselves appeared to have enjoyed being part of the study. Some participants even acknowledged that the interview process had challenged them on certain relevant aspects of the ideals of climate change journalism which they may have not known or taken for granted. It can be concluded that the principles that social research outlines for engaging with participants were followed to a great extent in this study.

3.4 Analysing the interview content and writing up the research findings

The stage of analysing qualitative interviews content demands that a researcher should make choices about which content is worth analysing or discarding and how best to do the analysis. All these choices, however, must be guided by ethical requirements to avoid the influence of bias from a researcher in providing undue privilege to certain interviewees' responses over others. This is in line with the understanding that the production of knowledge through the analysis of research material should be guided by ethical considerations (Corbin & Strauss, 2015:13). The common way of analysing findings in this type of study is through a process called 'constant comparisons' (ibid:7). In this process, findings are separated into small manageable segments. The segments are then compared for similarities and differences. Findings that are similar or referring to the same idea are grouped together under the same conceptual heading. The researcher can then further analyse and group the concepts together to form categories which are sometimes referred to as themes (ibid). Each theme is developed in terms of its properties and dimensions.

In considering the analysis for this study, the researcher planned to adhere to a methodical approach that would examine responses based on themes carefully ordered in the interview guide. The particular approach for this study is deductive involving identification of themes from pre-determined categories. This process is widely known as ‘thematic analysis’ (Jwan & Ong’ondo, 2011:104). Such analysis searches for themes of relevance to the research question under which information from respondents can be organised (ibid). It involves firstly reading and listing the categories of experiences from the transcribed information and identifying all the information that illustrate the categories. Thereafter, similar categories are combined into themes. The themes that emerge from the participants’ responses are then assembled to derive a comprehensive representation of their collective experiences (Jwan & Ong’ondo, 2011:104).

The interview material is analysed according to the identification of such themes, in Chapter Four and Five of this dissertation. Based on such broad themes, the researcher was able to observe shared patterns in their responses during the interviews, and key differences between these patterns. Throughout, the researcher kept in mind the guiding principle of qualitative research, which is to achieve an understanding of what the participants are communicating based on their lived experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271; Bryman, 2008:2; Strelitz, 2000:112). In this regard, the researcher was aware of the need to acknowledge and respect the respondents’ different conceptualisations of climate change and climate change journalism. Therefore, the researcher endeavoured to ensure that the approach was to consider the responses from the interviewees with an open mind, and not to impose his own judgement on what they have to say (Corbin & Strauss, 2015:13). Nevertheless, the researcher further acknowledged the imperative of making the respondents aware of what the literature on the ideals of climate change journalism posits. In cases where participants failed to refer to crucial aspects of debates about the role of such journalism, the researcher would therefore prompt them to do so. In this way, the researcher could ensure that it was possible to assess the participants’ responses to all of these aspects of the debate.

Conclusion

In the view of the researcher, the research design as described in this chapter has proved to be both valid and reliable. In some instances, it was not possible to fully implement the plan as it was originally envisaged. This applies, in particular, to the number of participants that the researcher planned to include, so that he ended up interviewing eight participants rather than

ten. The researcher is nevertheless of the opinion that the overall field work was satisfactory. Even though other respondents were not forthcoming, the eight interviews conducted provided valuable material that addressed the research question.

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS I: THE AGRICULTURAL JOURNALISTS

Introduction

The goal of this study has been to gain insight into how journalists working for MBC experience the task of producing content that enables their audiences to engage with the local relevance of climate change. The study set out to achieve this goal by comparing such experience as articulated by journalists working for the MBC in agricultural and news programming respectively. The final two chapters of this dissertation present a discussion of interviews conducted with such journalists. Chapter Four deals with the responses of agricultural journalists and Chapter Five compares these responses to those of news journalists.

Earlier chapters presented a theoretical framework designed to facilitate engagement with the research participants' commentary on the purpose of journalism about climate change and their own attempts to achieve such purpose. It was argued that such a framework should enable the researcher to take cognisance of normative guidelines for journalism about climate change that apply in context of the MBC. Chapter One contributed to the articulation of this framework by reviewing studies of journalism about climate change. The review identified three roles that journalism about climate change should fulfill, according to experts in the study of media. These experts propose that such journalism should 'inform and educate', encourage critical engagement and facilitate participation by the public in debates about climate change. The discussion in Chapter Four and Five explores the extent to which each of these guidelines resonate with the research participants' understanding of the purpose of journalism about climate change. Based on the participants' description of their own attempts to produce journalism about climate change, the discussion then also considers the extent to which each of these roles can be fulfilled in context of the MBC.

Chapter Two presented a framework that enables an engagement with contextually specific normative guidelines for journalism about climate change at three different levels of study. It dealt, firstly, with the macro level, where the aim is to establish which of Hallin and Mancini's 'models' of media systems are of relevance to the Malawian media landscape. It was argued that it is the 'polarised pluralist' model that best describes this landscape. However, within this media environment it is also possible to observe the co-existence of aspects of the 'liberal' model, at least at the level of rhetorical acknowledgement.

Secondly, the chapter dealt with the medium level of analysis, focusing on the relevance of Christian et al's normative 'theories' of the media for the examination of traditions of media

practice as these exist within news and agricultural programming at the MBC. It was argued that the ‘collaborative’ conceptualisation of media, in which media work in partnership with the state, is of particular relevance to journalism as it exists in these contexts. This can be observed in context of the strong emphasis, in these environments, on development journalism. At the same time, given the role played within MBC’s programming by listener clubs, it may be possible to observe aspects of the Christians et al.’s ‘facilitative’ role in context of agricultural programming.

The final level of analysis was referred to as the micro level, in which the aim is to examine how journalists describe the ideals that inform their daily practice and their experience of putting these ideals into practice within a specific institutional environment. It was proposed that Kovach and Rosenstiel’s *Elements of Journalism* offers a seminal example of such research, conducted in the American context, and that similar research could be conducted with journalists in Malawi.

The analysis of the fieldwork for this study attempts to demonstrate how the research participants’ commentary can be located within each of these three levels of study. The discussion is also organised around the themes that guided the interview process during fieldwork. As such, each chapter first deals with background information about each participant. It then focuses on the participants’ conceptualisation of climate change as a phenomenon, and after this their understanding of the ideal social purpose of journalism about climate change. Next, the discussion focuses on their assessment of journalism about climate change within their working environment, measured against the ideals they have themselves mapped out. Finally, each chapter reviews the participants’ comments on contextual factors that have constrained or enabled their own attempts at putting these ideals into practice.

1. The participants

As noted in Chapter Three, four agricultural journalists participated in this study⁸. Chikumbutso Maunde is a 36-year-old male journalist and producer. Between 2000 and 2001, he studied administration to diploma level at the Malawi Polytechnic, a constituent college of the University of Malawi. He later developed an interest in journalism and enrolled for a one-year certificate in this subject at Blantyre Business College, another local institution. He then went back to the Polytechnic and studied for a diploma in Journalism from 2009 to 2011. At the time of the completion of this research, he was registered as a part-time student for degree

⁸ It should be noted that the researcher assigned pseudonyms to the participants in order to protect their identities.

journalism studies at the Blantyre International University (BIU) where he was in his final year. Courses that he remembers studying as part of this programme include media ethics, mass communication, sociology, philosophy, media theory, television and radio journalism. He notes that none of these courses included a focus on climate change (Maunde, 6:2016). Maunde's journalism career started in 2003 when he secured employment with Radio Islam⁹. His experience at this station involved presenting, reporting news and producing talk programmes, including those that featured climate change. He joined the Malawi public broadcaster as a continuity presenter and producer in 2006. He has worked on agricultural programmes since 2008. In his time at MBC, Maunde has alternated between writing stories for the newsroom and working in the programmes department, where he was based at the time of the completion of this thesis. He was responsible, at this time, for two agricultural programmes entitled *Liwu la Alimi* (Farmers' Voice) and *Phindu mu Mkaka* (There is Profit in Dairy Farming). He mentions that discussion of climate change is a regular feature in these two programmes (Maunde, 5: 2016).

Steve Layazi, who is 34 years old, is another male producer and reporter. Layazi acquired a certificate in marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing in Malawi in 2000. Between 2001 and 2002, he completed a diploma in journalism with the Association of Business Managers and Administrators (ABMA) at the Polytechnic campus in Blantyre. He is currently a third year part-time student of journalism at BIU. He notes that so far his journalism education has included courses in reporting and editing for print news and radio journalism, as well as modules in mass communication, sociology, philosophy and public relations. Layazi joined MBC as a journalist in 2003 and has worked there for various agricultural programmes. As part of his responsibilities, he has regularly produced content about climate change (Layazi, 1: 2016). His coverage of this topic was particularly intensive between 2005 and 2008, when he worked in the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU). At the time of this research, Layazi was responsible for a programme entitled *Nyengo ndi Chilengedwe* (Weather/Climate and the Environment) which he started producing in 2012. This is an environmental and agricultural programme which also covers general issues about climate change.

Loveness Phikawa is a 40-year-old female producer and reporter, responsible for agricultural programmes at MBC. Phikawa completed a two-year diploma in journalism at the Malawi Polytechnic in 2009. She notes that this programme included modules in print and radio news writing, media ethics, economics and communication development (Phikawa,

⁹ Radio Islam is a commercial religious radio station based in Malawi. Apart from featuring religious content, the station broadcasts current affairs, news and sports.

6:2016). She returned to the Polytechnic in 2012 for a degree in business communication and graduated in early 2016. Phikawa joined the MBC in 1994 and has worked for a longer period at this broadcaster than the other three research participants. She was among the first cohort of employees after the multi-party elections who were taken on board straight from high school without any formal media qualification. Before the elections, the state broadcaster mostly employed people who had prior experience as teachers or in any media profession (Phikawa, 2:2016). The former teachers would mostly learn through observation and be established as presenters or reporters gradually. In contrast to this, Phikawa and other new recruits participated in MBC's in-house training programme, which focused both on presentation and reporting. Until 2008, Phikawa worked both in MBC's newsroom and in programming, reporting in areas such as sports and gender. Since then, she has worked in the DBU. At the time of this research, she was overseeing three programmes, one of which is an environmental show that regularly features climate change issues (Phikawa, 1:2016). The programme is entitled *Pakadafunda* (It's Still Comfortable)¹⁰ and she has been producing it for almost four years.

Chimwemwe Shale is another female reporter and producer based in the DBU. She is 32 years old. Between 2004 and 2008, she completed a degree specialising in Media for Development at the Chancellor College, which is affiliated with the University of Malawi. She notes that this programme included an introductory course in radio journalism, as well as courses in mass communication, development communication. These courses included modules on the political economy of Malawi and on media and democracy (Shale, 4:2016). Shale joined the MBC in 2009, and has been based there since then. She began her employment as a projects officer, but quickly switched to programming. Since 2009, she has been responsible for a programme entitled *Nzotheka Kusamalira Chilengedwe* ('It's possible to conserve the environment'). The programme features environmental issues including discussions on how local communities can adapt to climate change (Shale, 5:2016). Shale is the only participant among the four agricultural journalists participating in this study who had the experience of attending an international conference on climate change, which was held in Durban in 2011.

¹⁰ This is actually a short form. The full name is *Pakadafunda padajiwitsa galu*. (Staying for too long at one place because it still feels comfortable led to the death of the stray dog). It comes from a local adage which literally means that a stray dog that gets too comfortable and stays in one place is likely to get attacked. It insinuates that people must not get too comfortable with certain practices because they contribute to environmental degradation and climate change.

The description, above, indicates that these research participants have similar educational backgrounds. All of them have undergone formal training in journalism. None were exposed to the formal study of the topic of climate change. In the case of Maunde, Layazi and Phikawa, this included the programme offered by the Malawi Polytechnic. Two participants, Maunde and Layazi, continue to study part time, pursuing degree courses at the BIU. All four exhibit an interest in improving their journalism qualifications, and seem to be invested in the idea that such qualifications are of value to the working journalist. None of them, however, has learned about the topic of climate change as part of their education.

It is also possible to observe similarities among these research participants with regards to their experience of journalistic practice. All four have practiced journalism for over five years, both in the context of news and programme production. All of them have experience of covering environmental issues. Phikawa explains that this topic has remained a theme within her work throughout her career at MBC:

In 1994, I started dealing with environmental issues. When I went to the programme departments, we were also dealing with environmental issues. When I came to the DBU, we also had a project on environmental issues (Phikawa, 4: 2016).

Phikawa also explains that environmental issues have featured in her work from the start. She notes that such programming often dealt with raising awareness about the environmental impact of farming practices:

I started with the *Nzotheka Kusamalira Chilengedwe* programme ('It's Possible to Conserve the Environment') ... [this show] mostly was a campaign against environmental degradation..., (Phikawa, 2:2016).

Maunde notes, similarly, that the agricultural programmes for which he has taken responsibility often deal with the environmental impact of farming practices. He explains that a central theme within such programming at MBC was discussion of the dangers of deforestation. This topic is of particular relevance within the Malawian context:

I was generally doing programmes that talked about how to conserve the environment because here in Malawi deforestation is a big environmental problem. People do cut down trees a lot. So we have been involved in that to sensitise listeners on why they should not just cut trees because it impacts on the natural environment (Maunde, 2:2016).

Layazi explains that he developed a "passion for environmental issues" when he was based at the DBU. The stories he covered during this time demonstrated to him that damage to the environment is a serious concern within the Malawian context, and that this is therefore a topic

that is worthy of coverage. Like Maunde, he mentions the importance of the topic of deforestation:

I was mainly reporting on environmental topics like how cutting down of trees leads to deforestation, and how dumping refuse in rivers is bad because it pollutes the water that we drink. Generally, how dumping such refuse make the natural environment look bad you know. So we used to go to the field, the villages and interact with the communities. And, there I could see that there was much cutting down of trees that is why I decided to [report on] the environment (Layazi, 2-3: 2016).

Indeed, throughout these discussions, all four participants speak with conviction about the importance of addressing environmental impact as part of their journalism.

All four of the participants also have some experience of covering the topic of climate change. Layazi did so because he deliberately pursued opportunities to produce environmental journalism. He approached MBC's management with a proposal for a show in which he would "discuss ... environmental issues with local people and environmental experts". This programme became *Weather/Climate and the Environment*. In producing this programme, Layazi found himself dealing repeatedly with the issue of climate change. He has, for this reason, increasingly foregrounded this topic of discussion:

...I noticed that the officials in my programme kept explaining environmental issues and then somewhere they would bring in climate change. So I developed more interest to feature climate change and have my own programme on the issue... (Layazi, 3.2016).

Shale was also given opportunities to pursue the topic of climate change, due to her involvement in producing specialised shows for the DBU:

'We are the Change' ... this programme I can say is climate change specific ... *Pakadafunda* ... was also mostly a campaign about climate change adaptation (Shale, 3:2016).

Phikawa also mentions that she co-produced *Pakadafunda*, a programme that specifically focused on strategies for adaptation to climate change, and that this work was a turning point for her, with regards to recognising the importance of this topic. Maunde explains that his interest in climate change developed more gradually, while producing agricultural programmes that focused on improving crop yields for smallholder farmers in Malawi. He came to the conclusion, while doing research for these programmes, that most of the problems that contributed to low yields could be traced back to changing climate patterns. The farmers he has interviewed repeatedly explained that the soil that they farmed was increasingly becoming infertile after flooding. Experts that he included in his programmes discussed such flooding as

being directly linked to the impact of climate change. In this way, the issue of climate change began to “crop up” as a regular feature of Maunde’s programmes (Maunde, 2:2016).

The participants’ comments, as summarised above, suggest that they have moved over time from a general interest in environmental reporting to a more specific investment in the importance of climate change journalism. When prompted to comment on how they established some level of expertise in the topic, they generally note that their involvement in journalistic assignments provided them with opportunities for such learning. Shale speaks, in particular, of the value of her “interaction with communities” in the course of her fieldwork (Shale, 4:2016). Field visits allowed her to talk with local people and gain insight into their understanding of climate change and its impact on their lives. In that way, her knowledge of climate change became based in the experiences of the local communities. In addition, there was her interaction with sponsors of the environmental programmes that she produced. Here Shale makes mention of officials from Malawi Environment Endowment Trust (MEET), who actively engaged her in discussing concepts relating to climate change:

So they [MEET officials] could, at some point during brainstorming sessions, come up with topics, for example, they would ask me to... capture a particular climate change aspect such as global warming or adaptation. So that also made me ask them to explain further on the topics (Shale, 5:2016).

Maunde explains that his position as a journalist has enabled him to become closely acquainted with climate experts who have proved to be valuable sources of information on the topic of climate change. He explains that such experts are often very willing to build long-term relationships with him, making themselves available as sources of information, and sharing their contact details (Maunde, 6:2016). Layazi shares this experience of the willingness of climate change experts to make themselves available to journalists. He notes that organisations¹¹ and individuals who advocate for awareness about climate change are often willing to provide him with resources that enable him to inform himself on the subject:

Some of these organisations, or I can say the officials from there personally know me a journalist who is interested in climate change issues, so they always invite me for a recording. They provide transport and sometimes accommodation, that’s the support I get from such organisations. Through that, I enhanced my understanding on the issue (Layazi, 4:2016).

¹¹ Layazi indicates that he frequently conducts radio interviews on climate change with official from Leadership for Environment (LEAD). It is one of the organisations that deal with climate change issues in Malawi and Southern Africa (Layazi, 4:2016).

Likewise, Phikawa indicates that the interactions with the organisations that sponsor her climate change programme has played a central role in her education about climate change (Phikawa, 5:2016).

All four of the participants also note that their knowledge of climate change has been greatly enhanced by attending meetings organised by initiatives in order to raise awareness on the topic.¹² Maunde explains that journalists in Malawi are regularly invited to workshops organised by such groups. In such contexts, he can interact with experts on the topic, which enables him to ask for clarifications on concepts that confuse him (Maunde, 6:2016). Layazi, in turn, refers to environmental training workshops organised by the Association of Environmental Journalists, of which he is a member¹³. He notes that climate change has been a regular topic at such forums. Phikawa also cites workshops as having played a major role in her understanding of the topic¹⁴. She explains that the presentations made during such workshops on “what climate change is and how it affects human beings” has presented her with a source for basic information on the topic (Phikawa, 5:2016). Shale, in contrast, explains that she has not attended such workshops, but notes that her attendance of an intentional climate change conference played a similar role.¹⁵ Indeed, this conference was pivotal to her understanding of climate change as a global concern:

I was able to sit down and just listen to the discussions on the climate change issues. You know, how it is affecting people worldwide and how countries can contribute to dealing with the problem (Shale, 9:2016).

In addition to making use of these opportunities, the participants have also taken personal initiative to research the topic of climate change. All four note that they regularly search for literature on the topic, particularly in context of online resources, and they agree that the information on climate change that can be sourced in this way is crucial to journalists. Phikawa explains this as follows:

Nowadays the internet, that's the source of information and we cannot run away from it as far as climate change information is concerned. I can say I do sometimes

¹² Maunde indicated that he has attended most of such workshops organised by the African Farm Radio Research Initiative, an agricultural research project initiated in 2007 and supported by the Bill and Mellinda Gates Foundation (Maunde, 7; 2016).

¹³ The association is supported by the UNDP which often fund environmental journalism training workshops for journalists in Malawi (Layazi, 5:2016).

¹⁴ Phikawa has attended workshops organised by Leadership for the Environment and Development, the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and the Ministry of Forestry.

¹⁵ Shale attended the climate change Conference of Parties (COP 16) held in Durban in 2011 (Shale, 9:2016).

surf the net to read about climate change, particularly to check definitions like for El Nino or adaptation (Phikawa, 6:2016).

Maunde mentions the *Guardian Online* as a particularly valuable source of articles on the topic (Maunde, 6:2016). In addition, the participants also refer to resources that are available in print. Layazi makes mention, in this context, of informative pamphlets produced by NGOs:

When I visit the organisations to do recordings or meet the officials at their offices, they do often give brochures. They also like to display such literature at the reception for example. But also, they can have a small library. So all that literature is found there and I have been able to somehow get in and look at it (Layazi, 5:2016).

Maunde notes that he has also been able to access academic literature and magazines in the nearby polytechnic library and the public library (Maunde, 7: 2016). Phikawa, in turn, notes that she has found valuable articles in local newspapers. She refers, in particular, to the value of ‘human interest’ stories that provide insightful perspectives on the way climate change impacts on ordinary people (Phikawa, 6: 2016).

The participants’ comments on their own development as journalists who report on the environment and climate change suggests that they have succeeded in establishing a foundation of knowledge on the topic. They have been able to do so due to having access to valuable resources, by interacting with local communities about their experience of climate change, by interacting with knowledge that is made available by experts on the topic, and by accessing literature that is available both on line and in print form. Attendance of workshops seems, in particular, to have played a key role in the enhancement of their knowledge of the topic, and their treatment of the topic in their journalism. These comments by the research participants can be seen to resonate with the discussion, in Chapter One of this dissertation, of the role that experts in climate change have played in making knowledge resources available to journalists. It would seem that this trend, which the literature has identified in the international domain, can also be observed in the context of Malawi. The participants’ comments suggest that their environment provides them with resources that would enable them to put into practice the first of the ideal roles for journalism about climate change identified in Chapter One: that is, to ‘inform and educate’.

2. Conceptualising climate change

It should be apparent from the discussion in the last section that all four research participants demonstrate awareness of the subject of climate change and accept the existence of this phenomenon. However, during the interview process, only Layazi exhibited confidence in his

own ability to provide a definition of the concept and summarise key debates surrounding it. All three of the other participants were more hesitant in their approach to the topic. Phikawa explains that defining climate change is ‘confusing’ for her (Phikawa, 6:2016). Shale’s first attempt at defining the concept also suggested a lack of confidence in her ability to do so:

I don’t know how to put it in one sentence ... Okay, climate change is caused by the accumulation of gases in the atmosphere that have created a blanket ... and that has (laughs)...okay let’s move to the next question, we can get back to this later (Shale, 6:2016).

Maunde also noted that he was unsure whether the definitions he was providing were acceptable. He explained that it is not easy for him to “concisely” discuss the topic (Maunde, 8:2016).

All four participants are nevertheless able to offer contributions to the definition of climate change. All of them note that the phenomenon has to do with long-term shifts in weather patterns (Phikawa, 6: 2016; Shale, 6:2016; Maunde, 8:2016; Layazi, 6:2016). Layazi explains that this means that established patterns of seasonal change can no longer be depended upon:

To my understanding, climate change is something to do with the change of weather patterns... when somehow it becomes too hot at a time of the year when it has all along been cold during such times in the past (Layazi,5:2016).

Maunde notes that such changes are often associated with extreme weather conditions:

Basically I would say that climate change refers to the changing weather patterns ... like low rainfall, drought or floods... (Maunde, 8:2016).

When the participants speak of the causes of climate change, they all refer to the role that an increase in carbon emissions plays. Layazi explains that there is a relationship between damage to the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect, which in turn contributes to climate change:

...they... destroy the ozone layer thereby allowing sunlight... the ultraviolet light to come directly to the earth... to us. Especially when such emissions are not absorbed, they go direct to the air (Layazi, 8-9: 2016).

All of the participants agree that humans are responsible for the increase in carbon emissions. Shale, Layazi and Phikawa refer to the role played in this respect by large-scale industrial activity such as that of factories (Shale, 6: 2016; Layazi, 9: 2016; Phikawa, 7:2016). Phikawa explains this as follows:

These factory processes ... produce some gases which go up there and then causes congestion in the air (Phikawa, 7:2016).

Shale adds that agricultural practices such as charcoal burning and cutting down of trees are also contributing factors (Layazi, 6: 2016).

All four participants also note that a large percentage of the industrial activity that has led to climate change occurred in industrially advanced nations (Shale, 6:2016; Phikawa, 7:2016; Maunde, 9:2016). Maunde explains that gas emissions largely come from "... those big countries, those rich countries in the West" and that such emissions "are too much" when compared to those of developing nations (Maunde, 9:2016). Layazi notes that the "...industries in developed countries contribute significantly to the emission which result in climate change" (Layazi, 9:2016). They all agree that, in contrast, the contribution to carbon emission made by developing nations is comparatively small. Shale describes such contribution as "insignificant" (Shale, 6:2016) and Layazi argues that, due to the absence of heavy industries in developing environments, their impact is "relatively minimal" (Layazi, 9: 2016). Phikawa suggests that, although deforestation in developing nations do contribute to climate change, "...our fellow friends up in developed countries, they are busy producing a lot of gas and this results in an imbalance of such contributions" (Phikawa, 7:2016).

The participants nevertheless suggest that developing nations need to take responsibility for the impact that they do make on climate change. In this context, they refer, again, to deforestation and describe this problem to be of particular relevance to Malawi. Maunde suggests that the "first factor" that is a major cause of climate change in Malawi is "too much cutting down of trees" (Maunde, 9:2016). Shale notes, similarly, that deforestation is the "main thing here in Malawi" and explains that cutting down trees often occurs in order to clear land for farming (Shale, 6-7; 2016). Phikawa adds that deforestation in Malawi leads to a reduction in the role that trees can play in the mitigation of carbon emissions:

It's like here in Malawi we are finishing the trees which absorb carbon and I understand the trees kind of absorb the carbon dioxide through the leaves or something like that. So in that way we are contributing to the increase of that carbon in the air... (Phikawa, 7: 2016).

Layazi notes that trees are also cut down for the purpose of firewood and charcoal, and that the process of burning also adds to carbon emissions. In his view, Malawi and other developing countries are too reliant on wood as a source of energy:

Here in developing nations, I think we generally do not seem to know how to use renewable sources of energy like manure or solar energy. We cut down trees to produce or burn charcoal as a main source of energy (Layazi, 9:2016).

Layazi also refers to local tobacco farmers who cut down many trees because "...such farming requires the use of a lot of firewood" (Layazi, 9:2016). All of the participants suggest that local communities in Malawi should take responsibility for helping to solve these problems. Maunde notes in this respect that communities should "stop cutting down trees recklessly" (Maunde,

4:2016). Layazi and Phikawa both suggest that communities should also contribute to reforestation (Layazi, 9:2016; Phikawa, 8-9: 2016). Shale also argues that communities must consider “diversifying” their farming activities so that they adopt agricultural practices that do not contribute to climate change (Shale, 10:2016).

All four of the participants agree that climate change represents a serious threat to the welfare of humankind. In this context they refer to the impact that drought, floods and more general shifts in weather patterns have on agricultural productivity and therefore on food security (Layazi, 9: 2016; Shale, 6:2016; Maunde, 10: 2016; Phikawa, 7: 2016). As Maunde explains:

If we are not having normal rains, it means that people will realise low yields... Most plants cannot do well due to climate change. There are also fluctuations in animal productivity as it is negatively affected by hot temperatures (Maunde, 8-9:2016).

The participants speak about this problem in context of rural communities who are subsistence farmers and depend for food on their own crops. Phikawa talks about how floods wash away fertiliser and crops and “a season of hunger follows”, while drought means that crops die, which again leads people to “suffer from hunger” (Phikawa, 7:2016). Layazi explains that floods and drought lead to a situation where “... people will have no food as there will be nothing to get from the fields” (Layazi, 10:2016).

The participants understand the occurrence of both drought and flooding to be of particular relevance to the Malawian context. Layazi and Shale both note, in this context, that drought and floods are occurring with increasing regularity in this country, to devastating effect (Liyazi, 9:2016; Shale, 6:2016). They acknowledge that flooding and drought also exist as a threat in the industrial West; Layazi, for example, comments on hearing about “such issues of flooding in the US” (Layazi, 10:2016). However, they are generally more concerned with the impact of such conditions on the developing world. Shale suggests that in economically fragile environments such as that of Africa, the impacts of flooding are “more devastating” (Shale, 7:2016). In explaining their understanding of international negotiations about climate change, they refer to their role in establishing binding agreements around responses to the phenomenon. Shale explains that representatives of countries meet to discuss “how best they can deal with climate change” (Shale, 8:2016). Phikawa adds that these are meetings in which nations try to identify “solutions” to climate change (Phikawa, 8:2016). Maunde says that such meetings involve global leaders who discuss climate change and then “...sign agreements at the end” (Maunde, 10: 2016). Layazi also refers to “...meetings where they discuss ... the issues of climate change and eventually sign treaties” (Layazi, 6: 2016). The participants understand

such agreements to be concerned with shared strategies for mitigating climate change and adapting to its consequences. They explain, firstly, that strategies for mitigation are concerned with the establishment of agreements around the reduction of carbon emissions. Shale explains this as follows:

They ... discuss the percentages that maybe each country is supposed to commit to reduce or maybe what actions the countries can assure each other about what they would specifically do as their contribution towards reducing the emissions (Shale, 8:2016).

Phikawa explains, similarly, that contributors to these negotiations are concerned with exploring better ways of "...bringing down the carbon levels in the atmosphere" and ensuring that "... it does not get worse [than] it is" (Phikawa, 8: 2016). Layazi adds that countries are assigned "some quotas" to limit their production of carbon gasses (Layazi, 6: 2016). Discussion of adaptation, in turn, is understood to relate to the establishment of shared responses to the problems caused by climate change. Shale notes, in this context, that the focus is on how people are supposed to "...change their lifestyles to suite the way things like the weather are changing so that we survive". The emphasis is, furthermore, on international collaboration, in order to "...help countries that are trying to devise better ways to cope with problems of climate change" (Shale, 8:2016).

The participants generally suggest that negotiations around the establishment of such strategies are characterised by contestation between developed and developing nations. Shale explains that these contestations revolve around who should take responsibility for climate change and what commitments different nations can be expected to make in dealing with the issue (Shale, 8:2016). The participants seem to agree that a key area of contestation within the debates has to do with the argument that advanced industrial nations should shoulder primary responsibility for climate change. They explain that stakeholders in the debate who represent the interests of developing regions argue that, because industrially advanced nations have historically produced the most carbon gasses, they should take most responsibility for curbing emissions (Layazi, 6:2016; Shale, 6: 2016; Phikawa, 8: 2016). Layazi notes that such representatives also argue that industrially advanced nations should support programmes for adaptation in developing countries, and in Africa more specifically (Layazi,6: 2016). Shale adds that African nations are seen to be in the forefront of lobbying for technical and financial assistance "...to implement projects meant for adaptation" (Shale, 8:2016).

The participants also suggest that within these international debates, it is the discussion of financial support that is most relevance to African countries, and Malawi more specifically. Here they again refer to the importance of reforestation projects (Shale, 7: 2016; Layazi,

7:2016; Phikawa, 8: 2016). Layazi and Shale both explain that when Malawian representatives attend these forums, they lobby for increased international support for such projects (Layazi, 8: 2016; Shale, 9:2016). Maunde also understands that such international forums are opportunities for countries like Malawi to “...explore how we can attract support for local efforts” in dealing with climate change. He argues that there is an urgency around such assistance, given the threat that climate change poses to food security in developing countries, and Africa more particularly:

... we are experiencing hunger especially in Sub-Sahara Africa where the changing weather patterns are contributing to issues of hunger in most countries. So I should believe these negotiations are there to provide solutions to some of the challenges that people are meeting as regards to issues of climate change (Maunde, 10:2016).

All of the participants agree that it is important for local communities in the developing world to be informed about these international processes of negotiation and debate. Layazi explains that such communities deserve to know how the international discussions will impact on their lives:

These meetings are very important to the local communities because when representatives go there, they discuss and participate in the meetings and in the signing of the treaties which are supposed to benefit climate change adaptation projects in local communities (Layazi, 8:2016).

Layazi adds that knowledge of the debates can enable communities to become knowledgeable about the resources that are available to them in their struggle to adapt to climate change:

The local communities have the right to know that, maybe we have funding for this thing [climate change] so they can participate properly ... it's like motivation.

Shale argues that knowledge of the debates can also help communities to understand how the commitments that they are asked to make with regards to mitigation and adaption are located within global strategies. This may motivate them to contribute at the local level to international responses to climate change:

... at least the people out there get to know what other players are also doing to deal with the effects of climate change. At least they give hope to the local people to at least work hard and do their part (Shale, 2016:10).

Phikawa adds that by following the negotiations, communities in Malawi would be able to appreciate the need to “plant more trees as a form of adaptation to deal with deforestation in the country” (Phikawa, 9:2016). She explains further that if internationally shared strategies are to become effective, commitment at the local level is crucial:

Those discussions, they are important to the local person because if we can join hands and implement the outcomes, I think maybe it can take us somewhere, maybe

effects that come due to climate change can be minimised. If jointly implemented it will benefit because if the developed countries are going to fund the projects, then local people would benefit (9:2016).

She speaks of the impact that knowledge of the international negotiations may have on behavioral change within local communities:

Because if they know, they will know their role and responsibility and it will be easy for them to implement projects. But if they are not told... then it will not work because they will continue their activities that contribute to deforestation (Phikawa, 9: 2016).

The general suggestion seems to be that knowledge of the debates can enable local communities to take up the position of active participants in strategies for mitigation and adaption, rather than marginalised observers.

At the same time, the participants argue that the relevance of international debates for local communities such as that of Malawi is dependent on the extent to which the agenda that drives debate is guided by the concerns of the developing world. Maunde explains, in this context, that local communities in Malawi would benefit from hearing “typical examples of experiences from other developing countries” that seem to be making progress in adapting to climate change (Maunde, 11:2016). Layazi argues that communities in Malawi can only be expected to take an interest in the international discussions if there is evidence that they will lead to support for local adaptation projects like crop diversification and reforestation (Layazi, 8:2016). Shale argues, similarly, that the debates are only of interest to Malawi if they result in financial support for such projects:

I think what would be relevant for us [in Malawi] out of those meeting would be mostly about the financial support commitments because what the people out there are lacking is the capacity to adapt to climate change (Shale, 11:2016).

It is of interest to compare the participants’ understanding of climate change and its causes to those of scientists, as referred to in Chapter One of this dissertation. It is acknowledged in such science that carbon emissions that lead to climate change is caused by a range of human activities, which amongst others include the manufacturing industry, transport and agriculture. The research participants’ discussion of relevant activities is more selective. They appear to pay particular attention to the role that the manufacturing industries of advanced economies play in contributing to emission. They refer, in addition, to the role of agricultural activity, which is discussed with reference to developing societies. In context of Malawi, they understand agricultural activity that leads to deforestation to be the major local contributor to climate change. Other aspects of human activity that contribute to climate change is left unexamined.

The discussion in this section can nevertheless be seen to demonstrate that all four of the participants have developed a foundation of knowledge on which to base their analysis of issues relating to climate change. Their comments can be seen to take cognisance of key themes that have characterised international debates on the topic, as discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation. Although the participants sometimes express a lack of confidence about their ability to do so, they are nevertheless able to respond to questions about what climate change is, what its social significance may be and how different groups in contemporary society are responding to the phenomenon. The individual contributions that they are able to make to such a discussion results in a coherent set of reference points for engagement with the topic. Indeed, there is evidence of a common understanding, shared by all four participants of what these terms of reference should be. They make complementary statements regarding, for example, which aspects of the international debate are of relevance to Malawi, and what some of the key critiques have been with regards to the location of developed versus developing societies in the deliberations. In the previous section, we saw that the participants acknowledge that they have access to authoritative sources of information about climate change. The coherence of their discussion of the topic, in this section, suggests that all of them have engaged with these resources in order to develop their understanding of the topic and its relevance to the local context.

3. Conceptualising the purpose of journalism about climate change

Phikawa is of the view that journalism about climate change should be concerned both with raising the public's awareness of the phenomenon and building their understanding of it:

I think the main one is to sensitise the community on what climate change is all about ... this form of journalism I am sure should be all about awareness on the issue (Phikawa, 9: 2016).

Maunde emphasises, similarly, that journalism should help the general public to comprehend what climate change is:

I think the main task is to report about issues of climate change so that the people out there will also grab this issue and understand it (Maunde, 11:2016).

Shale agrees that journalism should play an explanatory role for society in general:

The first thing I believe is making people aware that there is climate change and then explain what it is, that is very important (Shale, 11:2016).

The participants agree that a key purpose of raising awareness and enhancing understanding in this way is to influence people's responses to climate change. Layazi

argues that such responses need to involve behavioural change, particularly with regards to lifestyle and farming practices:

The aim of climate journalism is to bring information that can change the mind-set of the local communities. For example, if the communities are relying on charcoal burning, in your reporting you can just encourage them, that they can also do some other things like bee keeping instead of charcoal burning (Layazi, 10:2016).

In discussing how awareness and understanding can be achieved, Shale proposes that information should be presented so that it can be easily digested. There is, in particular, a need to find ways of presenting complex statements made by scientists and officials about climate change in simple terms (Shale, 11:2016). Maunde adds that it is helpful to include vivid descriptions and references to instances where climate change and its effects are noticeable:

There is need to give concrete examples of the dire consequences of certain human practices like cutting down trees and how that contributes to climate change. When you give clear examples, it becomes easy for communities to ... learn more about the topic... (Maunde, 4:2016).

Phikawa notes, similarly, that audiences are more likely to grasp the personal significance of statements made about climate change if they are explained by means of examples that they can relate to:

...this must be done by emphasizing and giving vivid examples of this thing called climate change. I think if you teach people with examples, real life examples which they can see like floods and all those things, I think it works (Phikawa, 9:2016).

This example acknowledges that people in Malawi have direct experience of flooding, as an effect of climate change.

It is noticeable that the participants frame their comments on the purpose of climate change journalism and how to achieve this exclusively in terms of the first of the three goals articulated in Chapter One. In other words, they understand this purpose to be that of ‘informing and educating’ the public. One explanation for this may be that they are invoking a description of the central purpose of journalism that is generally foregrounded within communities of journalistic practice around the world. However, when the researcher prompted the participants to consider the second role for journalism on climate change described in Chapter One – that is, to engage critically with claims made about climate change – they responded enthusiastically. They were, in particular, quick to embrace the notion that journalists are more than neutral messengers of authoritative knowledge about climate change. Maunde appreciated how the active and critical approach would be effective in exposing the

rationale behind particular decisions on climate change. He understands such engagement to operate as a process of clarification:

...as journalists I think ... we need to be critical enough and challenge some information which is not clear ... we must seek clarification and maybe reasons for certain decision on the issue of climate change (Maunde, 14:2016).

Similarly, Layazi explains that journalists need to have an inquisitive mind-set with regards to climate change, interrogating all information provided to them by different sources:

There is need to ... ask questions about the climate change information, like whether it is at a press conference, a document on the topic, just look at some of the issues that don't seem to make sense you know, like even questions about its importance (Layazi, 10:2016).

Shale is also of the opinion that the critical role is indispensable not only to journalism about climate change but to all journalism:

I mean, isn't it our job is to ask questions? When you consider the five W's and an H you will see that our duty is to find out why, so in climate change journalism we should ask why certain [climate change] agreements are the way they are, why such a percentage of carbon emissions and not otherwise, and so on and so forth (Shale, 13:2016).

Phikawa notes that if journalists play this role of critical engagement, it is likely that the journalism they produce would be more relevant to their audience:

Where I have got a question, that means my listener will also have that question. So I also need to investigate (Phikawa, 11:2016).

When the participants are asked to consider the third role for journalism about climate change – to involve the public in deliberations about the topic – they again respond positively. Shale argues that the facilitation of participation can help to “demystify” the topic of climate change. Local communities often have misconceptions about climate change and by involving them in active discussion of the topic, journalists can create spaces for meaningful discussion of these misconceptions (Shale, 12:2016). Such discussion can also provide communities with the opportunity to explain what support they would need to be able to participate in strategies for adaptation such as “afforestation” (Shale, 13:2016). Phikawa notes that involving local communities in discussion would encourage them to develop a sense of ownership and willingness to take part in strategies for mitigation and adaptation (Phikawa, 10:2016). Maunde suggests that the contributions that community members can make, through such journalism, represent a valuable source of knowledge for the development of strategies that respond to climate change:

They [journalists] should know that the people out there also have some knowledge which if integrated with the new knowledge, something better can come out of that.

This phrase ‘new knowledge’ can be understood to refer to the knowledge of scientists and other experts that enter the community from an external source. Maunde argues that such expert knowledge can usefully be balanced with the experiential knowledge of local communities. He points out that journalism generally focuses exclusively on expert knowledge, ignoring the insights that ordinary people have to offer:

The audience also have some vital information, some good information which if they share with us ... it can complement ... the message that the experts are bringing because most of the times we dwell much on the expert voice ... And then we forget that these [local] people also have some knowledge that is very important (Maunde, 13:2016).

In a similar vein, Phikawa argues that the inclusion of local voices allows communities to discuss appropriate responses to climate change and even how to “...implement what they have discussed” (Phikawa, 5:2016). There is a strong emphasis, in these comments, on the importance of enabling communities to participate in developing solutions to problems caused by climate change that are of direct relevance to their context.

Maunde proposes that the inclusion of voices from local communities can be achieved both by means of good fieldwork and through interactive radio:

...we [journalists] should ... allow them [local communities] to say something by interviewing them or giving them more time to say something in the radio discussions (Maunde, 13: 2016).

Layazi agrees that interactive radio is an effective way of creating fora where communities can be encouraged to present their perspectives:

We must take the radio to the listener so that the programmes are ... interactive. Debates and discussions must be part of the programme so that they put in their views (Layazi, 11: 2016).

He adds that such programming creates “...a platform for the listeners to express their views and get answers on the issues and questions that confuse them” (Layazi, 11: 2016). Maunde adds that such radio makes audiences feel valued since they “...feel part of the message production process” (Maunde, 5;2016).

We have seen, in this section, that when the participants first speak about the purpose of climate change journalism, they refer exclusively to the first of the three roles for such journalism identified in journalism studies scholarship. However, when they are prompted to consider the second and third roles, they immediately agree that these should also form part of journalism about climate change. Indeed, they volunteer to provide diverse strategies through

which these goals can be achieved, drawing on their own experience as journalists. It may be that they initially attempted to provide the researcher with what they understand to be the ‘official’ conceptualisation of the purpose of journalism, rather than drawing on their personal beliefs and insights. The first role – of informing and educating – forms part, in other words, of the conventional rhetoric that journalists refer to when they are asked to explicitly discuss their own practice. However, when asked to consider a wider spectrum of reference points, beyond the limits of this official position, their responses are nuanced, richly thought through, and impressive in the consideration of alternative journalistic values. It can be argued that, as individual journalists, the participants recognise the value of all three roles, but understand the second and third role as existing separately from the official, institutional identity of journalism.

This discussion can be read in context of Kovach and Rosenstiel’s argument, as discussed in Chapter Two, of the value of drawing on the knowledge and experience of practicing journalists in order to investigate the normative foundations of journalism. Such investigation can enable the articulation of norms that already form part of the belief systems of individual journalists, but are not entrenched within the official self-descriptions of the institution in which they are based.

4. Evaluating journalism about climate change

In asking the participants to consider the extent to which radio journalism in Malawi contributes to these three roles of journalism about climate, the researcher prompted them to speak, firstly, about other stations than their own. They generally agreed that radio journalists who work for these stations see themselves primarily as neutral conveyors of credible information. For this reason, when they produce journalism about climate change, their work is guided by the first of the three roles; that of ‘informing and educating’ (Maunde, 15: 2016; Phikawa, 11:2016). Layazi notes that commitment to this role is articulated not only by individual journalists but also at institutional level by the organisations they work for. Stations define their own function in terms of this role because it is one that is generally recognised in society as providing them with credibility:

...informing and educating has been an area which local stations would be commended for. Almost every broadcast media house in this country will say and do their programming to show that the media is there to first inform and educate. And they do that even in programmes that may include the climate change topic (Layazi, 12: 2016).

Shale suggests that stations make serious attempts to fulfil this role, noting that she has heard informative climate change reports on local radio stations and thinks that in terms of disseminating information “...they have tried to a great extent” (Shale, 14:2016).

In discussing the limitations of this approach to journalism, the participants focus almost exclusively on the absence of the second role – that of critical engagement with stories about climate change. They argue that journalists generally have access to official sources who can provide them with leads for stories about climate change. However, they tend to accept the information that they acquire in this way at face value, without investigating it further. Maunde explains, in this respect, that he has not “... heard ... journalists from whichever station ... seriously investigating climate change” (Maunde, 15:2016). He observes that when journalists are provided with press releases and invitations to press conferences that deal with climate change, they do not use this as an opportunity to ask further questions:

I think they just get the information and then, maybe, ask very few straightforward questions based on a press release ... and then the press conference ends like that (Maunde, 15:2016).

Layazi explains that most journalists join groups such as the Association of Environmental Journalists in Malawi, through which they can access information on climate change, but they do not draw on this information as a source for critical reporting (Layazi, 12:2016). Shale adds that there is limited attempt to balance the information that is provided to journalists from such official sources with investigation of the reality that exists on the ground. She adds that stations also do not prioritise field visits which allow interaction with audiences:

I have noted that the programming on climate change in other radio stations is mostly studio-based. They rarely go out to the field to meet ... the people and get their views. What they know from studio guests ... is what they talk about on the radio (Shale, 13:2016).

This comment can be seen to represent a statement about the absence of emphasis within such programming on the third role of journalism about climate change – that of facilitating participation in the public discussion of climate change.

In their assessment of journalism about climate change at MBC, the participants point to similar trends, but there are also significant differences. Here, as in their assessment of other radio stations, they point to an emphasis on the first of the three journalistic roles. Phikawa explains that most programming about climate change at MBC “...is about basic information on how to deal with the climate change problem” (Phikawa, 12:2016). Layazi adds that such programmes center on “... just making people know that climate change is happening” (Layazi, 12:2016). Maunde agrees that this emphasis is observable across the MBC’s programming, and

also in the specific context of agricultural programmes (Maunde, 16:2016). Shale also notes that it is an approach that can be observed both in climate change specific programmes and those that regularly feature the topic (Shale, 14:2016).

The participants note, at the same time, that the public broadcaster generally does not adopt a critically engaged approach to the coverage of climate change. Phikawa observes, in this context, that there is “still a gap” with regards to the production of such journalism at the MBC (Phikawa, 12:2016). Layazi agrees with this view:

What I have seen is that here at MBC, we don't investigate further or question anybody on issues of climate change. We just feature the material as it is (Layazi, 13:2016).

Maunde also notes that programming on the topic lacks “commentary or analytical elements” (Maunde, 15:2016). He points out that the way climate change is featured has been “flat throughout” (ibid). Shale explains that this is a more general feature of programming at MBC, since the broadcaster is generally “... not known for being critical on issues including those on climate change” (Shale, 14:2016).

However, the participants also propose that the MBC has made some effort to fulfil the third role. Maunde mentions that the broadcaster tries to include the voices of local people in programmes where climate change forms part of the content. In such programming, community members are accorded the opportunity to “...talk about what they are doing in dealing with climate change” (Maunde, 17: 2016). Layazi mentions that some programmes on climate change include “... interviews where people bring their views on the issues or where they need help [in dealing with the impact of climate change]” (Layazi, 13:2016). Shale and Phikawa, who both have experience of working for the DBU, point out that such participation happens in particular in context of this unit's work, through the utilisation of listener clubs. Shale describes the role that such clubs play within the DBU's programming as follows:

...there have been cases, for example like what we do here at MBC DBU where we empower the community. Actually, we give them a platform to discuss various issues. And most of the programmes are recorded by themselves, they record them on their own. We go there just to collect it ... our programmes at the DBU are participatory, all of them (Shale, 13-13:2016).

Phikawa suggests that the listener clubs play a crucial role in enabling communities across Malawi to identify what their concerns are:

Here at the DBU we involve local voices. I mean we have radio listening clubs in most parts of the country. So local people take part in discussing their concerns about lack of development or certain services (Phikawa, 11:2016).

Layazi also agrees that in context of the use of radio listening clubs at the DBU, "...the audience involvement part is somehow covered" (Layazi, 13:2016).

In assessing their own contribution to journalism about climate change as measured against all three roles, all of the participants note that they have primarily made progress in context of the first role. Layazi adds that even in context of this role, he is not satisfied with his achievements:

As for me, I would give myself 5 out of 10 because am just striving to get enough information (Layazi, 12; 2016).

Maunde notes that he finds the task of explaining climate change to the audiences of MBC to be highly demanding, in context of the linguistic and cultural barriers. He points out that the explanation of complex scientific topics can become even more challenging, when one is translating English to Chichewa:

Most of the issues of climate change developed by climate change scientists who are not Malawians. The messages, therefore, are not localised and they are not ... put in our own terms like here in Malawi basically Chichewa is the language that almost 90 percent of Malawians can understand. So some of the issues of climate change that use the complicated language becomes confusing you know (Maunde, 19:2016).

Phikawa notes similar difficulties with the task of translation, and explains that she is sometimes forced to use complex terms like 'El Nino' as they are, without trying to identify equivalents in Chichewa (Phikawa, 14:2016).

In general, however, the participants express some confidence in their ability to 'inform and educate' their audience about climate change. Indeed, Shale feels that she has performed well in this role, by keeping herself updated about the latest developments in climate change news:

...on information dissemination I would give myself a 10. Because when I was producing environmental programmes ... I tried my best to read more about climate change and get updates on the issue (Shale, 15: 2016).

Phikawa explains that she has "...foregrounded presenting loads of information for the people to just understand the issue and its effect" (Phikawa, 13: 2016). Maunde describes himself as a mediator of information between experts in climate change and ordinary people:

I always try to give information. We talk to experts, we ask them questions on issues of climate change, and we ask them about the solutions, what should people do... (Maunde, 16:2016).

Most of the participants feel, however, that they have performed less well in terms of producing critically engaged journalism about climate change. Maunde explains that he generally takes the information provided to him by experts in climate change at face value:

I mostly take the information as it is and then transfer it as raw as it is again to the audience...yeah, because it is coming from experts. You know we believe so much in the expert's knowledge and that they are mostly saying the truth (Maunde, 16-17:2016).

Phikawa notes, similarly, that she has not considered the need "...to ask too many questions about the climate change information which comes from people like for example our meteorological experts" (Phikawa, 13: 2016). Layazi indicates that he has not yet figured out how to incorporate a critically engaged approach to climate change journalism "...as part of the purpose of my programme for now" (Layazi, 14:2016). Shale feels that one environment in which she was able to take on a more critical stance was in context of the climate change conference that she attended in Durban. In her interviews with Malawi's representatives, she "asked some probing questions" and was able to produce a documentary based on their responses (Shale, 15:2016).

In contrast, all the participants consider that they have to some extent been able to produce journalism guided by the third role – that of facilitating public participation. Maunde explains that some of the programmes that he produces on climate change features interviews with "local people", who are given the opportunity to "...explain what they are doing on the issue of climate change" (Maunde, 17: 2016). Phikawa also notes that the approach that she adopts in the production of programme includes an emphasis on "...interviews and discussions of climate change matters by audience members" (Phikawa, 12:2016). Layazi states, similarly, that his programmes place an emphasis on the inclusion of recorded field interviews with members of local communities:

I ensure that my programme has sections where I have audio interviews from members of communities affected by climate change. It could be the chiefs, a village headman, or even ordinary villagers (Layazi, 14:2016).

The participants return to the value of radio listening clubs in their implementation of the facilitative role. Shale points out that the availability of listener clubs have enabled her to make use of recorded conversations between members of rural communities, who explain their views on climate change. She adds, however, that she has learned to complement content from listener club discussions with her own individual interviews. She identifies those participants who have not spoken out in the context of the club, and encourage them to express their views:

I let the local people to freely debate on the climate change problems in their area. If there are others that seem to chicken out, I take the microphone to them and encourage them to at least say something on a topic that is under discussion (Shale, 15:2016).

The discussion in this section demonstrates that, according to the participants, radio journalism about climate change at the MBC tends to be guided by the first and third roles, of ‘informing and educating’ and facilitating public participation. They propose that emphasis on the third role is particularly visible in programming within the DBU, where listening clubs provide journalists with an infrastructure that enables them to include the voices of community members. The participants also note that the existence of such infrastructure has enabled them to pursue the third role of climate change journalism within their own work. However, according to them, the same cannot be said of the second role – that of engaging critically with stories about climate change.

These comments can be seen to resonate with the discussion in Chapters Two and Three of the potential represented by the institutional culture of the MBC for the realisation of the three purposes of climate change journalism. As we saw there, the MBC has traditionally pursued a ‘top-down’ approach to programming, with the focus on disseminating ‘official’ information. This was described, in Chapter Two, as evidence of the entrenchment, in Malawi, of a media system that resembles Hallin and Mancini’s polarised pluralist model. This model is based in an authoritarian vision of the role of media in society. It was argued in Chapter Three that this vision is strongly articulated within the institutional culture of the MBC. Within such a context, journalists are supported in disseminating official information, but constrained from engaging critically with such content. The participants’ comments, as summarised above, can be seen to support this analysis.

The participants’ comments can also be understood in context of the argument, presented in Chapters Two and Three, regarding the relevance of Christians et al.’s normative theories of media to the context of the MBC. As we saw there, these authors identify four conceptualisations of the role that journalism should perform in a democratic society. Chapter Two proposes that two of these conceptualisations are strongly present within the institutional culture of the MBC: that of ‘collaborative’ and ‘facilitative’ journalism. Within the collaborative conceptualisation, journalism works in partnership with the state to achieve developmental goals. It was suggested in Chapter Three that such an approach is present within the MBC in context of an emphasis on developmental journalism. This approach, which can be observed within agricultural programming, lends itself to the realisation of the first of the three roles of journalism about climate change – that is, to ‘inform and educate’. It was also

noted in Chapter Three that the collaborative conceptualisation can mean that journalism locates members of the public as passive spectators to discussions that take place between officials and experts. The facilitative conceptualisation, in contrast, calls for media to support the strengthening of civil society, by encouraging the public's participation in processes of deliberation that are geared to resolving shared social problems. It was argued, in Chapters Two and Three, that these tendencies can be observed to co-exist in context of the MBC. The participants' comments, above, support this analysis.

It was argued in Chapters Two and Three that the existence of both the collaborative and the facilitative conceptualisations of journalism within the MBC has resulted from the acceptance, within this institution, of the normative guidelines of development journalism. As we saw there, development journalism has functioned within some systems to bolster the authority of governments, sometimes at the expense of the interests of poor and vulnerable people. However, a more 'emancipatory' approach to such journalism places an emphasis on the empowerment of ordinary people, by requiring their participation in processes of public debate. It was proposed, in Chapters Two and Three, that both the authoritarian and the emancipatory approach to development journalism can be observed within the Malawian public broadcaster. It was suggested, furthermore, that the establishment of the DBU in the late 1990's has played an important role in opening up spaces for the second approach, by introducing journalistic practices such as that of listener clubs that enable community participation in programming. The participants' comments in this section can be seen to support this observation.

It is, however, also evident from their commentary that the emancipatory approach to journalism has not enabled them to adopt aspects of another of the conceptualisations of the purpose of journalism, as discussed by Christians et al: that of the monitorial role. It is assumed, within the monitorial conceptualisation, that journalism is required to monitor the performance of people in positions of authority on behalf of the public. It may be that the absence of such journalism can be explained in context of the extent to which the polarised pluralist model has become entrenched within Malawian media, and in the context of the public broadcaster more particularly. The normative foundations of this model remains one in which the role of media is understood to be that of a 'top down' circulation of authoritative information. In context of the incorporation of the tradition of development journalism within the MBC, this model can accommodate the notion of community participation, but only if such participation does not challenge accepted relations of power.

5. Engaging with enabling and constraining factors at MBC

When asked to comment on aspects of their institutional environment that empower them to produce content about climate change, the participants refer to five enabling factors. Firstly, they note that they do not experience any direct censorship or interference with their work from their editors. On the contrary, agricultural journalists are given scope to take individual initiative with regards to the kind of programmes they establish, the topics they pursue and the treatment of topics. Shale notes that these conditions provide journalists with a great deal of freedom to pursue the coverage of climate change:

...there is no censorship on climate change issues in the agricultural programmes that I produce. Actually when I produce my programmes, I don't even get any directions such as 'Let's listen to your programme before it gets aired', no. You know this is basically about climate change so you are free to be creative in whatever way you want (Shale, 17: 2016).

Shale's phrasing, in this explanation, suggests that one reason for the freedom accorded to agricultural journalists may have to do with the status of the topics that they generally deal with – including that of climate change. It is possible, in other words, that such topics are not regarded by editors in MBC as politically contentious. In this context, Layazi does note that agricultural journalists can face challenges when individuals involved in stories on the topic of climate change have “political connections”. In using this phrase, he appears to refer to people who are in positions of authority within the structures of the Malawian government. In such cases, journalists usually do not pursue the story further because they know that it would probably not be approved by editors – and even if they were allowed to produce such a story, it would “land them in trouble” (Layazi, 16: 2016). A second enabling factor, according to some of the participants, is that MBC is generous in their allocation of airtime to agricultural programming. Maunde explains that the availability of airtime for featuring the programmes that he produces provides him with a significant avenue for pursuing stories on climate change (Maunde, 19:2016). Layazi also explains that easy access to airtime enables him to pursue topics that he feels passionate about, including the subject of climate change:

MBC gives me airtime as a platform for my programmes on climate change. I would not be able to tackle issue of climate change such as adaptation and all that if MBC decided to say all the spaces on the programme schedules are taken (Layazi, 16: 2016).

A third enabling factor noted by three of the participants is the foregrounding of Chichewa within agricultural programming on MBC. Layazi explains that his programme is mostly in Chichewa, which helps him to overcome cultural barriers that his audience may face in

engaging with issues relating to climate change (Layazi, 16:2016). Phikawa also explains that her programmes are produced in Chichewa, which is generally understood by listeners across Malawi:

Maybe I can have problems with northerners, but for the central region, parts of north and southern region, I don't think I have any problem. You know Chichewa is known and spoken in almost the whole country, that's the reason why am saying it's not a big problem. Maybe it could be in few areas where they don't speak Chichewa and you can't speak their language, so there it can become a problem (Phikawa, 14-15; 2016).

Shale speaks similarly of the value of being able to produce programming in Chichewa:

My programmes are in Chichewa except for '*We are the change*' programme. So I think I generally I've had little challenge on the language issue (Shale, 17:2016).

A fourth enabling factor mentioned by Phikawa is the support that journalists receive from MBC's management in pursuing their own further education:

On the positive side, MBC has allowed me go to school to do my bachelors. I can't take that for granted (Phikawa, 14: 2016).

A fifth enabling factor mentioned by Phikawa and Maunde is the availability, to MBC journalists, of external resources that help them in the production of journalism about climate change. Phikawa explains that her affiliation to MBC has allowed her to link up with organisations that support radio programmes on climate change:

Sometimes you are able to get some funding for a programme on climate change because you introduced yourself as a journalist from MBC. We are able to get assistance from other institutions as long as there is that approval and MBC institution logo, that MBC letterhead you know. So you just need to write a proposal and acknowledge that you are getting this funding from a particular institution and MBC does not have any problem with that (Phikawa, 14: 2016).

Maunde also explains that the public broadcaster has enabled him to establish links with various stakeholders on climate change issues:

First of all, it was MBC itself that ... appointed me to be dealing with these agricultural programmes. Through that I have been able to establish collaborations with the organisations, the NGOs that support these programmes that I work on here ... initially as I mentioned we had African Farm Radio Initiative (AFFRI) and then after that we had Farmer Voice Radio and as of now there is another organisation we call Farm Radio Trust. (Maunde, 18: 2016:18).

The participants also note four institutional factors that constrain their ability to put into practice the guidelines they would like to follow in producing journalism about climate change. Firstly, there is the question of institutional indifference regarding the production of agricultural programmes that feature climate change. Layazi notes that, if it was not for the

commitment of individual journalists to the coverage of this topic, it would not receive much attention. He also observes that MBC does not go out of its way to support initiatives taken by journalists with regards to such coverage:

The programmes that we produce and air on MBC are supposed to be an MBC thing but MBC is not owning it [the programme]. It's like we the individuals are the ones who are putting the effort but MBC is not assisting us (Layazi, 2016:12).

Secondly, as Layazi also explains, journalists find it difficult to gain approval for the allocation of resources that they require for the production of such journalism, because of the slowness with which requests are processed:

You can apply, you can request for funding to go to the field for material collection, but it will take ages for them to give you some money for whatever you wanted to do, so it's a challenge (Layazi, 2016:13).

Thirdly, as Phikawa notes, such requests are unlikely to succeed at all, unless external funding can be found:

Financial problems. I can say that we don't have much financial support maybe to do a programme which needs maybe more investigative approaches ... because normally they will tell you that we don't have finances so to do those in-depth stories ... it needs resources ... because you need to contact several people and ... maybe you need to travel (Phikawa, 13:2016).

Shale and Maunde both note, as a fourth constraint, that MBC's management does not ensure that journalists who are pursuing an interest in a specialised topic such as climate change are given access to opportunities for learning about the topic (Shale, 15:2016; Maunde, 18: 2016).

As Shale explains:

I think one of the constraints I have noted so far is lack of workshops or other capacity building means for me to further my knowledge on climate change (Shale, 15: 2016).

Shale explains that workshops on issues such as climate change are in fact available, but journalists often do not benefit from them. Members of management choose to attend these workshops, even they are designed to benefit journalists:

You know there is this culture here at MBC whereby when there are ... workshops, it's the bosses that go there to attend ... and not ... the actual reporter who is concerned. And sometimes you actually don't even get to know about it (Shale, 16: 2016).

Shale adds that members of top management assign such opportunities either to themselves or to "favourite reporters", not because of the benefit they will gain from the training opportunity, but because attendees receive a daily financial allowance to cover their living costs and therefore gain financially (Shale, 17:2016). She explains that MBC journalists learn that if they

wish to benefit from such resources they need to establish personal relationships with the organisations that offer them to ensure that they are provided with access. This is, indeed, what enabled her to attend the conference on climate change in Durban, which, as we have seen, played such an important role in shaping her understanding of climate change journalism:

...for example, the case for me to attend the Conference of Parties in Durban I had to tell the sponsors of the trip that, you know, when you are writing my company, you should write the letter in my name and actually specify that we need this person. Otherwise I would not have gone (Shale, 16: 2016).

When the participants are asked to comment on what can be done to ensure that the MBC becomes a more enabling environment for producing the kind of journalism about climate change that they aspire to, they mention two strategies. Firstly, they suggest that it is up to the individual journalists to invest in their own education and training, so that they become empowered to produce such journalism. Layazi and Phikawa both note that personal initiative is key to ensuring that journalists establish a knowledge base that enables them to produce the kind of journalism they believe in. For this purpose they should read widely, consult with experts and make use of opportunities for training (Layazi, 16:2016; Phikawa, 14: 2016). The participants explain that they are, in fact, taking such initiatives and as part of this have established personal learning goals to empower themselves as journalists. A review of these goals suggests that, if the participants achieve them, they would indeed be better able to contribute to all three roles for journalism about climate change that have been discussed in this dissertation. This is apparent when they speak about the need to acquire advanced analytical and writing competencies. Layazi explains this as follows:

I ... require analytical as well as creative writing lessons ... to report adequately on climate change ... I can't do that one on my own. I need special training on that (Layazi, 18: 2016).

Phikawa also notes that she wishes to learn how to write analytically – and feels that she can only achieve this through formal training:

I need go through that process of understanding and learning how to write critically. I mean there is no way I produce meaningful analysis if am not trained on how to do, such talent may be there, but you know it's rare, it has to be nurtured (Phikawa, 15:2016).

Maunde argues that he would like to establish a foundation of university-based intellectual knowledge in order to gain the necessary ability to engage in critical discussion of issues relating to climate change:

I think I need to concentrate in an area that will help me as a journalist to be critical, like the way they do in philosophy, maybe I need to major in an area like that one.

You know, to major, to specialise in that area, that will help us to have that critical approach to issues (Maunde, 22:2016).

Shale notes that competence in analysis includes the ability to interpret quantitative information, since such information often form part of international debates about climate change. As a journalist specialising in climate change, she would like to be able to translate these discussions about quantitative knowledge into terms that her audience can understand:

Sometimes you know the information comes in graphs. So learning to analyse I believe is a must in dealing with other climate change issues ... like the issue of carbon trading. Such issues become difficult to explain if one is not well grounded in analytical skills (Shale, 18:2016).

All four participants also refer to the need to engage in education that will enable them to become more informed on the topic of climate change. Layazi proposes that knowledge about the history of climate change would help him to make sense of current and future developments:

I need to know where this climate change is coming from and where it seems to be going. So climate change history, it is necessary to know it. I have to understand what I want to tell my audience from the background of climate change and may what those meteorological experts are predicting about the future (Layazi, 19:2016).

Phikawa reiterates that knowledge of all facets of climate change is indispensable to producing good journalism on the topic:

I think I need to understand each and every angle of climate change for me to report better because it's like we are half-baked journalists. We need deep understanding of these issues. For now, it's like we only know things artificially (Phikawa, 15:2016).

Shale also expresses the desire to become knowledgeable about climate change, both with regards to its history and current developments:

I think I need anything that I don't know about climate change. The history, the changes, what's happening ... new things ... you need updated information about climate change. I think I need that knowledge (Shale, 18:2016).

Maunde is the only participant who suggests that the MBC should provide journalists with knowledge resources that would enable them to engage in such learning. He observes that MBC as an institution does not prioritise access to internet resources or the updating of literature in its library. He feels such updated information would contribute significantly to his efforts to practice climate change journalism:

We should have access to latest information on climate change. The internet would be important but also new books with new information that is up to date so that we

remain in line with current issues on this thing [climate change] (Maunde, 21;2016).

Secondly, Maunde and Shale propose that there is a need to develop more resources for the production of climate change journalism that are of direct relevance to the Malawian context. Maunde proposes that a manual on climate change journalism in Malawi would be particularly valuable. He explains that such a manual should draw on a diversity of local expertise, in order to articulate a terminology for speaking about climate change that would be understandable to Malawian audiences:

We have the experts, those people who deal with weather, the meteorological department ... the department of agriculture, people from Bunda College of Agriculture, such experts ... should come and sit down and involve the journalists and local people to maybe develop a manual that will explain about all these climate change terms. Explain [climate change issues] and put them in our local terms (Maunde, 20:2016).

Shale proposes a similar initiative, in which experts in climate change and in aspects of Malawian culture and language meet to develop a local terminology that can be used as part of journalism about climate change:

Malawi has a long way to go because I think we do not update our language that much. The language needs to be updated so that we have better words to translate to (Shale, 17: 2016).

The participants' discussion in this section can usefully be compared to the comments that the American journalists made in Kovach and Rosenstiel's study, as reviewed in Chapter Two. As we saw in that chapter, the study demonstrated that these journalists were able to articulate a richly detailed and thoughtful normative framework for the journalism that they produce. This framework was based in a sense of professional identity that was not purely dependent on their institutional environment. It is possible to observe evidence of such a normative framework within the comments made by the agricultural journalists; that is, one that is not purely determined by the institutional context of the MBC. Their articulation of their own purpose as journalists emerges at least partly in context of freedom from scrutiny by the MBC management.

It is possible that this freedom originates from the status of agricultural programming within the overall culture of the MBC. The comments that Shale and Layazi make, above, suggest that the difference between reporting on 'agricultural' and 'political' matters results from the role that the latter plays in contributing to the public image of government. Because they do not tend to deal with such content, agricultural journalists may be able to operate 'under the radar', avoiding the scrutiny of the editorial management.

It is of interest, in this context, to consider the journalists' description of the role that advocacy groups and experts on climate change play in shaping their approach to journalism about climate change. It could be that external influence becomes far more important to journalists in context of the absence of direction from their own editorial management. The power of such influence can also be observed in the context of the DBU, where the establishment of a facilitative approach to journalism – including the use of listening clubs – was made possible through the intervention of external expertise.

Nevertheless, despite the freedom accorded to agricultural journalists and the degree of access that they have to external sources of knowledge, they speak with confidence only about their ability to fulfil the first and third role of climate change journalism. The second role, of critical engagement, remains unfulfilled. This may be explained by the general dominance within the MBC of the authoritarian vision of the role of media, as encapsulated in the Hallin and Mancini's polarised pluralist model. Even if the journalists' immediate institutional environment provides them with the possibility of freedom, this broader context constrains them from engaging critically with content.

It is, possibly, significant that in making proposals for what needs to be done to make the MBC a more enabling environment for the fulfillment of all three roles of reporting on climate change, the participants focus on strategies that do not require institutional change. The emphasis is, rather, on what individual journalists can do within the existing institutional context, and on the role that external stakeholders can play in generating resources that are of relevance to Malawi. It would seem that the participants have doubts about the possibility of a broader transformation of institutional culture within the MBC.

Conclusion

It was argued in this chapter that the participants' commentary on their own conceptualisation of climate change demonstrates that they have access to credible knowledge about climate change and its relevance to the Malawian context. They gain such access through their interaction with local communities, their contact with experts and officials and exposure to literature on the topic. The availability of workshops offered by organisations dedicated to the promotion of education about climate change plays a key role in access to the knowledge of experts and officials. Based on such knowledge, the participants articulate a shared understanding of climate change and its relevance to the Malawian context. It is likely, in the

view of the researcher, that this understanding is more widely shared amongst agricultural journalists working for the MBC.

It was further demonstrated that, when describing the purpose of journalism about climate change, the participants began by speaking exclusively about the first of the three roles identified within scholarly studies: that of ‘informing and educating’. However, when prompted to do so, the participants were quick to recognise the value of the second and third role – that of critical engagement and the facilitation of public participation. They were, furthermore, able to draw on their own knowledge and experience to share ideas about how these roles can be implemented. It was proposed that the participants initially offered what they understand to be the ‘official’ conceptualisation of the purpose of journalism, rather than drawing on their personal beliefs and insights. However, when invited to consider a wider spectrum of reference points beyond the limits of this official position, they were able to do so. It was concluded that, as individual journalists, the participants recognise the value of all three roles, but understand the second and third role as existing separately from the official, institutional identity of journalism.

In evaluating radio journalism about climate change in Malawi, the participants noted that radio journalism outside the context of the MBC generally foregrounds the first of the three roles of journalism about climate change. In contrast, radio journalism at MBC puts into practice both the first and the third role, while the second role remains underdeveloped. The participants note, further, that this trend is also reflected within their own practice as agricultural journalists working for MBC. It was proposed in this chapter that the participants’ observations in this respect should be read against the location of the MBC within a polarised pluralist media model. The polarised pluralist model is defined by an authoritarian understanding of the social purpose of media, and therefore supportive of the first role of climate change journalism. – Their commentary should also be understood in context of the presence, within this broadcaster, of developmental traditions of journalism. Developmental journalism is informed by a ‘collaborative’ understanding of the relationship between media and government, which further supports the articulation of this first role. At the same time, the ‘emancipatory’ tradition of such journalism – which as we have seen is present in MBC in context of the work of the DBU – has allowed for the development of a more ‘facilitative’ tradition of journalism, and with this, an emphasis on the third role of climate change journalism.

The participants also commented on factors within the MBC that either enable or constrain them in their attempts to produce journalism about climate change that is relevant to the local context. It was proposed that their commentary suggests that agricultural journalists

at MBC are provided with unique opportunities for developing an approach to their own practice that fulfills the first and third roles of climate change journalism. One reason for this may be that the topics they deal with are not the subject of close scrutiny by editorial management, so that they have the freedom to make their own decisions about content and treatment. Another is the high level of access that journalists have to the knowledge resources of experts in climate change. Furthermore, there is the high level of access that they have to expertise in facilitative journalism, in context of the DBU. It was proposed that the DBU is also representative of expertise external to the institutional context of the DBU. As such, fulfillment of both the first and third role is dependent on resources external to the MBC. The presence of these resources has, however, not ensured the fulfillment of the second role –that of critical engagement. It may be the strength of an authoritarian institutional culture within the MBC mitigates against this.

CHAPTER FIVE - FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS II: THE NEWS REPORTERS

Introduction

This chapter deals with the MBC news journalists' contribution to the empirical component of this study. It is organised around the same themes as the review of the interviews with agricultural journalists in Chapter Four. It therefore, contains the same five sections, focusing respectively on the participants' background details; their conceptualisation of climate change; their understanding of the ideal social purpose of journalism about climate change; their assessment of journalism at MBC measured against these ideals and their comments on contextual factors that have constrained or enabled their own attempts at putting these ideals into practice. However, whereas Chapter Four dealt exclusively with the comments made by agricultural journalists, each section of this next chapter also identifies similarities and differences between the statements made by the agricultural and news journalists. In this way, the chapter seeks to compare the experiences of journalists working in MBC news and agricultural programming with regards to the production of content about climate change that can enable Malawian audiences to engage with the relevance to their local context.

1. The participants

A scrutiny of the background of the four newsroom journalists who participated in this study reveals a varying range of both education and work experience¹⁶. The only woman in this group, Thokozani Msuyane, is 31 years old. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts in media studies and psychology in 2008 from the University of Namibia and a post-graduate diploma in media management in 2016 from Rhodes University in South Africa. She notes that these courses included content on broadcast writing, media law, ethics, media management, critical thinking and writing, an introduction to psychology and research methods (Msuyane, 6:2016). She joined MBC as a producer and presenter in 2009 and took charge of a programme called *Environmental Forum*. The programme features environmental health issues, including stories about climate change and its effects in Malawi. Because she was interested in reporting, Msuyane also volunteered to file stories to the MBC news department. She eventually joined the news department in 2010 and at the time of the completion of this research was working there as a senior reporter. The topics that she has covered, as part of this work, has included stories about climate change (Msuyane, 3: 2016).

¹⁶ The researcher assigned pseudonyms to the newsroom journalists in order to protect their identities.

Wamba Mtundu, who is 35 years old, is another senior reporter in the newsroom at MBC. He holds a diploma in mass communication obtained in 2001 from Grefa Communications, a Malawi-based journalism school that has since closed down¹⁷. Subjects that he recalls studying include economics reporting, media ethics and court reporting (Mtundu, 1: 2016). After graduation, he worked for two local radio stations as a newsreader before joining the public broadcaster in 2003 as a reporter. The stories that he has covered in the last thirteen years included those that relate to climate change (Mtundu, 2:2016).

Charles Kachirwa, who is 34 years old, holds a diploma in Journalism from the University of Malawi, which he obtained in 2013. At the time of this research, he was in his final year of part-time journalism studies with Blantyre International University. He notes that the courses that he has covered so far include television journalism, introduction to mass communication, critical thinking, radio reporting, print writing and television journalism (Kachirwa, 4:2016). From 2007 to 2008 he worked as a news reporter specialising in environmental journalism for a private radio station called FM 101 and then, from 2009 onwards, for MBC (ibid, 2: 2016). He notes that since 2007, as part of this work, he has reported regularly on the topic of climate change (ibid, 7:2016). Kachirwa is the only reporter among the participants who has, on two occasions, won awards for environmental reporting because of his outstanding special reports on the topic. One of these awards was for reports on climate change (ibid).

Finally, James Thuphiri, who is 38, holds a degree in mass communication obtained in 2003 from the African Bible College Malawi Campus¹⁸. The courses he studied included radio broadcasting, writing for television, writing for radio, media ethics, economics reporting and an introduction to desktop publishing (Thuphiri, 1:2016). After graduation, he first worked with Transworld Radio Malawi¹⁹ as a part-time presenter/reporter. After three years, he moved to FM 101 where he stayed for four months only (ibid, 1:2016). He then joined the public broadcaster towards the end of 2006, where he has worked as an environmental reporter for the

¹⁷ This was a local private commercial school which provided basic certificate and diploma journalism courses. The school has since closed down.

¹⁸ ABC is an interdenominational tertiary education institution that mainly offers theology training. Besides that, it teaches non-theological courses such as mass communication. The Malawi campus was established in 1988 as one of the affiliates of the various African Bible Colleges. Similar campuses are found in Uganda and Liberia (<http://africanbiblecolleges.com/malawi/>).

¹⁹ Transworld is a Christian religious radio station that broadcasts in various countries in Southern Africa. Trans World Radio Malawi broadcasts for 24hours on FM. Its programmes are in English, Chichewa, Tumbuka and Yao. Its broadcasting content is mostly gospel programmes though it also covers news reports on current affairs (<https://twrmalawi.wordpress.com/about/>).

past 11 years. Currently, he doubles as a senior reporter and editor. Thuphiri indicates that he specialises in journalism about climate change and that he has substantial experience in this area of reporting (Ibid, 4:2016). He is the only member of the group of newsroom journalists interviewed for this study who has attended two international climate change conferences: one in Durban, South Africa in 2011 and the second in Doha, Qatar in 2012.

As can be seen from these biographies, all four of the participants have achieved qualification at tertiary level, specialising in communication or journalism. Msuyane and Thuphiri have achieved undergraduate degrees, while Mtundu and Kachirwa have qualified with diplomas. It can be seen from this that, as in the case of most of the agricultural journalists, these participants have prioritised the completion of an education in journalism or communication before they began to practice as journalists.

It is also possible to observe similarities between these research participants with regards to their experience of journalistic practice. All four have worked in other radio stations before joining MBC. All of them have, furthermore, been involved in environmental reporting at some point in their work history²⁰. Kachirwa and Thuphiri describe themselves as journalists specialising in environmental coverage, and they both explain that they have at least five years of experience of reporting on climate change. Out of the four participants, these two reporters are the most confident in claiming expertise with regards to reporting on this topic. As we saw above, Kachirwa has won awards for this work, and he expresses pride in these achievements:

... when I was at Capital Radio, I covered a lot of climate change stories there before I came to join MBC ... I won an award on reporting on issues of climate change ... when the Media Institute of Southern Africa was looking at who has done well in these issues I was given an award to say I have done a good piece on the topic (Kachirwa, 7:2016).

He adds that after joining MBC, his interest in reporting on climate change continued, and he “...still followed much of the issues on the topic” (Kachirwa, 9:2016). Thuphiri, in turn, explains that he has concentrated much of his reporting over the past 10 years on environmental issues in general and climate change in particular. He considers himself a specialist in journalism about climate change because he has “...reported on the issue all along” (Thuphiri, 4: 2016). The other two participants explained, in contrast, that they have only covered this topic intermittently, as part of their more general reporting duties. Msuyane feels that her experience of reporting on the topic is typical of the general news reporter:

²⁰ It should be noted that in selecting news reporters to participate in this study, the researcher deliberately identified individuals who have experience in environmental reporting. Such experience is not necessarily typical of news journalists working for MBC.

I think I have done moderately in highlighting the climate change issue in some of the news items that I contribute to the reporting section. But so far I would not describe what I have done on the topic as extensive, it's just average (Msuyane, 24: 2016).

Mtundu explains that he has not been able to regularly report on climate change issues because of the lack of the culture of specialised reporting at MBC:

It has not been that much because the ... issue here is that we don't always specialise at MBC. I have covered a lot of issues about climate change but they don't always come ... back to back. I have only covered that in bits ... If something crops up now you cover it, but it will take a couple weeks more before you do the next story relating to it (Mtundu, 11: 2016).

As in the case of the agricultural journalists, when the participants comment on how they have acquired knowledge about climate change, they make reference to participation in workshops facilitated by NGO's²¹. All four participants explain that these workshops played a crucial role in providing them with a foundation of knowledge on the topic of climate change. Kachirwa describes the workshops as providing him with systematic points of reference for the coverage of this topic:

I have attended several climate change workshops ... The workshop covered ... what is climate change, why it is happening now and also causes of climate change. And also what should be the role of a journalist in these issues ... I think the workshops ... opened up my understanding on this issue (Kachirwa, 9-10:2016).

Thuphiri notes, similarly, that such workshops²² have provided him with "...specific presentations on different issues related to climate change", and that this has "...shaped my knowledge on the topic" (Thuphiri, 5: 2016). Msuyane notes that workshops²³ on climate change have provided her with "basic understanding" of the issue (Msuyane, 11: 2016). Mtundu explains that one of the workshops he attended²⁴ played a fundamental role in enhancing his knowledge of the topic. At that point, he already had "...general knowledge about climate change", but this workshop covered more specialised issues (Mtundu, 3: 2016).

²¹ Kachirwa explains that he attended workshops by Leadership for Environmental and Development (LEAD), the Malawi Environmental Endowment Trust (MEET) and the Wildlife Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM).

²² Thuphiri has attended workshops convened by organisations such as LEAD, Centre for Environmental Policy (CEPA), Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), UNDP and UNFCCC.

²³ Msuyane participated in workshops such as those organised by Active Youth Initiative for Social Empowerment (AYISE) and LEAD.

²⁴ Mtundu has attended workshops by MCC, MEET and the Ministry of Information.

The participants also talk about how they have taken personal initiative to improve their knowledge of climate change by consulting literature. Kachirwa notes that he has benefitted from reading "...summaries on the topic from ... brochures and magazines" (2016:10). Thuphiri also explains that he updates himself on the topic by reading "literature" and "information from the internet" (Thuphiri, 6: 2016). Similarly, Msuyane indicates that she frequently consults online resources for information on climate change, for example when she needs to clarify "confusing terminologies" (Msuyane, 11:2016). Mtundu, in contrast, explains that he has not often resorted to seeking online information about the topic due to difficulties in accessing the internet (Mtundu, 5:2016).

In Chapter Four, we saw that all of the agricultural journalists were able to establish a foundation of knowledge that could assist them in the coverage of climate change. They describe themselves as being able to do so because they have access to local communities, experts, and literature. The news journalists can also be seen to have access to such knowledge resources. It is therefore possible to conclude that they, too, are in a position to put into practice the first of the ideal roles for journalism about climate change identified in Chapter One: that is, to 'inform and educate'.

However, it is also noticeable that there is more variation in the extent to which the news reporters express confidence in their achievement of specialised knowledge of climate change than could be observed in the context of the agricultural journalists. This may be because their work environment and job requirements within MBC differ from those of the agricultural journalists. For specialist reporters such as Kachirwa and Thuphiri, it is possible to establish in-depth knowledge of the coverage of one topic. Their position can therefore be seen, in some respects, to be similar to that of the agricultural journalists, who are given the scope to establish such expertise. For general reporters such as Msuyane and Mtundu, however, the lack of continuity that characterises their daily assignments may limit their ability to gain such expertise.

2. Conceptualising climate change

Like the agricultural journalists, the news reporters express some reservation about their own ability to define what climate change is. The explanations that they provide, in this context, are very similar to those of the agricultural journalists. All of them describe climate change as having to do with long-term changes in weather patterns (Kachirwa, 11: 2016; Msuyane, 11:2016; Mtundu, 5: 2016; Thuphiri, 6: 2016). Kachirwa, who is one of the participants who

describes himself as a specialist in climate change reporting, understands these changes to be observable in the Malawian context:

...climate change is what a country such as Malawi in particular is experiencing now in terms of change of weather patterns, change of climatic conditions ... This change is for over a long period of time, because ... the things that used to happen in a certain way are no longer happening in that particular way (Kachirwa, 11: 2016).

Like the agricultural journalists, the news journalists are also in agreement that these changes in weather patterns include an increase in extreme weather conditions, particularly that of flooding and drought. They suggest that such changes can be observed in context of Malawi (Mtundu, 7:2016; Msuyane, 13:2016; Kachirwa, 12:2016). Thuphiri refers, more specifically, to "...flooding in the Southern part of the country" (Thuphiri, 7:2016).

Again, like the agricultural journalists, the participants are in agreement that human activity is to blame for the occurrence of climate change. They note, in this respect, that climate change is mostly caused by carbon emissions that result from industrial activity. Mtundu refers in this context to "...certain gases from industries which go up in the atmosphere" (Mtundu, 5:2016). Msuyane notes that carbon emission contribute to climate change because "...it affects the ozone layer" (Msuyane, 13: 2016). Thuphiri, one of the two environmental journalists, explains the relationship between carbon emissions and climate change more precisely:

"I know that greenhouse gases are the main ones that contribute to climate change [because] ... they ... affect the ozone layer and then it affects the movement of winds and air in the atmosphere (Thuphiri, 7: 2016).

Thuphiri and Kachirwa both propose that developed nations are primarily responsible for such emission. Thuphiri points out, in this context, that developed countries "...are heavily industrialised" and therefore produce more carbon gasses (Thuphiri, 7: 2016). Kachirwa suggests that within public debate, blame for climate change is often apportioned to "...gases from those huge industries in the western world" (Kachirwa, 11;2016).

The participants also make similar comments to the agricultural journalists with regards to the role that Malawi plays in contributing to climate change. They all refer to deforestation as the major contributing factor to climate change in this country. Kachirwa explains that deforestation occurs due to the felling of trees for uses such as charcoal burning. He suggests that trees "...help in making sure that rainfall is formed" and their destruction has a direct adverse effect on the weather (Kachirwa, 11: 2016). Mtundu also explains that the "...uncontrolled cutting down of trees, bush fires and all the burning of charcoal" in Malawi

contribute to deforestation which eventually leads to climate change (Mtundu, 7: 2016). Msuyane refers to the role that tobacco farming plays in this respect:

...when farmers want firewood for flue cured tobacco farming, that one requires a lot of firewood and the farmers end up cutting hundreds of trees in their area and that contributes to climate change (Msuyane, 12:2016).²⁵

Thuphiri suggests that such agricultural activities mean that the country bears some responsibility for the occurrence of climate change in the region:

...I think in our little way we have contributed to climate change by cutting down of trees, particularly what's happening in Malawi in terms of the generation of energy where most people use charcoal (Thuphiri, 7:2016).

All of the news reporters agree, like the agricultural journalists, that the extreme shifts in weather associated with climate change have serious implications for the welfare of human beings. Msuyane explains this as follows:

I think it's about the dynamics to do with the change in weather patterns over a long period of time and these affect us as human beings (Msuyane, 12: 2016).

Thuphiri also describes climate change as "...long term changes in the weather that is affecting humanity in various ways" (Thuphiri, 6: 2016). The participants add that flooding and drought, in particular, are having a devastating social impact in Malawi, particularly with regard to food security. Like the agricultural journalists, they describe this impact primarily in context of communities that are dependent on food from subsistence farming. Msuyane explains this as follows:

After the drought or flooding, there is likelihood that food reserves will be affected by the resulting low yields. The food would not last because it may not take you to the next planting season, and people may die of hunger (Msuyane, 13:2016).

Kachirwa points out that people also may not have enough food because "...the soil fertility has been washed by the floods and what comes out of that is a poor harvest" (Kachirwa, 12: 2016). Thuphiri points out that the impact on Malawian society is particularly devastating, because this is a country that is heavily dependent on agriculture:

The effects are hunger because we cannot produce enough because this is an agricultural country. Our source of food is based on agriculture and when you have a mishap in terms of farming it means that it translates to bad news for people in our country because you harvest little (Thuphiri, 7: 2016).

²⁵ Flue cured tobacco is dried in a closed building with heat directed from flues or pipes that extend from a furnace into a barn. Flue curing of tobacco takes about a week (International Tobacco Growers Association website). In the case of countries like Malawi, it requires the use of a lot of firewood to maintain the heat.

When asked to explain what they know about international negotiations around climate change, three of the participants were hesitant in offering detailed responses. Kachirwa, one of the two reporters who describes himself as specialising in environmental reporting, offers a somewhat vague explanation:

I am told there is one such meeting, the one that is very famous, every year. I have been seeing news about these meetings on television. I have also been reading about it, even here in Malawi we have been seeing reporters going there. I know there are countries that meet to discuss these issues but I don't follow them. I just know that there is this meeting on climate change (Kachirwa, 14: 2016).

Mtundu, one of the two general reporters, is able to provide a more detailed clarification:

I know there have been some international platforms where climate change is discussed but I haven't heard recently like which one is which. I didn't follow the most recent one, COP 21. But ... I followed COP 17... (Mtundu, 7: 2016).

Thuphiri, the second environmental journalist, provides the most detail of all:

These are forums where delegates, [including] politicians, meet and discuss with experts how best they can deal with climate change. They usually discuss how to mitigate the impact or to adapt and then what to do to effect that. And then they vote. So, at the end of each conference, there is a deal that comes after members have signed that particular agreement (Thuphiri, 8: 2016).

It is worth keeping in mind that Thuphiri described himself, in the previous section, as having chosen to specialise in the coverage of climate change and that he has attended two international conferences on the topic.

Like the agricultural journalists, the participants suggest that these international meetings focus on the establishment of agreements around globally shared strategies for mitigation and adaptation. Thuphiri explains that the major topics are about "...how to reduce industrial gas emissions" and how to "...enhance adaptation programmes" (Thuphiri, 9: 2016). Msuyane also suggests that the debates deal with the development of strategies for adaptation and mitigation:

The delegates come together and talk about how to mitigate the effects of climate change like bringing down carbon levels. And they also agree on what to do in terms of measures to cope with the effects of climate change (Msuyane, 15: 2016).

Similarly, Mtundu explains that the negotiations focus on "...what countries are doing to fight climate change and what projects are there to fight climate change", and that at the end there are "...protocols that are agreed upon" (Mtundu, 7: 2016).

Also, like the agricultural journalists, the news reporters all point out that the establishment of these agreements are characterised by contestation, often articulated as a tension between the interests of industrially advanced and developing countries. Kachirwa describes the negotiations as an opportunity for nations to "...meet to ... bang heads on what

to do about climate change in their countries” (Kachirwa, 14:2016). The participants understand this ‘banging of heads’ to relate, in particular, to struggles between wealthy and poorer countries around responsibility for the impact that climate change is making on the world. Msuyane describes such struggles as being informed by “...this rift between the big emitters and the others” (Msuyane, 15: 2016). She explains that delegates from developing countries argue that they are hard done by, because although they “...don’t emit large amounts of that carbon”, they nevertheless “...suffer more from the effects” (ibid). Mtundu describes developing countries as “...collectively pointing fingers to the developing nations” as significant contributors of climate change and therefore they have to do the mitigation part” (Mtundu, 8:2016). Kachirwa explains that negotiations are then concerned with ensuring that wealthier countries make commitments to reduce carbon emissions, and providing developing countries with support for adaptation projects. He describes these agreements as being about the distribution of tasks:

It’s like there is that allocation of responsibilities where poor countries like us here in Malawi and maybe [other countries in] Africa do concentrate on beefing up efforts on coping with the problem of [climate] change here. And then Europe and America they dwell on curbing the gases, the carbons which come from their industries (Kachirwa, 14:2016).

The division of labour that emerges from this is one in which wealthy nations are responsible for mitigation, and poorer nations for adaptation:

They give each other duties. I understand rich countries pledge to tone down on the amount of gases they emit at a certain period. And we in Africa and other less industrialised nations have to up our game on how to survive from the damage already caused by climate change (Kachirwa, 16: 2016).

Again, like the agricultural journalists, the participants generally agree that it is important for local communities around the world, including those in Malawi, to be kept up to date about developments within these negotiations. Kachirwa explains that this is important because “...whatever they discuss there and the final outcomes will affect people on the ground” (Kachirwa, 15: 2016). Thuphiri adds that the negotiations are relevant to local communities everywhere because, in the contemporary world, global and local processes are intertwined:

I think they are extremely important in the sense that these meeting discuss how countries worldwide are implementing climate change projects. So, I think local people need to know all this as part of the global village (Thuphiri, 10: 2016).

Thuphiri adds that the agreements established at such meetings around offering support for the establishment of adaptation and mitigation strategies in developing countries is of particular

relevance to communities in Malawi (Thuphiri, 10: 2016). Mtundu points out that it is important for such communities to know about these strategies, since they will need to be involved in their implementation:

The measures and ways ... [of] adaptation are meant to be implemented by local people in villages, so they need to relate to the debates which suggests these ways. There should be a connection between what is being decided and the people for whom such decisions are made, so they are relevant to people obviously (Mtundu, 8: 2016).

It has been demonstrated, in this section, that the news reporters' conceptualisation of climate change and associated debates are similar to that of the agricultural journalists discussed in Chapter Four. Both groups are able to refer to a foundation of knowledge on which to base their analysis of issues relating to climate change. Both are aware of key themes that have characterised international debates on the topic, as discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation. Indeed, it is possible to observe evidence of a common understanding, shared by all eight participants of what the terms of reference for the discussion of climate change should be. This is, as noted in Chapter Four, an understanding that is, to some degree, based in an uneven and selective acknowledgement of factors that contribute to climate change. Nevertheless, for both groups, there is evidence of a valuable foundation of knowledge on which to base their analysis of issues relating to climate change.

3. Conceptualising the purpose of journalism about climate change

Before prompting the news reporters to speak about their understanding of the purpose of journalism about climate change, the researcher first asked them to explore the more general social purpose of journalism. Thuphiri explains, in this context, that he has always understood journalism to be first and foremost "...about reporting, getting issues wherever they are and transmitting them to people" (Thuphiri, 3:2016). Msuyane notes that the core task of the journalist is to inform and to educate:

I think for me the very first role of a journalist is straightforward ... to ... make listeners aware of relevant developments in life ... to inform about current affairs and educate them on their importance (Msuyane, 8: 2016).

Mtundu also speaks of the importance of "...informing, teaching and educating the people on different topics" (Mtundu, 6: 2016:2). These comments can be seen to be framed by the same conceptualisation of the purpose of journalism that we saw in operation in context of the agricultural journalists, in their initial responses. Kachirwa is the one person who makes a comment that adds a further dimension to this conceptualisation:

As a journalist, you must act as a mediator, between somebody who has no voice and those who have the voice out there, like government, service providers and all that, that's the first role of a journalist (Kachirwa, 6: 2016).

It is not clear, from this statement, what journalists should do in mediating between 'somebody who has no voice' and 'those who have a voice'. It may be that Kachirwa is suggesting that journalists should simply 'inform and educate' the 'voiceless' about statements made by government and service providers. Alternatively, he may be pointing to the idea that journalists can assist the 'voiceless' in speaking for themselves.

The reporters' more specific comments on guidelines for journalism about climate change are also informed by this idea that journalism should serve society primarily by 'informing and educating'. Like the agricultural journalists, they argue that the coverage of climate change should ensure that audiences are informed of issues and events relating to the topic, and help them to understand their significance. Kachirwa believes that the starting point for such journalism should be "...making people aware" of climate change (Kachirwa, 16:2016). Mtundu, in turn, talks about the importance of increasing audiences' comprehension of the topic:

I think journalists working on climate change stories should make sure that audience have a clear understanding of the topic (Mtundu, 9: 2016).

Msuyane suggests that audiences would benefit, in particular, from learning about how climate change is impacting on daily life, and what should be done in response to such impact:

Journalism that deals with climate change should focus on how to inform and educate the listener about what is happening now on the ground. Saying exactly what is this problem called climate change and what we should do about it. So what I am saying is that as journalist we need to highlight these best practices (Msuyane, 17: 2016).

Thuphiri describes journalists' role in all of this as a process of mediation, in which they share the knowledge of experts with ordinary people:

I think journalists should help a lot in getting climate change information from experts or ... books and then bring the package to the people through reports on the radio or any medium that they are using ... the core of their job ... is that they should make people aware about the issues of climate change (Thuphiri, 11: 2016).

Mtundu adds that these goals can be achieved, "...if the reporting is ... creative" (Mtundu, 9: 2016).

The participants suggest, further, that such journalism should be designed to convince listeners to change their behaviour in response to the realities of climate change. Thuphiri argues, in this context, that journalism can encourage audiences to "...develop positive

thinking about how they could ... contribute” to dealing with the problem of climate change (Thuphiri, 12:2016). Kachirwa notes that this can include the adoption of practices that mitigate against climate change:

It is ... important that climate change journalism helps in sensitising communities on how they can change their thinking and conduct and ... avoid doing things that may lead to climate change. Journalists can do that through writing about alternatives to activities that cause climate change but which local communities believe are their only way of survival (Kachirwa, 16: 2016:16).

Mtundu argues, similarly, that journalism “...can go a long way in stopping people from engaging in activities [that contribute to climate change]” (Mtundu, 9:2016). Msuyane adds that journalism on the topic can play a role in “curbing common bad tendencies” that are linked to causing climate change among some local communities (Msuyane, 9:2016).

It should be noted that in making these comments, the participants speak about strategies for mitigation rather than adaptation. This is in contrast with the responses from the agricultural journalists who include references to strategies for adaptation such as crop diversification. This difference can possibly be explained by the fact that the news journalists’ reporting activities do not regularly involve fieldwork in rural communities. For this reason, they may be more distant from the realities of life of agricultural communities.

When the news reporters were prompted by the researcher to consider the second role – that of engaging critically with the topic of climate change – three of the journalists responded positively. Kachirwa agrees that critical engagement is crucial to any journalism, if it is to serve the interests of the public:

The second role is also ...very important because if we don’t question or, you know, analyse whatever is coming out, at the end of the day, maybe, we can also be giving people things that are not good for them (Kachirwa, 17: 2016).

Msuyane adds that critical engagement enables journalists to “...expose hidden agendas that could be in the climate change stories” (Msuyane, 20: 2016). Mtundu notes, in turn, that critical engagement is crucial for an in-depth approach to journalism about climate change. Such an approach would help to ensure that journalists “... [do not] just scratch on the surface of climate change issues” but are instead thorough in dealing with stories on the topic (Mtundu, 11:2016). Thuphiri, in contrast, argues that journalists cannot have the necessary resources to produce critically engaged journalism about climate change, because they are by necessity not experts on the topic. Indeed, journalist should refrain from critically scrutinising statements made by the ‘real experts’:

There is no need to be critical on information that comes from experts who have done their research in their field. I mean when a deal has been passed and all the experts have said this is what we think and the policy makers have said this is a correct deal, what are you investigating on about? (Thuphiri, 13: 2016).

Thuphiri adds, however, that critical engagement may be appropriate when there is an instance of “... non-compliance to agreements made at international climate change negotiations”. He feels that journalists would only have justification in such cases where they intend to “... investigate reasons behind the disregard of such commitments” (Thuphiri, 13: 2016). It is of interest to remember that, of the four news reporters, Thuphiri is the one that presents himself as a specialist in journalism about climate change, and indeed his comments on climate change, as summarised above, are often the most precise and detailed. It may be that, for this reason, Thuphiri is particularly invested in the authority of expert knowledge about climate change, and therefore resists the idea that such knowledge can be challenged by journalists. It should also be pointed out that in commenting on the value of critical engagement he chose to speak, in particular, about engagement with authoritative scientific knowledge. His view of the need to challenge claims made by officials about the implications of climate science, or claims made by climate change denialists, may differ from what he has outlined here.

When the participants are asked to comment on the third role – that of facilitating participation in debates and deliberations about climate change – all four respond positively. Msuyane observes that such an approach would help journalists to draw on the knowledge and experience of communities, which represents a valuable resource on which to base strategies for responding to climate change:

The feedback from local people could be valuable in exposing challenges that communities face regarding climate change. Journalist must help in allowing local people make such contributions in solving the climate change problem (Msuyane, 22-23: 2016).

Mtundu notes, similarly, that it is important for communities to “...share their experiences of climate change” (Mtundu, 11: 2016). Thuphiri also feels that the inclusion of local voices in journalism on the climate change “...brings in a good balance in the reports”. He adds that such voices can “...add an interesting dimension” to climate change reports (Thuphiri, 15: 2016). Kachirwa notes, similarly, that the third role of climate change journalism points to the importance of including a “human interest angle”, which “...shows that the story is also about local people”. He adds that such people “... deserve to say something on in issues that affect them” (Kachirwa, 17:2016).

In this section, we have seen that the news reporters’ comments on the purpose of journalism about climate change are, in many respects, similar to that of the agricultural

journalists. As in the case of the agricultural journalists, it is possible that their initial emphasis on the first role of climate change journalism has to do with its ‘official’ status, as part of the conceptualisation of the purpose of journalism that is dominant in MBC. However, when asked to consider a wider spectrum of reference points for the purpose of journalism about climate change they too are able to embrace these ideas. This is, of course, with the exception of Thuphiri, who remains unconvinced of the centrality of critical engagement as a requirement for journalism about climate change, because the authority of expert knowledge about climate change should not be challenged. Nevertheless here, again, we see that the journalists are able to give expression to a much more nuanced and diverse understanding of the purpose of journalism, if they are encouraged to liberate themselves from referring only to the ‘official version’.

However, it is arguable that the news reporters’ discussion of this wider conception is less rich in its detail than that of the agricultural journalists. While the agricultural journalists were able to articulate how they would fulfill the third role in particular, the newsroom journalists are less forthcoming on this aspect. It seems likely that the reason for this difference can be traced to the fact that their work, as news reporters, provide fewer opportunities for facilitative journalism. In contrast, the agricultural journalists were able to draw on their experience in the BDU programming, including that of listener clubs. In addition, as we have already seen, the newsroom journalists may have less opportunity to fulfil the second role of critical engagement, because of the sensitivity of operating in an environment that is closely monitored by authorities.

4. Evaluating journalism about climate change

All four news reporters are in agreement that radio stations in Malawi generally understand the purpose of the news they produce to be that of informing and educating. Kachirwa suggests that stations incorporate this role into the way they present their own purpose, in acknowledgement of its status as the “official trademark” for journalism in the country (Kachirwa, 18:2016). Mtundu adds that radio journalists take this task seriously because they believe that “...that is what they are supposed to do every day” when they report for work (Mtundu, 11:2016).

The participants agree, furthermore, that radio journalism in Malawi has also been guided by this commitment to informing and educating in its approach to the coverage of climate change. Stations have “... attempted to create awareness of what climate change is all

about” (Thuphiri, 15: 2016). Msuyane feels that journalists working at these stations have done “very well” in explaining climate change to their audiences. She observes that journalists do not seem to find the task intimidating because it “...simply involves carrying information from sources to listeners on air” (Msuyane, 23:2016).

The participants are also in agreement that radio journalists in Malawi have not fulfilled the second role – that of critical and active engagement. Mtundu explains that the stations he listens to tend to focus on sharing official information about climate change and presents this information as “undisputed facts” (Mtundu, 11:2016). He suggests, further, that journalists tend to believe that climate change information which comes from experts is “sacred” and must not be challenged (Mtundu, 11:2016). Msuyane argues that radio journalists in Malawi are not “...interested in investigative journalism especially on climate change because it looks complicated to begin with” (Msuyane, 23:2016). She suggests that journalists may be intimidated by the task of producing journalism that engages critically with this topic, and would therefore rather “...just treat everything about the topic as being very correct” (Msuyane, 23:2016). Kachirwa also observes that he has not come across examples of investigative coverage of climate change. His phrasing suggests that it would be preferable for a more critical element to be included:

I have not heard local journalists taking a stance to investigate further. They haven’t done enough. Most of the times they will not analyse the reports; it’s just what the experts have said at a certain function, not something that one has sat down to do as an inquiry (Kachirwa, 18: 2016).

In contrast, Thuphiri feels that the absence of the critical element from journalism on the topic is not problematic. He argues that stories on climate change are usually based on statements made by experts whose authority should not be questioned because “...their information is substantiated by research” (Thuphiri, 15: 2016).

The participants also agree that radio journalism in Malawi shows little evidence of attempts to fulfil the third role – that of facilitating public participation in debates about climate change. Kachirwa suggests that journalists have “failed” to create a balance between the voices of ordinary Malawians and experts:

Most of the times they will involve the officials, or the experts, not local people. They will just say, the climate expert has said so, so ... not something that one has sat down and said let me do this as a piece that should investigate the issue deeper (Kachirwa, 18: 2016).

In their assessment of the coverage of climate change journalism within MBC, the participants focus on news. They note, firstly, that the emphasis within MBC News tends to be

on fulfilling the first role, of informing and educating. Msuyane suggests that news reporters find this role easy to fulfil, because it is “somehow basic” to their work (Msuyane, 23:2016). Kachirwa believes the public broadcaster has done “extremely well” in fulfilling this task:

That informing and educating part here cannot be disputed. I have seen several stories on climate change here at MBC during which the news has covered the awareness and teaching aspect (Kachirwa, 19:2016).

Thuphiri also feels that news coverage at the public broadcaster had “so far exceeded the average rating” with regards to journalism about climate change that is informative and educative. He notes that the MBC News often feature stories that deal with this topic, and that they are therefore “doing enough” to inform people about climate change (Thuphiri, 16: 2016). Mtundu also states that MBC News “mediate information” about climate change from expert sources. He notes that news bulletins “frequently” include stories that provide information on the topic. He adds, however, that news bulletins do not go beyond this task of disseminating statements made by experts, saying that “...for us here, after the experts, it ends there” (Mtundu, 11:2016).

The participants also agree that their own emphasis has been primarily on the first role. Mtundu is dissatisfied with this self-assessment, and feels that he should be doing more:

Out of ten, I think I can give myself a four, because I think my focus has been just to inform and after the experts have spoken the story ends there (Mtundu, 13: 2016).

Thuphiri suggests that he tends to neglect the second and third roles because he “...sticks to objectivity and I never thought about their relevance in the main news bulletins here at MBC” (Thuphiri, 17: 2016). Kachirwa, in contrast, feels that he has performed relatively well both in context of the first and third role. He feels it is only the analytical aspect of journalism that has been missing from his work:

I think I have done better on bringing information and teaching messages through my creative reports on the topic. Some of which have made me win awards you know. And I also try to ... [bring] in voices of people in rural areas in my news reports. I ask the local people what do you think about this? So maybe it is ... being critical and analytical where my shortfall is, I haven’t done that (Kachirwa, 19: 2016).

However, it is only Kachirwa who makes reference to his own success in producing stories that help to facilitate public participation in discussion of climate change. The absence of any further emphasis on this role by the news reporters can be seen to be in contrast with the commentary provided by the agricultural journalists. As noted in Chapter Four the agricultural

journalists argue that the MBC has done well in relation to the fulfilment of the third role, particularly in context of the work of the DBU.

The news reporters' commentary can be seen to support the proposal, explored in Chapter Four, that coverage of climate change at MBC is framed by the collaborative approach, in which journalism works in partnership with the state to achieve developmental goals. The description of collaborative journalism provided by the news reporters can, however, be seen to differ from that of the agricultural journalists. In the agricultural journalists' case we were able to identify two forms of collaborative journalism that co-exist at the MBC. The first locates members of the public as passive spectators to discussions that take place between officials and experts. The second, in contrast, aims to support the strengthening of civil society, by encouraging the public's participation in processes of deliberation. In the case of the news journalists, the emphasis remains almost exclusively on the first form of collaborative development journalism. Here we do not see the same degree of reference to the more 'emancipatory' approach to development journalism, which places an emphasis on the empowerment of ordinary people, by requiring their participation in processes of public debate. This is despite the fact that the news reporters explicitly endorse the importance of journalism that foregrounds the voices of ordinary people. It is possible that, in context of MBC's News department, there are much fewer opportunities to pursue the emancipatory approach than there are for journalists working in the context of agricultural programming.

5. Engaging with enabling and constraining factors at MBC

In commenting on how MBC assists them in the producing journalism about climate change, the news reporters identify four enabling factors. Firstly, they note that MBC provides them with valuable technical resources. In this respect Msuyane, Mtundu and Kachirwa all point out that MBC has an adequate supply of field equipment. Kachirwa explains that the availability of such equipment enables him to gather field recordings, which are of particular relevance to environmental stories, such as those relating to climate change:

So if you want to do a story on anything on climate change, you will go to record with quality sound, whether it's in the forest or anywhere else (Kachirwa, 12:2016:21).

Thuphiri refers, in turn, to the role that editing facilities play in enabling a creative approach to the crafting of stories:

This place is conducive enough for one to demonstrate creativity in reporting climate change. You can use various sound effects with equipment here at MBC which I think is the best in the country (Thuphiri, 19: 2016).

Like the agricultural journalists, as a second enabling factor, the news reporters also speak of the value of being able to produce news in Chichewa. Msuyane explains that in Malawi, Chichewa operates as a lingua franca, even in areas where the language is not widely spoken:

...most of the places that I have been to, I haven't had challenges in terms of the language because you find that even the local chiefs would know a little bit of basic Chichewa. And if they are totally blank, they would have translators within to help you, like, they might speak in their language and someone would translate into Chichewa and you can grasp what they are saying (Msuyane, 27: 2016).

Mtundu makes a similar point, noting that in the context of fieldwork, there are often individuals within local communities who can act as translators in this way (Mtundu, 17: 2016). Msuyane adds that MBC has a “capable and experienced editorial team” that is able to identify local equivalents for scientific terms (Msuyane, 28: 2016). She explains that she often consults this team when writing reports for bulletins in local languages. Mtundu notes that he is also able to consult with experts outside the context of the MBC, who are able to provide equivalents for English climate change terms in Chichewa. However, Kachirwa states that the task of translating news about climate change remains a challenge, despite the availability of these resources. One reason for this is that when one translates from English to the target language, the final wording is often more extensive:

It has been a challenge to me sometimes because most of the words that are used in climate change have one word in English. Now for you to interpret the same so that someone understands that particular word in the local language, you have to do that in a sentence or two (Kachirwa, 23: 2016).

Thirdly, the participants mention that they are encouraged by MBC management to specialise in particular subject areas, including environmental topics. Msuyane notes that this is a recent development and one that he regards as a “very positive step” (Msuyane, 28: 2016). Kachirwa, who is one of the two reporters specialising in environmental journalism, notes that reporters who have a “passion” for an area of reporting are free to specialise in this way at MBC (Kachirwa, 22: 2016; Mtundu, 13: 2016). Thuphiri, the other environmental specialist, explains that his editors have encouraged his interest in climate change journalism and that, as a result, he was able to establish himself as “...among the better handlers of climate change reporting” at the broadcaster (Thuphiri, 19:2016).

Fourthly, like the agricultural journalists, the news reporters explain that their status as MBC staff enables them to establish relationships with news sources who have expertise in climate change. They recognise that it is their association with the MBC that enables them to gain access to these sources. Msuyane feels that such access has improved her ability to report on the topic:

I think I have benefitted a lot. For instance, MBC sometimes proposes my name to organisations ... whenever they need reporters who have done environmental reporting generally or specifically climate change before. So that has enabled me learn a lot and use that knowledge in my subsequent work on the topic (Msuyane, 26: 2016).

Mtundu explains that in some cases, it is the sources who contact him to provide information on the topic (Mtundu, 15: 2016). He understands that this is due to his association with the MBC:

The recognition by news sources that can invite you if there is a story is encouraging. That has happened to me several times. I do get calls sometimes and they ask me if am still working with MBC, then they say that they have a story or function which they need me to cover as an MBC reporter (Mtundu, 15: 2016).

Thuphiri notes that he was able to attend international climate change conferences because of his status as an MBC staff member. He explains that his supervisors at MBC supported his interest in attending these events, because they recognised his expertise in the topic of climate change:

That has put me in a strong position to pursue stories on the issue and also establish close links with organisations that have climate change projects. Even my trips to COP meetings ... MBC recommending me. Of course it was UNDP that gave me an opportunity to go but MBC said, okay you can go (Thuphiri, 19: 2016).

Kachirwa notes that the institution has accorded him the opportunity to enhance his knowledge on the topic by allowing him to attend workshops organised by external institutions. He explains that he was able to do so “because of being an employee at MBC” (Kachirwa, 22: 2016).

The news reporters mention two factors that have constrained their ability to report on climate change. Firstly, they suggest that editorial management place limitations on the kind of stories they can pursue. Of particular relevance, in this context, is the MBC’s tendency to prioritise “political” stories. This emphasis means that a focus on other stories, including those relating to climate change, is regarded as less attractive. Kachirwa explains that news reporters tend to prioritise political stories at the expense of other topics because they know that it is more likely that these stories will be given the status of ‘top stories’ in bulletins:

Normally political stories go first ... then maybe [other] stories will come towards the end of the bulletin. When the bulletin is about 15 minutes long, a climate change story may be slotted at the 14th minute. Sometimes when the climate change story cannot fit in the last minute, it is either chopped or removed completely as a leftover for the next bulletin (Kachirwa, 22: 2016).

Msuyane explains that once journalists have observed this practice, they will scramble for 'political' stories even though there is no official documentation indicating that such stories are a priority:

No one wants to be doing stories that always come at number seven or number eight in the bulletin. And by default, here the stories that come first are usually stories to deal with politicians and their functions (Msuyane, 25:2016).

Thuphiri adds that journalists may fear dismissal if there is a story that can promote a politician or political event and they choose instead to follow a story about a topic such as climate change. He understands this to relate to the MBC's status as a public broadcaster:

This being a public broadcaster, more resources go towards presidential functions or political issues. So the politicians can interfere when you ignore them for other stories such as climate change. Management, therefore, seem to get instructions from politicians to police how we write our stories. For fear of being labelled as an insubordinate employee, one ends up dumping the climate change story and following the one on politics (Thuphiri, 17:2016).

Mtundu explains that journalists within MBC have become accustomed to a culture of "self-censorship and fear of the unknown" when presenting news ideas (Mtundu, 13-14: 2016). In this context, most journalists at the institution avoid stories deemed "sensitive", even though there is no official editorial policy that restricts them from covering such content (Mtundu, 13-14:2016). Msuyane notes that this 'unofficial' institutional culture has constrained her ability to pursue the second and third approach to climate change journalism:

It becomes difficult for me to perform differently from the way the whole institution that is hosting me is performing. So I have no problem with the first role because am able to interview experts, but I don't go ahead to interview local people because I know the editors would cut that and say that there is not enough time in the bulletin for any more voices after the main source has spoken (Msuyane, 24:2016).

It is apparent, from these comments, that a crucial difference between the work environment of the agricultural journalists and news reporters is represented by this policing of news bulletin content. While the agricultural journalists rarely experience direct censorship or interference with their work from their editors, the newsroom journalists constantly experience both explicit and implicit censorship. This places limitations on their ability to pursue stories relating to climate change, and also on the choices that they may make with regards to the treatment of

such stories. It is not surprising, in this context, that the second and third role of climate change journalism remains largely neglected within their work as news reporters.

As a second factor that restricts their ability to fulfil assignments on climate change, the news reporters speak of a lack of resources. In this context, all of them explain that limitations in access to transport is a particular concern. Kachirwa explains that there is no vehicle allocated for use by MBC news reporters, which makes it difficult for them to travel in order to collect stories (Kachirwa, 19: 2016). Mtundu adds that it takes time for the transport section to release a vehicle for use by a reporter "...due to various processes involved in signing and approving the form for such an application" (Mtundu, 14: 2016). This places constraints on news reporters' ability to respond to stories outside urban areas:

We have a few vehicles so it's not easy to have a vehicle that will take you to the rural communities unless you are being sponsored by an organisation (Mtundu, 13: 2016).

Thuphiri suggests that these constraints on news reporters 'travel to rural areas have implications for their coverage of climate change stories. Reporters' ability to pursue the third role of climate change journalism, that of facilitating participation by the public, becomes particularly limited:

...climate change stories need one to travel long distances if you need to include views of local people.

Msuyane notes that she has on occasion used her own funds to enable her to pursue stories based in rural areas (Msuyane, 26:2016). Thuphiri adds that journalists generally depend for their coverage of climate change stories on the infrastructure provided by external organisations:

In such cases, we have mostly relied on external support from NGOs that come in to help us by taking us to the field in their cars... (Thuphiri, 7: 2016).

In their comments on what ought to be done to ensure that all three roles of climate change journalism can be fulfilled within the MBC, the news reporters make the same two proposals as the agricultural journalists. Firstly, they suggest that they, as individual journalists, need to take responsibility for acquiring the competence and knowledge that such journalism requires. In this context they speak of the need to know more about climate change. Thuphiri notes, in this context, that knowledge of the general history of climate change is "necessary" if one is to produce journalism on the topic (Thuphiri, 25: 2016:22). Kachirwa also proposes that such knowledge is crucial, "...because people need to be told where we are coming from" in order to understand the current situation (Kachirwa, 25:2016). In addition, he feels that

knowledge of current debates would enable him to “explain how relevant they [climate change negotiations] are to the local audiences” (Kachirwa, 25: 2016). Msuyane suggests, similarly, that knowledge of reports presented at conferences and summits is also of importance, in providing background on the implications of climate change:

All these summits and conferences of parties, they are also very important because if we are going to be giving details and be analytical, you need to provide statistics and views from the global debates to back up your analysis (Msuyane, 30-31: 2016).

Thuphiri also explains that “updates on the science of climate change” would be one of the areas that he feels would improve his reporting (Thuphiri, 25: 2016:22).

The participants also speak of the importance of improving their ability to engage with complex knowledge about climate change. Here Kachirwa feels that he needs to enhance his ability to make the most of the sources for climate change stories that are available to him, by improving his ability to identify and formulate appropriate questions to pose to them:

We need to learn on how we can benefit from relating with the climate change sources when we interview them. Because sometimes maybe the problem could be us, they may have the information that they may wish to share with us but maybe they might not share with us because we ask wrong questions (Kachirwa, 24: 2016).

Thuphiri notes that he would like to improve his own ability to make sense of quantitative information about climate change, so that he is able to tease out the significance for his audience:

I need to understand how best I can analyse the figures, graphs and all that. Maybe how to go towards that stance of even commenting rather than just to leave it with experts to explain (Thuphiri, 24: 2016).

Mtundu also explains that he is satisfied with his own ability to do “basic reporting”, but feels that more specialised “analytical” skills would help to improve his ability to cover the topic of climate change (Mtundu, 18: 2016). Msuyane notes that she would like to acquire a more in-depth understanding of scientific terms common to climate change. She explains that such understanding would enable her to “overcome communication problems” that may arise during interviews with local audiences, when dealing with this topic (Msuyane, 30: 2016).

The participants generally propose that access to more workshops and refresher courses focusing on guidelines for reporting on climate change would enable them gain such knowledge and skill. Kachirwa argues that such workshops allow journalists “...opportunities to sharpen and update their skills” in a way that could enable them to realise all three roles of journalism on the topic (Kachirwa, 24: 2016). Msuyane also argues that refresher courses on the topic are important because “...most local journalists get rusty through overusing the old

basic ways of reporting to inform, educate and entertain” (Msuyane, 30: 2016). She adds that journalists can only learn of “new innovations in the field” if they attend such courses (Msuyane, 30: 2016). Mtundu thinks such courses also allow journalists to interact with fellow journalists, in order to “...share knowledge and experiences” (Mtundu, 18:2016). Thuphiri suggests that educational institutions should work with the MBC to facilitate such training, “...so that local journalists’ reporting on the topic is up to date” (Thuphiri, 26: 2016).

One topic that the participant feels should be covered in context of such workshops is that of reporting on climate change in the multilingual context of Malawi. Kachirwa suggests that workshops can act as fora for sharing knowledge that enables journalists to translate knowledge about climate between English and local languages (Kachirwa, 25: 2016). He understands such knowledge to relate primarily to the appropriate translation of terminology:

The climate change scientific terms may be confusing but if we could have proper training on these terminologies, maybe it can help us (Kachirwa, 24: 2016).

Mtundu also notes that journalists would benefit “significantly” if they were able to consult with climate change experts in context of such workshops on the appropriate local words for concepts relating to climate change. He explains that such consultations usually happen during workshops (Mtundu, 18: 2016). Thuphiri feels that tertiary institutions have a role to play in developing expertise in this topic, and then sharing such knowledge with working journalist by means of workshops:

The university should ... assist in in research and development of translated local terms that we can all use in reporting on the issue.

He adds that reference to such knowledge should also be included in the journalism programmes that such institutions offer to their own graduates:

Maybe it’s also time to incorporate climate change in the curriculum since this issue is almost well known as a big problem (Thuphiri, 22-23: 2016).

Conclusion

It is demonstrated in this chapter that, like the agricultural journalists, the news reporters have access to credible knowledge about climate change and its relevance to the Malawian context. Again, the availability of workshops presented by organisations dedicated to the promotion of education about climate change plays a key role in access to such knowledge. They draw on such knowledge to articulate a conceptualisation of climate change that is very similar to that of the agricultural journalists.

There are, at the same time, crucial differences in the way that the agricultural journalists and news reporters make sense of such knowledge. Such difference can be observed, firstly, in the two groups' understanding of the purpose of climate change journalism. In particular, the agricultural journalists incorporate an emphasis on a facilitative, emancipatory approach to such journalism, that is virtually absent from the news reporter's commentary. This allows the agricultural journalists to engage more confidently with the potential of the third role of climate change journalism.

It has been argued, above, that this difference must be understood in context of the contrast in the working environments of the two groups of journalists. The news journalists operate in a highly monitored environment, in which there is very limited freedom to take initiative with regards to pursuing stories in climate change. The agricultural journalists, in contrast, have benefitted from the tradition of facilitative journalism that the DBU has introduced to MBC.

However, it can be seen to be significant that, despite these differences, both groups respond very similarly when asked to comment on ways in which the MBC could become more enabling of the realisation of all three roles of climate change journalism. In each case, they focus on the need to enhance their own skill and knowledge. All of the research participants understand training by means of workshops to be of key importance to the achievement of this goal. It was suggested, in Chapter Four, that this understanding points to an acceptance, by the agricultural journalists, that the institutional context of the MBC is not likely to change. There is, in other words, little point in talking about ways in which the institutional factors that constrain their ability to produce climate change journalism may be addressed. However, the news reporters' comments on this topic, above, suggests a further dimension: that the participants recognise that workshops conducted by external facilitators can serve as a valuable intervention into the institutional context of the MBC. All four of the news reporters note that in context of such workshops, they gain access to individuals who can introduce new knowledge into the context of the MBC. Mtundu adds that workshops also operate as fora in which MBC journalists can interact with each other, to articulate approaches that they want to adopt in their own practice. It may be, then, that both the agricultural journalists and news reporters recognise that, despite the entrenched culture of authoritarianism at MBC, such workshops can contribute fundamentally to the shaping of journalistic practice within this broadcaster.

CLOSING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated how radio journalists experience the challenges involved in producing content that can help their audiences to engage with the local relevance of climate change. It focused on these challenges as experienced by agricultural and news journalists who report on the topic in the context of the MBC. The empirical component of the study explored such experience in context of interviews with agricultural journalists and news reporters based at MBC.

It was demonstrated, in Chapters Four and Five, that both groups of research participants have access to credible knowledge about climate change and its relevance to Malawi. Based on such access, both groups articulate a shared conceptualisation of climate change and of the purpose of journalism that reports on climate change. They first describe such purpose exclusively in terms of the first of the three roles identified within scholarly studies: that of ‘informing and educating’. However, when prompted to consider the second and third role, they indicate that these also represent important components of the purpose of journalism about climate change. They recognise, in other words, the importance of critical engagement with knowledge about climate change and the facilitation of public participation in engagement with such knowledge. It was concluded that the participants acknowledge the value of all three roles but understand the second and third roles to exist separately from the official, institutional identity of journalism.

However, the participants explain that even though they may recognise the value of the second role, they have little experience of putting it into practice and lack the necessary competence to do so. Chapter Four and Five concluded that the lack of confidence that the participants’ express with regards to their own ability to do so can be better understood when one considers their institutional context. More specifically, it should be read against the location of the MBC within a polarised pluralist model of the media, which is framed by an authoritarian understanding of the social purpose of media.

At the same time, the agricultural journalists are to some extent able to draw on their knowledge and experience as journalists to articulate practical guidelines through which the third role can be implemented. It has been argued in this study that their ability to do so should be understood in context of the role that the DBU has played over the past sixteen years in making interventions into authoritarian culture at MBC. The DBU has, in particular, introduced a more emancipatory and facilitative approach to media production within certain categories of MBC’s programming, including agricultural journalism.

Journalists at MBC can be said to have access to two categories of expert knowledge that provides them with resources for the production of climate change journalism. Firstly, both the news reporters and agricultural journalists have access to the knowledge resources of experts on climate change. Secondly, the agricultural journalists have access to expertise in facilitative journalism, through the DBU. The presence of these resources has, however, not ensured the fulfillment of the second role –that of critical engagement. It was argued in this study that the strength of an authoritarian institutional culture within the MBC mitigates against this.

We saw that both groups respond very similarly when asked to comment on ways in which the MBC could become more enabling of the realisation of the three roles of climate change journalism. In each case, they focus on the need to enhance their own skill and knowledge, and refer to the value of training by means of workshops facilitated by external experts. It was suggested that this understanding might point to an acceptance, by the participants, that the institutional context of the MBC is not likely to change. However, it is also possible that they understand workshops conducted by external facilitators to represent a possible intervention into the institutional context of the MBC. The value of such intervention has, after all, already been demonstrated in context of the DBU. Despite the entrenched culture of authoritarianism at MBC, the involvement of external experts can contribute, through such ventures, to the changing of the nature of journalistic practice within this broadcaster.

In light of these conclusions, the researcher would propose that the MBC would benefit from external interventions such as workshops and trainings facilitated by organisations and experts on the topic. Journalists would also benefit from further investing in their own education, in order to gain access to knowledge that enable them to produce journalism about climate change that meets all three of the goals identified in literature. In this context, the initiative taken by MBC management to encourage more journalists to specialise in reporting in various fields is an effort that should be supported. The broadcaster's management can take advantage from the strongly articulated interest among its staff in furthering their studies in this way. It would, for example, be advantageous if the MBC assisted such staff in gaining access to scholarships for journalists wishing to pursue studies in specialised reporting – including environmental journalism and journalism about climate change.

At the same time, the researcher would propose that journalists working at the MBC need to do more to challenge the culture of authoritarianism at MBC. In Chapter Two, it was noted that Kovach and Rosenstiel argue that journalists need to recognise their own obligation to challenge editors, advertisers and other institutional authorities in this way. Only then will

they be able to contribute to the creation of a work environment that enables them to put into practice all the elements that form part of their vision for the practice of journalism. Indeed, the two authors are of the opinion that journalists' engagement with authorities about the need to adhere to the journalistic ideals is the only way to produce credible journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001:181). To achieve this goal, journalists at MBC can take advantage of the potential of the 'rhetorical' presence of the liberal model in the Malawian media system, as discussed in Chapter Two. They can invoke their status as professionals who are guided by a vocation that transcends the specific institutional requirements of the media organisations that they work for.

This study raises many more questions about the factors that enable and constrain the production of radio journalism about climate change in Malawi. Such questions can only be dealt with through further research. This study has provided a beginning point for such research, by providing evidence of how a particular group of journalists experience the challenges of producing such journalism. However, the discussion of such experience was presented in very broad strokes. It would therefore be of value to build on this study by conducting research which deals more closely with the details of journalistic practice, both for agricultural journalism and news reporting. It would also be of value to pursue further studies of journalism as it is practiced at other radio stations, both in the community and commercial sector.

It is the researcher's hope that this study will be of use both to MBC and other radio stations who are interested in enhancing their approach to journalism on climate change. In addition, the researcher hopes that institutions involved in journalism education can draw on this study to inform their approach to teaching about such journalism.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The interview guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Section One: General background and experience in reporting about climate change.

Explain your personal history as a journalist.

How has your experience as a journalist shaped your understanding of your role?

To what extent have you reported on climate change issues?

How did you acquire your knowledge about climate change?

Section Two: Conceptualisation of climate change.

What is your definition of climate change?

What do you know about international climate change negotiations?

How relevant do you think these debates are to local communities in Malawi?

Section Three: Conceptualisation of reporting about climate change

What do you think should be the main aims of journalism that deals with climate change?

Are there any particular issues or themes that you think need to be covered when reporting about climate change in agricultural programmes in Malawi?

What do you think journalists should keep in mind, in their approach to covering climate change stories in agricultural programmes in Malawi?

What do you know about how climate change is affecting local communities?

Section Four: Evaluating journalism about climate change

How would you evaluate your personal reporting about climate change against what you consider to be an ideal approach to climate change news coverage?

How would evaluate your radio station's coverage of climate change issues?

What do you think of the current coverage of climate change issues in Malawian radio stations?

What is it that you think a journalist in the Malawian context should be doing in reporting about climate change?

Section Five: Constraining and enabling factors

What aspects of your work situation have constrained your ability to report on climate change issues the way you would like to?

What aspects of your work situation have helped you better pursue the kind of journalism about climate change that you think is ideal?

How has the language and culture of audiences of climate change news affected your reporting on the issue in agricultural programmes?

How do you think the factors you have mentioned in the above question can be dealt with?

What climate change reporting skills do you think you need to enable you to perform in a way you consider as ideal reporting about climate change?

What climate change knowledge do you think you need to enable you to perform in a way you consider as ideal reporting about climate change?

Appendix 2: The consent form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS



Rhodes University

School of Journalism & Media Studies

Dear respondent,

I am a post-graduate student at the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, pursuing a Master of Journalism and Media Studies. As part of the fulfilment of my degree, it is required of me to carry out a research. I intend to carry out a research on, 'PRODUCING JOURNALISM ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE FOR NEWS AND AGRICULTURAL RADIO: A CASE STUDY OF MALAWI'S PUBLIC BROADCASTER.'

I am intending to purposively select 10 participants comprising five journalists working on an agricultural programme that feature climate change issues and another five working in the newsroom. The study will investigate how journalists at MBC radio experience the task of producing content about climate change that can enable rural communities to engage with the relevance to their local context. It will compare the experiences of journalists working in news and those contributing to agricultural programming. The aim is to gain insight into the two groups' conceptualisation of the kind of content that they should ideally produce and the challenges that they face in doing so. You will be requested to voluntarily participate in an in-depth interview with me.

The findings of the study will be purely for academic reasons and a copy of the complete project can be provided upon request. Thank you in advance.

Yours Sincerely,

Francis Kapiri

Researcher

Informed Consent Sheet

**** To be signed in duplicate – one copy to be returned to the researcher and one copy to be retained by the participant.**

Thank you for your participation. By submitting this form you are indicating that you have read the description of the study, are over the age of 18, and that you agree to the terms as described in the short questionnaire that follows:

I have read this form and received a copy of it. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or consequences. **I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction.**

Yes ☐

No ☐

I agree to take part in this study and I hereby grant permission for the data generated from this research to be used in the researcher's publications on this topic.

Yes ☐

No ☐

I grant permission under the following conditions:

I grant permission for the research to be recorded and saved for purpose of review by the researcher, supervisor / principal investigator, and ethics committee.

Yes ☐

No ☐

I grant permission for the research recordings to be used in presentations or documentation of this study.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Participant's names and signature _____

Date _____

Researcher names and signature _____

Date _____

Contact

If you have any questions at any time about this study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher Francis Kapiri on this email fkapiri@poly.ac.mw or cell +265 999 459 952 or +27622591045.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

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